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## Critical Conversations: Using Picture Books to Welcome Refugees into Our Classrooms

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### Abstract

*Approximately 11 million children have recently been forced to leave their homes and lives behind due to war, natural disasters and other types of trauma. Reading picture books about refugees in classroom communities that include refugee children may help these children to feel recognized and to realize they are not alone in their situations. All children should see themselves reflected in the literature (Hope, 2008), and children who have arrived suddenly after escaping some sort of tragedy are no different. Using selected children's picture books depicting refugee children not only provides opportunities for teaching critical literacy, but also incorporates global perspectives, as well as perspectives of justice and injustice in the classroom. The multidimensional representations of refugees in picture books also enables teachers to promote critical conversations in the classroom.*

*Keywords: Critical literacy, refugee children, picture books*

According to The UN Refugee Agency (2017), 22.5 million people around the world have been forced from home, and over half of these refugees are under the age of 18. Accord-

ing to Hope (2008), refugee children experience substantial hardships when they and their families are affected by poverty, war, and/or natural disasters. Children may arrive “feeling disoriented and bewildered” (p. 298) into our classrooms. Hope describes how refugee children frequently face language and cultural barriers and may feel isolation and friendlessness. The author cites a study by Melzak and Warner (1992), in which refugee children revealed through interviews that they appreciated teachers who “asked about their experiences and included them in the curriculum” (p. 298). Hope stresses the need to integrate refugee children “into what is often a hostile or, sometimes indifferent school environment” (p. 298). How do we make refugee children feel safe, valued and included? How do we talk with our students about refugees in a kind, compassionate manner? One way to address these needs is by using selected children's picture books, which not only provide opportunities for teaching critical literacy, but also incorporate global perspectives, as well as perspectives of justice and injustice in the classroom. Children should see themselves reflected in the literature (Hope, 2008), and children who have arrived suddenly after escaping some sort of trauma are no different.

Reading picture books about refugees in classroom communities that include refugee children may help these children to feel recognized and to realize they are not alone in their situations. The multidimensional representations of refugees in picture books also enables teachers to promote critical conversations in the classroom.

Dolan (2012) defines critical literacy as actively reading and reflecting on text, which encourages critical thinking on topics such as inequality, injustice, and the power of the dominant culture. According to Roy, (2016) critical literacy “acknowledges the situated nature of language, interrogates power relationships, and can make visible the identities and subject positions negotiated in a classroom context” (p. 542). The development of critical literacy skills enables people to interpret messages in the modern world through a critical lens and challenge the power relations within those messages. Educators who facilitate the development of critical literacy encourage children to examine societal issues such as poverty, education, equity, and equality, and institutions such as family and school. As students learn to analyze the structures that serve as norms, they realize these norms are not experienced by all members of society. Critical literacy is not merely about educating children about critical ways of seeing and questioning. It is equally about encouraging what Maxine Greene (1995) calls their “social imagination” which is “the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the street and in our schools” (p.5).

Paulo Freire encouraged readers to “read the word” in order to “read the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire implored us to think critically about the world around us through experiences with literature and through an understanding of the powerful nature of text. According to

Dolan (2012), critical literacy is reading text “in an active and reflective manner which promotes a deeper understanding of socially constructed concepts, such as power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships” (p. 5). “Culture is never static” because “the belief systems and practices associated with cultural groups are always under negotiation with new generations” (Lee, 2003, p. 4). Elementary schools constitute one of the most significant cultural niches in which young people begin the process of becoming literate. It is in these settings that children expand their understandings of the purposes of literacy and begin to see how literacy relates to their interactions with others. The instructional approaches and the culture that children experience in classrooms play a major role in shaping their emerging identities as cultural and literate beings (Leland, Harste & Huber, 2005). Books are particularly useful for starting and sustaining critical conversations in classrooms. Students can participate in critical conversations after engaging with picture books that address important topics such as ethnicity, gender, culture, language, people with special needs, immigration, war, refugees and marginalized groups. Dolan suggests that picture books can serve as springboards for critical discussions and “for incorporating global and justice perspectives in the classroom” (p. 5). Critical conversations highlight diversity and difference, while calling attention to the nature and role of literacy in our society. Children begin to understand what is and is not valued through the works of authors who create picture books. Reading aloud from high-quality literature supports young children’s literacy development in multiple ways. Including the reading and discussion of critical literacy texts can add even



more learning opportunities for students by opening up spaces for building critical literacy awareness in classrooms.

Conceptually, reading critical picture books aloud to children, is anchored in Freebody and Luke's model of reading as social practice (1997). Arguing that literacy is never neutral, Freebody and Luke identify four different views of literacy: reading as decoding; reading as a way of co-producing a meaningful reading; reading as language in use; and finally, reading as a way to interrogate the assumptions that are embedded in text as well as the assumptions which are brought to the text. Part of learning to read is being able to look critically at the images and messages in books, to understand what can be learned from authors, and to think about problematic stereotypes authors and illustrators might perpetuate. A critical literacy approach includes a focus on social justice and the role that we each play in challenging or helping to perpetuate the injustices we identify in our world. To prepare literate individuals for the global society, more is needed than to teach children how to decode and comprehend texts. What is needed now is a critical understanding of language as a cultural resource that can be used to challenge or maintain systems of domination (Janks, 2000). This article will look specifically at using picture books to encourage conversations about the ever-increasing marginalized group, refugees, while focusing on building students' awareness of how systems of meaning and power affect people and the lives they lead.

Today there are refugees in countries all over the world (UN Refugee Agency, 2017). Many people are not able to receive the protection of their state and therefore require the protection of the global community. Picture books about refugees address a range of universal

emotions including fear, grief and confusion. Several books pay homage to the resilience of children placed in difficult situations. These books provide ideal teaching opportunities for exploring issues such as compassion, empathy, tolerance, justice, conflict resolution and a respect for human rights. The reasons why asylum seekers seek refuge are many, and to this day, people are still unaware of the difficulties and hardships refugee children have experienced.

While it is important for refugees to encounter their stories in classrooms, it is equally important for other children to hear these stories and to learn about their experiences. Hope (2008) makes the argument that children's literature about the refugee experience provides an ideal context for sharing stories, feelings and fears undergone by refugee children. Critical discussions of picture books can facilitate the understanding of the refugee experience. In addition, such discussions serve as a springboard for sensitive topics related to persecution, flight and resettlement, while also reassuring refugee readers that there is new life and hope for the future.

Roche (2015) suggests that when a child listens to a story and has time to dwell on the pictures and discuss the book with peers in a safe and interactive social setting, a whole new sense of making meaning comes into being. For critical engagement with both text and illustrations to work well, teachers need to be knowledgeable about the book(s) being used, critically aware, willing to listen to and open to learning from students, and committed to creating a community of inquiry in the classroom.

Giving children *time to think* is crucial. Additionally, listening actively as others speak builds reciprocity of respect and a

sense of community. Finally, critical literacy and book talks offer children the opportunity to speak, listen, reflect, have an opinion, make statements, question and to be listened to (Donnelly, 1994, p. 7).

According to Cox, Miller and Berg (2017) there are eight steps for successfully sharing a critical literacy book aloud:

1. Select a book that draws attention to social issues or raises questions about the social world, for example, refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers.
2. Preview the book. Look for places that raise issues or might be a springboard for a conversation about social issues. Also, identify vocabulary you may want to introduce during a mini-lesson or a book introduction. Meller, Richardson, and Hatch (2009) suggest phrasing questions to "...illicit children's own questions, further their understanding of the issues in the book, and encourage the children to make connections between themselves and the text" (p. 77). Ask "why?" "how?" and "what do you think?" questions.
3. As you formulate your critical questions to use during the read-aloud, write them on sticky notes, and place them throughout the book.
4. Activate students' prior knowledge. This can be done by asking thought provoking questions related to issues in the text or by sharing a physical object related to the book with the students.

5. Conduct a picture walk through the book. Show the cover, title, and pictures, and ask students to make predictions. Introduce new vocabulary.

6. Read the story and discuss the information you previously wrote on the sticky notes as you come to them in the text. Encourage students to make connections to their own lives and to other books.

7. Ask students to write or draw about the events in the story, thinking about the discussion and relating it to their own lives.

8. Invite students to continue the discussion of the text and the issues it addressed. Consider using the book connections students shared as future critical literacy read-alouds (Cox, Miller & Berg, 2017, pp.49-50).

This method of examining critical literacy with students works well with books about refugees and refugee children. Not only will refugee children in the classroom feel a sense of recognition and support as their story is told, but other children in the classroom will come to understand the plight of the refugees and hopefully gain a sense of empathy for their new classmates. Coming to this mutual understanding will help create a caring and compassionate community of learners. The results of critical conversations about refugees are multi-faceted. In reading about and discussing the issues faced by refugees, students can begin to develop an understanding of critical topics in our society. The picture books and the conversations that sur-

round them can help refugee children tell their stories. As classmates learn about the emotions and difficulties experienced by refugees, they can better understand the lives of refugee children who may become a part of their classroom community. Through critical read alouds, and especially those focusing on refugees and refugee children, students can become aware of realities in our society that are tragic and unjust. Through their new understandings, students can become change agents who “read the word” and “read the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987) in order to do their part in making our society a better place for all.

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## Exclusionary Discipline Practices in Texas: Addressing the School to Prison Pipeline

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### *Abstract*

*Statewide discipline data indicate that African-American and Latino students are disproportionately removed from classrooms in Texas. Students who are excluded from school are more likely to experience academic failure, drop out of school, and become involved in the juvenile justice system. Changing the culture of schools by training staff to use proactive and positive approaches to behavior management offers the best prospect of breaking the school to prison pipeline. In several states, improved Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports implementation has resulted in changes in exclusionary discipline. Use of this model in Texas might reduce discipline discrepancies by race.*

*Keywords: African American, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), cultural responsiveness, disproportionate minority, exclusionary discipline, Latino, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), representation, school-to-prison pipeline*

Suspending and expelling students from school are common disciplinary practices. These policies relieve administrators and teachers of the responsibility of teaching appropriate behaviors, and the excluded students frequently enjoy extended vacations from school, a result that inadvertently reinforces the problem behaviors that got them into trouble in the first place. This paper reviews the results of research on exclu-

sionary discipline practices in Texas, the state with the nation's second largest public-school system, in which two-thirds of students are non-White.

School disciplinary practices are not color blind. The Office for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education reported that African-American students are three and one-half times more likely to be suspended or expelled than White students. According to nationwide data for the 2013-14 school year, African-American K-12 boys were 3.8 times as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as White boys. Similarly, African-American girls represented 8% of enrolled students but 13% of students receiving out-of-school suspensions. In districts that reported expulsions under zero-tolerance policies, African-American students were 1.9 times as likely to be expelled from school without educational services as White students (Office for Civil Rights, 2016).

Disproportionate discipline practices in Texas made national headlines (Schwarz, 2011) when the Justice Center at the Council of State Governments reported that 31% of students received at least one out-of-school suspension or expulsion during their middle and high school years. Eighty-three percent of African-American males had at least one removal from the classroom for disciplinary reasons compared to 74% Latino male stu-

dents and 59% White male students. Female students experienced a similar pattern: 70% African-American, 58% Latino, and 37% White were excluded at least once (Fabelo, Thompson, Plotkin, Carmichael, Marchbanks, & Booth, 2011). Suspended or expelled students were more likely to be held back a year or to drop out and to be involved in the juvenile justice system the following year.

In Texas during the 2015-2016 school year, African-American students represented 12.6% of the school population but accounted for 22.6% of expulsions to Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) facilities, 21.5% of other expulsions, 30.6% of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) placements, 34.8% of out-of-school suspensions, and 25.8% of in-school suspensions (students enter JJAEP and DAEP placements as a result of the most serious disciplinary offenses; Texas Education Agency, 2007). Latino students represented 28.5% of the school population, but accounted for 58.3% of JJAEP expulsions, 59.8% of other expulsions, 63.8% of DAEP placements, 48.7% of out-of-school suspensions, and 49.7% of in-school suspensions.

In contrast, White students' representation in each discipline category was less than half of their proportion of the school population (see Figure 1).

### Explaining the Discrepancies

Researchers theorize that the overrepresentation of ethnic minority youths in exclusionary discipline cases is due to the interaction of school and family risk factors (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). While in school, students from minority groups are more likely to be identified as having mental retardation and emotional disturbance and less likely to be identified as eligible for gifted and talented programs. These students, faced with a greater likelihood of special education placements and disproportionately more suspensions and expulsions, decide that school is not a welcoming place and drop out (Nelson, Leone, & Rutherford, 2004). In terms of societal risk factors, students from minority backgrounds often come from

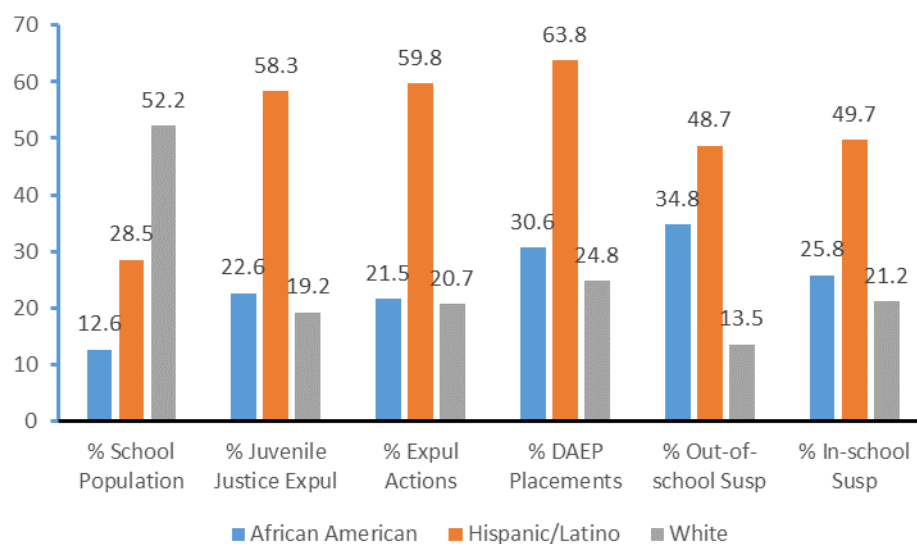


Figure 1. Texas School Discipline Data for 2015-2016. This figure illustrates exclusionary discipline discrepancies by ethnicity.

impoverished homes, experience academic failure, and engage in law-breaking behavior (Skiba et al., 2011). School risk factors such as the failure of teachers to understand the needs of children from impoverished families interact with the aggressive behavior patterns that some minority students learn at home to set the stage for confrontational situations in the classroom (Scott, Nelson, & Liaupsin, 2001).

Students who drop out of school become susceptible to the problems that plague impoverished neighborhoods: crime, drugs, gangs, and gun violence. Antisocial behavior frequently leads to incarceration in juvenile or adult detention facilities, which often lack the educational and mental health programs that could address the needs of delinquent youths (Nelson, Leone, & Rutherford, 2004). The result for these individuals is that the educational system, intended to be a pathway to a better life, becomes a conduit to a life of crime, a paradox known as the school to prison pipeline (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Rennie Center, 2016).

### **What Needs To Be Done**

Changing the culture of schools might reduce disproportionate disciplinary exclusions. Combining the proactive disciplinary approaches of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) and implementing more culturally responsive practices could bridge the gap between students' culturally diverse backgrounds and their school environment (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005). SWPBIS is a three-tiered approach to preventing problem behavior in schools. At the primary or whole-school level, teachers explicitly teach social skills, measure students' progress in using the skills, and provide opportunities for practice and feedback. The emphasis is on creating a high quality learning environment for students

and staff (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2015).

Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, and Swain-Bradway (2011) proposed six initiatives to enhance SWPBIS cultural responsiveness: (a) enhance staff members' cultural knowledge, (b) enhance staff members' cultural self-awareness; (c) validate others' culture, (d) increase cultural relevance, (e) establish cultural validity, and (f) emphasize cultural equity. They recommended integrating these practices with the emphasis on preventive discipline and decision making based on behavioral data. "If teaching and rewarding appropriate behaviors equally validated students' varying cultural identities," they noted, "the common school social culture built on these practices could have equal relevance for all students" (p. 5).

SWPBIS schools with diverse student populations in Colorado, Illinois, and Maryland have reduced disproportionate disciplinary referrals by emphasizing positive reinforcement of expected behaviors and ensuring that transitions between instructional and non-instructional activities go smoothly (Tobin & Vincent, 2011). These schools also regularly reported discipline referral data to faculty, and some leadership teams provided ongoing training and evaluation. In Oregon, where schools exclude American Indian/Alaska Native students at much higher rates than their White peers, researchers have proposed combining SWPBIS with culturally relevant practices. The latter include (a) increasing the cultural awareness and knowledge of school staff, (b) incorporating culturally relevant social skills lessons and language, (c) using culturally valid data for decision making, and (d) placing students in

less restrictive environments through curricular and home-school collaborations (Sprague, Vincent, Tobin, & Pavel, 2013).

An analysis of office discipline referral data from a national sample of schools revealed that teachers were more likely to refer African-American and Latino students than White students and that school administrators were four times more likely to suspend or expel African-American students and twice as likely to suspend or expel Latino students than their White peers (Skiba et al., 2011). The researchers recommended that districts and states disseminate disaggregated data on discipline patterns, promote policies that ensure the equitable disposition of disciplinary referrals, and train staff to minimize the disproportionate application of discipline policies.

### Ending the School to Prison Pipeline

When states and districts educate school personnel on the need for cultural awareness, rewarding appropriate student behavior, and sharing discipline data, schools will change from being oppressive places where teachers punish and exclude students to places in which diversity and positive behavior are valued (Sugai, O'Keefe, & Fallon, 2011). A culturally relevant application of behavioral principles must take account of the unique characteristics and learning histories of students and educators. When behavior management becomes contextually appropriate and avoids stereotyping, all stakeholders will share in an equitable outcome. This will open to all students the educational opportunities that are now available only to some.

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## Using Multicultural Children's Literature to Address Social Issues: The Power of Interactive Read Aloud

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### *Abstract*

*As the demographics of U.S. schools are changing, educators have to embrace this change and prepare students to adopt diversity and inclusivity as a means to increase students' understanding of their peers. Not only are race and ethnicity identities at the forefront of these changes, gender identity and ability identity must also be supported, as more students are challenging traditional gender roles and as more students are mainstreamed into regular education classes. This article seeks to address usage of interactive read alouds of multicultural literature as a means to help bridge students who need inclusive and equitable pedagogical practices in race, gender, and ability identity and those who need to understand those who identify as one or more of the aforementioned. A recommended list of multicultural literature is included with discussion starters to assist educators in establishing critical conversations with students who identify as one of the listed identities or for those students who need to understand those students who identify differently than them.*

*Keywords: multicultural children's literature, racial identity, gender identity, ability identity, read alouds*

### **Background of the Problem**

In the early 2000's, the United States entered an era characterized by the influx of immigrants and a vast increase in the number of U.S. born ethnic minorities (Banks, 2001, NCES, 2014). That era continues; for example, from fall 2011 the number of White students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade in the U.S. public schools decreased. The number of Latino students enrolled during this same time period, however, increased (NCES, 2014). Most recently, there has been an increase of students of color in public school classrooms. In fact, the United States Department of Commerce (2000) projected that African American, Asian American, and Latino students will comprise nearly 57% of all students across the nation by the year 2050. Thus, there is a critical need for future educators to embrace the reality that they will be working with students whose backgrounds will, more often than not, be unlike their own; teacher educators need to be prepared and know how to prepare their students to embrace this reality, as well (Clayton, 2011; Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Wilson & Rodkin, 2011). Within the ever-changing context of the sociopoliti-

cal climate, it is important that teacher educators provide students with opportunities to explore a variety of multicultural children's literature to help build students' level of comfort and understanding of the social issues expressed in discussion with students in classrooms.

Multiple factors influence identity development including race, ethnicity, social class, language, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ability (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Gee (2000) suggests that identity includes "being recognized as a certain kind of person in a given context" (p. 99). Because multiple factors influence one's identity development, it is imperative that teachers are aware of the complex nature of the identity development process. Emdin (2016) suggests that when instructing students, teachers are more successful when they recognize the students' realities. This article seeks to identify best practices when using multicultural read alouds and the possible effects they have on identity development. Additionally, this work seeks to make recommendations for teachers who can incorporate multicultural children's literature through teacher-led, interactive read alouds. Multicultural children's literature that incorporates racial identity, gender identity, and ability identity will also be explored.

### **Purpose of Interactive Read Aloud**

Reading aloud to students is a practice that is consistently recommended for elementary teachers in order to encourage students' engagement with and motivation to read text (Dugan, 1997; Sipe, 2000, 2002). Researchers have examined how teachers use "read-alouds" in the classroom (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004) and the teacher practices used to analyze how students respond to the books that are read aloud (to them by teachers and/or peers and/or that they read aloud themselves) (Sipe, 2000, 2002).

Little attention has focused on how book subject matter may influence teacher reading and student reading response. Furthermore, research shows that in the educational space limited opportunity exists for students to have open-ended conversation around literature (Worthy, Chamberlain, Peterson, Sharp, & Shih, 2012).

In a recent study which explored teachers' comfort level with discussions of a variety of social topics with children, it was found that the topics of marriage equality and gender identity elicited the most discomfort. Teachers identified these two topics as areas they would not discuss with students in their classroom (Piper, Walker, Pittman, 2017). Religion, family composition, incarceration and politics were also areas of concern for teachers as they identified these areas as topics that they would discuss but would experience discomfort when doing so. The topics that teachers felt they could openly discuss included disabilities, poverty, and aging. Teachers may feel challenged by the sociopolitical contexts of some read aloud experiences. Teachers need to be confident and comfortable to discuss social issues and hot topics with their students with a sense of fearlessness. Confidence and comfort is vital to their ability to discuss social issues and hot topics with their students. Both educators of pre-service teachers, and those who work with teachers, can be better prepared to support teachers in these new frames of discussion.

### **Multicultural Children's Literature**

The umbrella of multicultural children's literature includes multiple categories (e.g., religion, social groups, gender, families, race, etc.). The variety of topics and texts provides children with opportunity to expand

their knowledge and understandings about various topics. When teachers select and implement carefully considered authentic literature they can avoid promoting stereotypes for groups of people or of cultures. In applying Freire's (1970) framework of critical literacy to the teaching of children, the goal is, again, to teach reading and writing while also teaching self-efficacy and agency. Freire (1970) describes critical literacy as a process of coming to consciousness about issues of power, privilege, and oppression in the world, and then using that consciousness to push back against societal injustices. Children learn to read and write, while also learning to resist the coercive effects of uncritical literacy amongst other things (e.g., standardized instruction, especially of language) (Comber, Thompson, & Wells, 2001; Janks, 2000; Luke, 2000). Thus, teachers who teach using multicultural children's literature through a critical literacy framework should do so through a "problem posing" approach to consider issues of culturally relevant concerns for students as problems in search of solutions, rather than simply static conditions of existence from which there is no relief (Freire, 1970, 1990). When the approach and framework are student centered, opportunities for critical conversations to arise around social issues that children often question when otherwise those conversations are left untouched due to teachers' comfort levels. Children who have the opportunity to discuss literature through interactive read aloud, develop comprehension strategies and their own self-perceptions and identities as readers (Wiseman, 2012). As teachers consider the complexity of interactive read-aloud and critical conversations, it is crucial to familiarize them with a variety of texts that they can use to increase comfort levels with these societal topics and provide students with engaging dialogue.

This work seeks to explore multicultural children's literature across three areas; racial identity, gender identity, and ability identity. Included are books that address each area and detailed sample questions that teachers can use to prompt student discussion during read alouds in the elementary-aged classroom.

**Racial Identity.** Media outlets can impact the ways that society and particularly children see race today. Topics such as immigration, police brutality, poverty, and race are often at the forefront of social discussions. In response, the selection of children's literature around similar topics is increasing. The following texts can be used to introduce the topic of race to children, *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001), *Pink and Say* (Polacco, 1994), *Tea and Milk* (Say, 2009), and *Separate is Never Equal* (Tonatiuh, 2014). While reading, texts like these provide opportunities for the reader to make meaning of the story and situate the social contexts. Table 1 provides publication details and a brief summary of these recommended texts.

**Gender Identity.** Gender identity is a topic that is relevant in schools today. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) youth are declaring their identity at younger ages, and the average coming out age is sixteen (Herdt & Boxer, 1996, as cited in Human Rights Watch, 2001). Because of varying definitions around gender identity and sexual identity, the exact number of school-aged children who identify as GLBT in the United States may be difficult to determine. Because schools are designated safe spaces for children, teachers can support students' true identity with texts that explore discussions about

gender identity. Texts that are appropriate for forming critical conversations centered around gender identity are represented in Table 2.

**Ability Identity.** As classrooms continue to grow, teachers are charged with meeting the varying needs of individual students. Often the social development determines how a child will participate in school and in society. Inclusion of all children is essential to the development of each individual child. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) was created to ensure that all students have an equitable education. Today schools include children who have a physical or educational disability, and many of these students are mainstreamed into the general education classrooms with the support of special education teachers and assistants. Teaching children the importance of acceptance is an important part of their own identity development. There are many texts available that explore students' ability identity. Some suggested texts are outlined in Table 3 provide insight about various ability identity topics ranging from visual impairment to autism.

### **Discussion of Implementation of Multicultural Children's Literature**

While a majority of educators agree that frequent teacher read alouds are important (Anderson, Hieber, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), they have difficulty implementing them when they are tasked with a standards-based approach to teaching especially when school districts promote a pre-packaged scripted curriculum with limited flexibility to add multicultural children's texts. Additionally, studies on teacher read alouds (Bintz, 1993; Elley, 1992; Ouellette, Dagostino, & Carifio, 1999) have been conducted but the lack of

discussion around the process that effective teachers use to implement read alouds to enhance student learning on multicultural topics is lacking. What is evident is that research suggests there are limited opportunities for students to have open-ended conversations around literature in PK-12 classrooms (Worthy, Chamberlain, Peterson, Sharp, & Shih, 2012). Bohm (1996) argues that in order to create such spaces, teachers need to assume more of a facilitator role in the classroom, and even act as a participant in the discussion of texts. This is a vital teacher role when the topics around identity development are addressed.

A key element to interactive read alouds is the opportunity that teachers have to introduce students to literature they may not have had the opportunity to view otherwise (Hedrick & Pearish, 2003; Morrow, 2003). Research demonstrates the benefits of read aloud activities especially in terms of motivating students to read and in develop their reading prowess (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004; Morrow, 2003; Palmer, Codling, & Gambrell, 1994). Overall, the research emphasizes the importance of selecting texts that increase student engagement with, and the understanding of, literary features such as character identification, story setting, and text connections. These outcomes are most durably achieved when students undertake learning through analytically challenging conversation about literature (Dungan, 1997; Sipe 2000; 2002). Multicultural texts related to developing identities help students gain connection to literature whereby children are able to understand their own developing social identities while increasing their literacy knowledge.



### Conclusion

Classrooms across the United States are changing. Children are becoming more aware of different issues facing society that, in fact, have the potential to influence their identity development. Now, more than ever, it is essential that teachers consider how their approach to discussing these topics may influence a child's social development and their understanding of identity. The literature provided is authentic and can be used by teacher candidates, teachers, and teacher educators to begin to have the critical conversations that impact students and teachers alike. Implementing such literature has the power to increase awareness of issues and impact societal change.

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### APPENDIX A

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Table 1  
*Racial Identity Themed Texts*

Text Title	Author, Year	Summary	Discussion Prompts
<i>The Other Side</i>	Jacqueline Woodson, 2001	A familiar story of a friendship between Clover and Annie, two girls who live on opposite sides of a fence. Clover, a young African-American female and Annie, a young white female see each other often but have been told to not go to the other side. As summer passes, the two girls introduce themselves and the unfamiliar becomes familiar. This story shows the power of young children.	Have your parents ever told you not to go somewhere? Explain.  Have your parents ever told you that you could not be friends with someone? Explain.  How did you meet your friends?
<i>Pink and Say</i>	Patricia Polacco, 1994	This is a story of interracial friendship during the Civil War between two 15-year old soldiers. Say, a young White and poor soldier tells the story of how he was rescued by Pinkus as he was wounded. The boys eventually are torn apart again.	Have you ever been friends with someone from a different race?  Other than your family, have you ever helped someone when they were hurt? Why did you choose to help?
<i>Tea and Milk</i>	Allen Say, 2009	Recounting the story of May, who after graduating from High School in California is forced to move with her parents to their native Japan. May becomes rebellious and misses her native country. Her parents make her repeat high school to learn “her own language” and the students begin to tease her. May overcomes these challenges and focuses on exploring just who she is.	Have you ever been teased for talking <i>differently</i> ? Explain.  How would you feel if you had to repeat a grade to learn a language?
<i>Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez &amp; Her Family’s Fight for Desegregation</i>	Duncan Tonatiuh, 2014	In 1944, third grader Sylvia Mendez tried to enter school in California. However, her family was repeatedly told, “Your children have to go to the Mexican School.” Unhappy with the comments from the school, Mendez’s parents formed an association and fought against the injustice.	What does injustice mean?  Should all students be allowed to go to the same school? Explain.  Have you ever stood up for something in which you believed? Explain.
<i>The Name Jar</i>	Yangsook Choi,	A young Korean girl, Unhei, moved to an American school. In her new school, she felt that she needed to change her name to fit the identity of U.S. students. Unhei’s classmates put names in a jar for her to try. Unhei tried many American names. Unhei didn’t realize how special her name was until a classmate visited her neighborhood. Unhei decided to keep her name as an important cultural identity.	How did you receive your name?  What does your name mean?  Would you change your name if you had to move to a new country? Why or Why not? Explain.

Table 2

*Gender Identity Themed Texts*

Text Title	Author, Year	Summary	Discussion Prompts
<i>I Am Jazz</i>	Jessica Herthel, 2014	From a young age, Jazz knew she had a girl's brain inside a boy's body. Confused, her family took Jazz to the doctor, and the doctor confirmed that Jazz was transgender and born that way. Having a supportive family, friends, and the chance to be your true self is evident throughout the story.	In what ways do your family and friends support you?  What does it mean to be your true self? Explain.
<i>10,000 Dresses</i>	Marcus Ewert, 2008	Bailey has dreams every night about beautifully made dresses. Unfortunately, nobody wants to hear about these amazing dreams. Instead, Bailey's parents suggest that Bailey should not be thinking or dreaming about dresses because, "You're a boy!". Bailey meets someone who understands Bailey and helps make her dreams come true.	Should Bailey be allowed to dream about dresses? Why or why not?  Have you ever been told that you cannot do something because of your gender? Explain.
<i>Who Are You?: The Kid's Guide to Gender Identity</i>	Pessin-Whedbee, 2016	This non-fiction text provides a discussion of all genders through this book. The topic of gender identity is explored through the individual interests, preferred clothing, and preferred gender. Additionally, this text celebrates all people for exactly who they are.	Why do you think society chose girls to play with dolls and boys to play with trucks? Do you think it is appropriate if the opposite occurs? Why or why not?



Table 3

*Ability Identity Themed Texts*

Text Title	Author, Year	Summary	Discussion Prompts
<i>My Brother Charlie</i>	Holly Robinson Peete, 2010	Callie and Charlie are twins. Charlie has autism. This story addresses the disorder and focuses on the themes of love, patience, and acceptance from the perspective of Callie.	<p>What are ways that we can celebrate everyone's strengths regardless of their ability?</p> <p>What ways can you show appreciation for- and acceptance of someone who has autism? Explain.</p>
<i>Keep Your Ear on the Ball</i>	Genevieve Petrillo, 2009	Based on a true story, this text explores a young boy, Davey, who is blind. He loves to play with his classmates but when it was time to play kickball, he was faced with multiple difficulties. His classmates help him so that he can be included in the game.	<p>Have you ever helped someone who could not see? Explain.</p> <p>In what ways have you included someone in a game, activity, or friendship who has a different ability?</p>
<i>Just Because</i>	Rebecca Elliott, 2014	A young brother describes everything he loves about his big sister, Clemmie. It isn't until later in the story that it is introduced that Clemmie has special needs. The story encourages sibling friendship.	<p>Do you consider your siblings as your friends? Explain.</p> <p>If you had a sibling with special needs would you treat him or her differently? Explain.</p>

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## Using Word Walls to Promote Literacy Skills and Social-Behavioral Success for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

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### *Abstract*

*The purpose of this manuscript is to demonstrate ways that word walls can be used to promote literacy skills and social-behavioral success as part of multi-component interventions that include evidenced-based instructional and behavioral strategies for students with emotional-behavioral disorders (EBD). This approach is designed to address the inter-connection between literacy skill deficits and social-behavioral skill deficits that many students with EBD experience.*

*Keywords: Emotional and behavioral disorders, literacy instruction, word walls, behavioral interventions*

### **Introduction**

Students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) often struggle to achieve positive outcomes in both academic and social-behavioral domains (Kauffman & Landrum, 2013). The frequent difficulties of students with EBD to adapt to new learning challenges, tolerate frustration and persevere through challenges, maintain positive self-esteem, and seek assistance from adults and peers all contribute to their poor academic outcomes (Burke, Boon, Hatton, & Bowman-Perrott, 2015). These diffi-

culties can lead to academic challenges in a variety of domains, including literacy skills. Over the past 15 years, the literacy outcomes of students with EBD have received increased attention (Kauffman, 2010). As these students progress through school, the connection between literacy outcomes and behavior grows stronger (Bruhn & Watt, 2012). Students with EBD consistently perform lower than their peers in reading and writing (Siperstein, Wiley, & Forness, 2011), and they lag further behind in these critical areas as they advance in grade levels (Kamps et al., 2003). As their literacy skill deficits increase, problematic behaviors and emotional difficulties also increase (McIntosh, Sadler, & Brown, 2012).

### **Rationale for interventions that address academic and social-behavioral problems.**

Researchers and practitioners are increasingly emphasizing interventions that simultaneously address both academic and social-behavioral problems in students with EBD (Ennis, 2015; Bruhn & Watt, 2012). The rationale for this approach is based on research that demonstrated that academics and behavior are closely related, with each serving as a risk factor for the other (Morgan, Farkas, Tu-

fis, & Sperling, 2008). Ennis (2015) expanded on the reasoning for why academic and social-behavioral needs should be addressed in tandem. The cycle begins when a student with EBD exhibits challenging behaviors that result in removal from academic activities. The removal from instruction contributes to the student falling further behind, which then leads to the student exhibiting more challenging behaviors and possibly experiencing social isolation. This results in a type of academic/social-behavioral vortex that spins more rapidly as the student's difficulties escalate. The short-term ramifications may include removal from the general education classroom to separate special education settings, falling behind grade-level peers academically, and increased struggles both socially and behaviorally. The long-term ramifications are post-school outcomes that may include under- or unemployment, high levels of involvement in the criminal justice system, and escalated risk of substance abuse (Burke, Boon, Hatton, & Bowman-Perrott, 2015; Lane & Carter, 2006; Kauffman & Landrum, 2013; Zigmond, 2006).

### **Word walls as an opportunity for simultaneous literacy and social-behavioral instruction.**

Findings from the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) have largely shaped the agenda for literacy instruction for students with disabilities, including those with EBD. The report identified five core components of effective literacy instruction: phonemic awareness, phonological processing, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Each of these components is essential for building strong reading skills, and they contribute to the ability of students with disabilities to express themselves in writing (Wong, 2000). As described by Reid and Liene-

mann (2006), the components function together in an integrated manner. A student utilizes phonemic awareness to recognize and utilize sounds in spoken words. This enables the student to see or hear a word, break the word into its component parts, and then associate the sounds with letters that comprise the word. The student incorporates these skills to read with accuracy, speed, and expression (fluency). Reading fluency and the student's ability to understand the meaning of words (vocabulary) directly contribute to the student's overall ability to understand written text (comprehension).

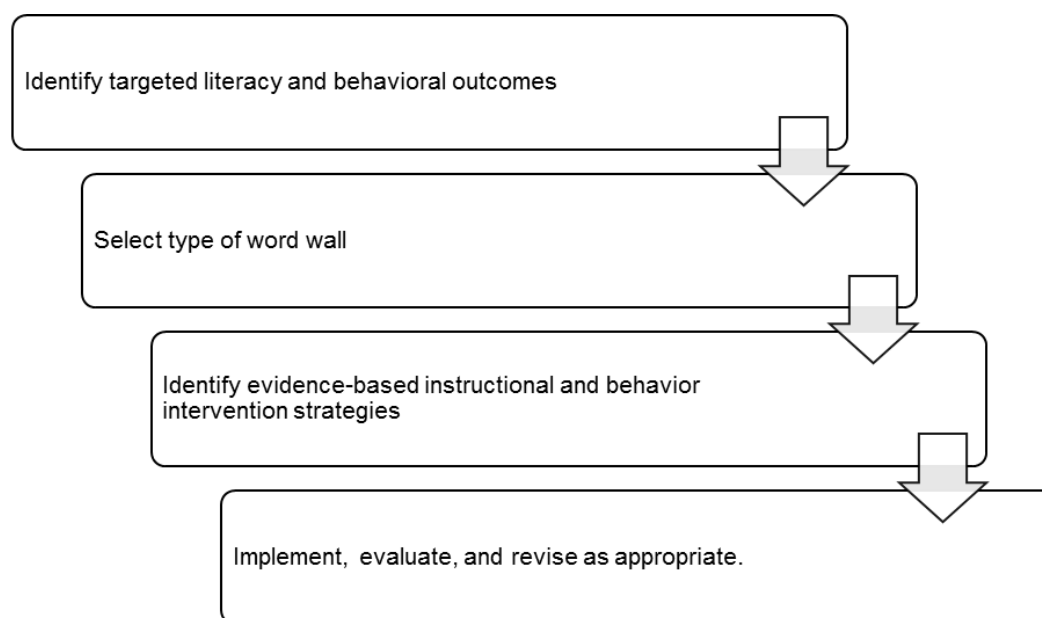
The development of these skills also affects writing ability (Reid & Lienemann, 2006; Wong, 2000). Phonemic awareness and phonological processing help students to spell accurately and avoid interruptions in the writing process due to correcting spelling errors. Fluency contributes to the student's ability to produce writing that is organized and cohesive, as well as assists the student in generating written products that contain sufficient amounts of content. Vocabulary and comprehension are skills that enable students to use appropriate words to express their ideas and to structure written products that convey complex, interconnected pieces of information into a cohesive whole.

*Word walls* are a research-supported strategy for promoting many of these literacy skill domains (Hooper & Harmon, 2015; Vintinner, Harmon, Wood, & Stover, 2015; Harmon, Wood, Hedrick, Vintinner, & Willeford, 2009; Jasmine, & Schiesl, 2009). Although often viewed as static displays of disconnected words on classroom walls, word walls are actually interactive, dynamic teaching tools that enable students to gain ownership over their learning and to access support

independently for a variety of literacy-related tasks (Wingate, Rutledge, & Johnston, 2014; Houle & Krogness, 2001). For students who struggle with phonemic awareness and phonological processing, word walls can be used to teach word analysis and spelling rules (Smith & Read, 2005). At the elementary level, word walls can be used to improve reading fluency and writing output by supporting the acquisition of sight vocabulary and promoting the memory and recall of high frequency words (Jasmine & Schiesl, 2009). As students move from early elementary school into the more in-depth content courses offered in upper elementary, middle school, and high school, word walls become a tool for building both content-specific vocabulary and general academic vocabulary. Improved vocabulary skills can result in higher levels of reading comprehension, deeper content knowledge, and higher quality written products across content courses (Hooper & Harmon, 2015; Vintinner, Harmon, Wood, & Stover, 2015).

### **Ways to Use Word Walls to Promote Literacy Skills and Social-Behavioral Success.**

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate ways that word walls can be used to promote literacy skills and social-behavioral success as part of multi-component interventions that include evidenced-based instructional and behavioral strategies for children with EBD. This approach is designed to address the inter-connection between literacy skill deficits and social-behavioral skill deficits that many students with EBD experience (Morgan, Farkas, Tufis, and Sperling, 2008). In designing a multi-component intervention that includes word walls, teachers of students with EBD should a) identify the targeted literacy and behavioral outcomes, b) select the use and function of the word wall, c) identify evidence-based instructional and behavioral intervention strategies, and d) implement, evaluate, and revise the intervention as appropriate (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Steps for designing a multi-component intervention using word walls and evidence-based practices.



Potential outcomes for multi-components interventions that utilize word walls include improved skills in building a knowledge and vocabulary base of key concepts, written expression, behavioral and social competence, and self-monitoring. These educational outcomes should be matched with instructional practices that lead to the identification of evidence-based practices. The following cases studies illustrate approaches for integrating word walls with proven strategies for supporting students with EBD in order to achieve improved outcomes in reading, writing, and social-behavioral domains. In each case, we attempt to outline key considerations in designing, implementing, and evaluating the intervention.

**Word walls as bridges to building prior knowledge and vocabulary base.** *Marsha is a ninth grade student with moderate cognitive disabilities and an emotional-behavioral disorder. Marsha experiences high levels of anxiety, task avoidance, and withdrawal when the instructional content becomes too complex or difficult to follow. Her teacher is worried that the upcoming unit on “Urban Living” will prove overwhelming to Marsha, particularly because it will involve both new academic content and scenarios related to her everyday life in a large urban city that often prove stressful to her. One of Marsha’s annual IEP goals reads: “Given ten ‘real life’ scenarios involving decisions about living in an urban setting, Marsha will orally state an acceptable response to each situation with 90% accuracy as measured by a content-related evaluation checklist.”*

Students with disabilities often show large gaps in their store of prior knowledge. Topical content encountered in literature and expository text is often grasped at the most minimal level because many students with high in-

cidence disabilities do not have the anchoring knowledge needed for deeper processing of new content. Direct, explicit instruction in vocabulary “is extremely important for diverse learners and students of all ability levels (Wood, Harmon, & Hedrick, 2004, p. 60). A routine for vocabulary teaching suggested by Wexler, et al. (2015) included “explicitly defining and contextualizing terms using student-friendly definitions, helping students to actively process words, and providing multiple exposures to vocabulary” (p. 144). In this sense, a scaffolded approach that follows principles of modeling, guidance, practice, feedback, opportunities to respond, and continuous assessment is recommended.

Blachowicz and Fisher (2004) defined a classroom word wall as “a place where students could write new words they encountered in reading, in conversation, and in their daily experiences” (p. 67). Manyak, et. al (2014) describe a classroom that has a vocabulary word wall “that included cards presenting a target word and a corresponding visual image” (p. 18). For instance, a picture of a cartoon figure bent over and perspiring accompanied the word *exhaustion*. In her resource social studies class, Mr. Allen is all too aware that Marsha will need extra elaboration, further examples, and extended time for processing the new knowledge presented in class. A rich context must also surround Marsha’s learning of specific facts and concepts (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2010).

He decides to design a word wall to introduce the unit on “Urban Living.” In order to guide the implementation and evaluation process, Mr. Allen uses an implementation fidelity checklist for using word walls for instruction in vocabulary and social concepts (see Figure 2).

Yes	Somewhat	No	
			Term is identified by teacher or self-selected by students and is prominently displayed in the word wall
			Teacher explains the importance and relevance of the upcoming terms(s) and gains students' commitment to engaged learning
			Term is introduced and students are prompted and questioned about existing prior knowledge and understanding
			Term is modeled and practiced until students are able to recognize with automaticity
			Term's concept is defined with critical features and descriptors
			Examples and non-examples of the term's concept are provided and discussed
			Examples of ways the term is used in narrative, expository, and expressive text and writing are provided so that students receive multiple exposures to the term
			Questions and feedback are provided about student's understanding of the term
			Relationships to related terms and ideas are provided
			Students are prompted to use the term in sentences and feedback is provided
			Samples of how the term is portrayed through text structure categories are provided – description, compare-contrast, cause/effect
			Verbal, social, and textual contexts in which the term is used are identified and discussed
			Daily and weekly reviews of the term are conducted

Figure 2. Fidelity checklist for using word walls for instruction in vocabulary and social concepts.

The checklist highlights key considerations for selecting the terms and concepts included in the word wall, introducing and modeling the terms and concepts, and providing ongoing evaluation and feedback for student learning. After developing his instructional plan based on these items, the critical terms on the word wall – *mass transit*, *municipal services*, *residential neighborhoods*, *public spaces* – are previewed and discussed. In order to minimize her task avoidance behaviors, Mr. Allen scaffolds instruction by having her read the words along with him and offers her multiple attempts at defining and explaining each term (Wheeler & Richey, 2014). Mr. Allen keeps an anecdotal description of Marsha's store of information. For instance, he learns that Marsha has little background or understanding for concepts like condominiums, transit hubs, or rush hour.

When these new or challenging topics are addressed, he provides her with multiple opportunities to respond. She can identify the concept on the word wall, create an accompanying illustration, and/or use the internet to research the concept further. Providing these choices helps to increase her on-task behaviors and to alleviate anxiety and withdrawal related to academic activities (Wheeler & Richey, 2014).

**Word walls as support for improving written expression.** *Camille is a sixth grade student with an emotional-behavioral disorder who is working on written expression. She shows minimal involvement and is verbally resistant, making statements such as "Do I have to write about this?" and "Have I done enough that I can stop now?" Her gen-*

*eral education language arts teacher is concerned about Camille's motivation and class participation and knows that the writing/spelling demands of the class are areas where Camille struggles. One of her short-term goals in written expression is: "Given a writing prompt, Camille will compose a three paragraph response with a word choice in which 70% of the words used are different (type/token ratio) and 20% of the words are multi-syllabic as measured through teacher evaluation of written assignments."*

Struggling writers such as Camille can work with teachers to generate a word wall that contains topical lists of new words that will be encountered in upcoming reading assignments or that could be used in writing projects. By consulting the word wall, students are able to compose narrative stories or non-fiction descriptive pieces without avoiding or getting "stuck" on word choices (Vintinner, Harmon, Wood, & Stover, 2015). A look at the word wall from time to time allows the writer to capture topical words and readily integrate them into their pieces. The use of these new, complex words in self-directed writing creates a meaningful context for engagement with new vocabulary, much more so than passively writing isolated, disconnected sentences with new words (Wong, 2000).

In order to increase her academic engagement and improve her written expression, Camille's teacher has decided to use self-regulated strategy development (SRSD). SRSD has an established research-base as an effective practice for teaching writing to students with EBD (Ennis & Jollivette, 2012; Lane, Barton-Arwood, Nelson, & Wehby, 2008; Rogers & Graham, 2008). As described by Ennis (2015), "SRSD is a six-stage writing process that involves developing background knowledge (Stage 1), discussing the strategy (Stage 2), modeling the strategy (Stage 3), memorizing the strategy (Stage 4), supporting the strategy (Stage 5), and engaging in independent practice (Stage 6)" (p. 3).

Camille has recently expressed an interest in selecting her future career path and determining how much she can make in annual salary. Her teacher has used this as an in-road for increasing her writing productivity. In order to develop background knowledge (Stage 1 of the SRSD approach), she helps Camille to identify related vocabulary for her word wall to assist with upcoming writing projects focused on career interests and budgeting. Figure 3 shows their first word wall on these topics.

salary	co-worker	insurance	punctuality	calendar
responsibility	cooperation	benefits	transportation	hurry
career	retire	volunteer	cooperation	expenses

Figure 3. Camille's class word wall for writing about career interests and budgeting.

In Stage 2, the teacher introduces the POW + TREE strategy to help Camille learn how to frame and organize her writing (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005). This strategy requires Camille to pick a topic, organize her notes using the TREE strategy (topic sentence, reasons, examples, ending), and write and say more. Throughout the remaining stages, the teacher supports Camille through stages of modeling, memorizing the strategy, continued support, and a release to more independent practice.

**Word walls for behavioral and social competence.** *Angie is a ninth grade student with an emotional-behavioral disorders who struggles with socialization and pragmatic communication competencies. She is successful in her content classes with the support of co-teachers who work well together and peer assistance for comprehending complex and abstract concepts. Her family envisions a bright future for Angie, including going to college, but they are especially concerned about her difficulties with social interaction. Angie lacks social perception and decision-making about determining others' intentions and comprehending the underlying message in everyday pragmatic communication. Her interactions with peers and adults are often awkward due to not really understanding the main point of a speaker or making inappropriate statements and comments. Her IEP includes transition objectives in the social domain such as the following: "Given three simulated social experiences involving meeting and interacting with others who will present temptations and invitations to engage in inappropriate or illegal behavior, Angie will display an appropriate resistance skill for each scenario as measured by teacher observation and a content-related self-evaluation checklist."*

Literacy instruction can be used as a means for fostering improved social skills for many students with disabilities (Forgan and Gonzalez-DeHass, 2004). Through literacy learning opportunities, students can engage in social problem solving scenarios and explore decision-making in a range of social situations. Within this context, word walls can serve as an instructional medium for fostering growth in social and behavioral domains while continuing the emphasis on literacy learning. A word wall can be constructed that highlights more abstract terminology related to social experiences that are often difficult for students who struggle with social pragmatics. This is similar to the way in which a high school science teacher would build word walls containing content specific vocabulary that is necessary for successfully completing a unit on climate change (Hooper & Harmon, 2015). Further, Forgan and Gonzalez-DeHass (2004) suggest a number of advantages to "infusing" social skills training into literacy instruction, including more instructional time devoted to social skills instruction and using mediums (folk literature, etc.) that are meaningful to students' lives.

For Angie, discussions between her teachers and parents have hit upon the idea of using word walls as a means of identifying critical concepts in social communication and decision-making. A special educator meets with Angie twice a week to conduct units of instruction on social skills and communication. The teacher has identified a series of short stories that focus on complex social situations often encountered by teenagers. Together with the teacher, Angie constructs a word wall that focuses on key content from the stories. Her teacher and parents then select terms from the word wall that they feel

are particular areas of difficulty for Angie. These become areas for additional focus as the team helps Angie prepare for the transition into young adulthood. The explicit instructional practices of explaining, modeling, discussing, demonstrating understanding, feedback, etc. allow Angie to now name and identify the features of her effective (terms such as *appropriate* and *wait*) and ineffective (terms such as *embarrass* and *awkward*) pragmatic communication in both hypothetical and actual social situations.

**Word walls for self-monitoring and managing aggression.** *Steve, a seventh grader with an autism spectrum disorder and an emotional-behavioral disorder, exhibits both verbal and physical externalizing behaviors. The concerns about his aggressive behavior have led to an IEP and behavioral intervention plan (BIP) that are heavily weighted toward reducing his oppositional and noncompliant behaviors. Although these are the primary concerns of his teachers and parents, Steve's level of achievement in reading and writing continues to be far below that of same-age peers. His IEP team has recently decided to focus on helping Steve acquire self-management strategies to decrease his aggressive outbursts. His IEP now contains the following objective: "Given three scenarios that depict new social situations, Steve will identify appropriate steps for navigating each situation with calm words and actions as measured by teacher observation and a self-evaluation checklist."*

Self-management strategies are an effective approach for supporting students with autism spectrum disorders that engage in problematic behaviors associated with an EBD diagnosis (Schulze, 2016; Carr, Moore, & Anderson, 2014). For improved academic outcomes, self-management is a category of "highly effective,

yet easy-to implement strategies that support students with EBD" (Farley, Torres, Wailehua, & Cook, 2012, p. 39). Word walls can be used with self-management interventions to introduce and support key ideas when teaching students to follow social and behavior strategies. Linn and Myles (2004) describe a self-management strategy to help students with Asperger syndrome "successfully navigate new social situations" (p. 7). This strategy (SODA) is employed when confronting situational circumstances and demands: Stop, Observe, Deliberate, Act (Bock, 2001). For teaching this strategy, a word wall could be created that both teaches the key terms and concepts related to the SODA strategy, and conveys other key content related to social interactions, self-monitoring, and self-management of aggression.

In order to help Steve learn this strategy and to generalize it to a variety of new social situations, his teacher engages in a series of scaffolded instructional steps that include defining the purpose and goals of the SODA strategy, teaching the steps of the strategy, and reinforcing the use of the strategy (Schulze, 2016). Steve initially uses the word wall to help him learn the key terms associated with the strategy. As he acquires and maintains use of the SODA strategy, the teacher introduces a series of social stories built around themes related to social justice and designed to lead to discussion and expressive writing about complex social situations. Chapman, Hobbel, and Alvarado (2011) state that "a social justice approach to writing fosters an awareness of societal challenges that affect students' families, communities, and the larger society" (p. 539). Students such as Steve with difficulties in aggression and socialization could confront ide-



as and concepts that challenge their misconceptions or beliefs about schools, teachers, and peers.

The critical terms and big ideas from these stories are added to Steve's word wall to help him gain a deeper understanding of the concepts related to social decision-making and social justice issues. In implementing the instruction with the word wall, the criteria in the fidelity checklist that deal with modeling, explanations, identifying critical features, and practice in contexts that are increasingly authentic are important concerns. Thus, terms such as *observe* and *before* (antecedents), *questions* and *options* (behavioral decision-making), and *restore* and *consequences* are related to different social situations that are associated with Steve's aggressive behavior. An example of his initial word wall is presented in Figure 4.

### Conclusion and Summary

The purpose of this article has been to demonstrate ways that word walls can be used to promote literacy skills and social-behavioral success as part of multi-component interventions that include evidenced-based instructional and behavioral strategies for students with EBD. This approach is designed to address the interconnection between literacy skill deficits and social-behavioral skill deficits that many students with EBD experience. By taking a comprehensive approach that is based on the development of literacy skills and the use of research-based strategies, students with EBD should experience improvements in both academic and social-behavioral domains.

deliberate	choose	options	consequences	relax
observe	question	solutions	relationships	irritate
before	actions	de-escalate	restore	peace

Figure 3. Camille's class word wall for writing about career interests and budgeting.

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## Columns

### Wordless Picture Books: One Way to Scaffold Reluctant Readers and Writers

**Nancy K. Votteler, Ed.D.**  
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As a former middle school language arts teacher, I was amazed when I found out that my seventh-grade students did not really like to write. Oh yes, they loved to write on Facebook or Instagram, but write in class...no way. In my frustration, I searched for ideas to help facilitate writing. I read about wordless picture books as a way for students to create their own narratives using visual cues in wordless picture books (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). My students were not very impressed when I told them I had a “fun” to help them with writing ideas and in order to create ideas or topics for writing, we were going to read books with only illustrations. At first, several students’ thought reading books without words was silly and childish. “How do we read this book, Miss?” or “this book has no words...what a dumb book or these are books are for first and second graders” were the most common comments the first couple of days when I introduced wordless picture books to the class. I wondered why they were so reluctant to “reading” a book that did not have written text. I finally realized many of my students were not familiar with wordless picture books. See Table 1.

Wordless picture books, have little or no text. Dowhower (1997) defined wordless picture books as “books that tell a story through a series of illustrations without written text” (p. 63). There is no one single genre for wordless picture books as they vary in “topics, themes, and levels of difficulty,” (Jalong, Dragich, Conrad, and Zhang, 2002, p. 167). Wordless picture books encourage students’ creative thinking using clues of the “artistic mediums of color and style as well as thinking about what the story means as told through illustrations” (Brodie, 2011, p. 46). In addition, Serafini, (2014) states that wordless picture books are “visually rendered narratives.” (p. 24).

Armed with the knowledge my students were not familiar with wordless picture books, I asked the school librarian if she would be able to provide us with multiple copies of the book *Flotsam* by David Wiesner (2006). When the books arrived two weeks later, I placed students in small groups and our journey began. *Flotsam* was chosen because students had just finished a water pollution unit in their science class. *Flotsam* was one of their science vocabulary words and I knew they would have the background



knowledge to create their own original text. (Students were asked to look through the book and comment on what was happening in the book by looking at the pictures throughout the book using a picture walk strategy. A picture walk is a pre-reading strategy (Clay, 1991; Briggs & Miller, 2009) that provides a conceptual organization (Holdaway, 1979) for reading.

Before we read the book *Flotsam* (1993), I began modeled the picture-walk strategy with a favorite wordless picture book of mine; *A Boy, A Dog, and A Frog* by Mercer Mayer (1993). I asked students to make predictions on the title alone. “Miss, it is a book about a boy, a dog and a frog.” We moved to the first page of the book and asked them questions like the following: ; What do you see in the picture? Where do you think this story takes place? When do you think the story takes place? Who are the characters in this picture? Students were able to advance from literal questions to inferential questions making personal connections as they moved forward in the story. I then asked students to picture-walk through the rest of the book in their small groups using the visual cues from each page to orally tell the story. After modeling with the whole group, I asked students to write the name of one person they would like to work with and why they choose that specific classmate. Roberto and Jordan (all names are pseudonyms) stated they wanted to work together because they worked well together their science unit project. .. Using the visual cues from the setting and personal connections, each group had to create an original title, negotiate the name or names of characters, and construct an original piece of writing When all groups were finished writing, we shared them in class and displayed them in the school library.

Reading and writing are both literacy skills that can be taught and learned through the

use of wordless picture books (Crawford & Hade, 2000; Votteler, Carwile, & Berg, 2010). These books may inspire struggling or reluctant readers and writers to develop vocabulary, make connections between the spoken and written language and create writing and reading skills based on the pictures (images) that are present in the books (Cassady, 1998; Miller, 1998). In addition, telling or retelling a story from a wordless picture book may improve, fluency, story recall, and oral vocabulary (Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lowrance, 2004). Instruction for literary devices can be modeled through the use of wordless picture books. Point of view, creative writing, theme, tone, and visual literacies are some of the different literary devices that a wordless picture book can help develop (Dallacqua, 2012). Through wordless picture books , students are creating their written stories using their own background knowledge (Rosenblatt, 2004).

Wordless picture books can be useful teaching tools in any classroom to support reading and writing for all students. Promoting oral literacy through the retelling of the story using the illustrations along with student’s prior knowledge will scaffold students’ writing literacy. Students create their own stories using their own imagination, thus becoming more successful middle school readers and writers.

**Table 1.** Wordless Picture Books for Middle School Students.

Title	Author	Date	Publisher
Anno's Journey	Anno, M.	2007	Puffin Books: East Rutherford, NJ.
The man who walked between the towers.	Gerstein, M.	2007	Square Fish: New York, NY.
Mirror	Lee, S.	2010	Little, Brown Books: New York, NY.
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## Board Games in Math Class

**Andrew Sundin**  
**Sam Houston State University—Texas**

“Math is boring!”, “Mr., I don’t get it!”, “Why do we even have to learn this anyways?” These are all comments that many math teachers, especially at the junior high level, have heard countless times in their career. Sitting in a math classroom as a student, I honestly never had any of these thoughts run through my head because I always really enjoyed the subject. When I heard these comments during my time as a substitute in College Station ISD, it was eye opening. Of course, for me, when the time came to choose what I would like to teach, math was always at the top of my list. I loved the subject, but once I started getting into the classroom, I realized that the boring way that really got me going in school only resonated with about one third of the students in my classroom, if that at times. I thought long and hard on what I could do to get the students back and engaged in the class and remembered an assignment I had to lead during my time spent as a substitute. The assignment was creating a board game. I looked at my sub notes again to see if I had read it correctly when I first saw this, but it was true. I had no idea how I was expected to do this activity that day, much less lead the activity so I was sweating bullets when the first bell rang that day. I was in a fifth-grade language arts classroom that day as well so I was totally out of my element. The day passed and I will say that it was honestly one of the most fun days I had ever had in a classroom as a student, substitute, or teacher. The students had done an assignment

like this in the past so as soon as I mentioned it they all lit up and went right to work. All I had to do was give them a topic and the race was on. After this memory had popped back into my head I decided to give it a try in an assignment given to me in my Literacy Methods semester at Sam Houston State University. The assignment was to create some way of teaching math to students that would incorporate and foster literacy and reading in the subject as well. At first choosing to create a board game seemed odd to many of my classmate because it just seemed like I was dodging the assignment and creating something fun instead. However, I knew it would work because I got the idea from my past experiences in and ELAR classroom. Once I got the ball rolling everyone soon realized that the board game would work, and it honestly has endless possibilities.

Creating the board game with one student or the whole classroom is all kind of the same. You need a few students to help design and create the board itself. As inspiration, the class as a whole just looked at different board games they had played in their past. Games such as Monopoly, Sorry, and the Game of Life were a few the students seemed to really use as influences. They noticed that the games had different spaces such as move ahead, pass go, go to jail, and so on. The student moved on to creating their boards. Including the different spaces they had ob-

served in the games they knew really seemed to make them feel like they were actually taking part in creating a real-life board game. The hardest part about this whole experience was getting one set of rules for all of the games. I myself created these rules, so the students could rotate from game to game and kind of know how the rules of the game worked. Keeping them simple, short, and sweet was all I went for.

Now once the boards are made in any design the student deems fit and the rules are set, you would think that the game could start. However, some of you are still wondering how any of this might have to do with anything about math at all, well get ready for it cause the magic is about to start happening. In these board games, the students must create the different cards that will be placed on the board. When it's a student's turn in the game they will pick a card, and answer the question. If they answer correctly, they roll the dice and move the amount of spaces shown. If they answer incorrectly they just have to stay put and wait for their next turn. So now that you kind of have a feel of how the game works, back to the creation of the most important part of the game: the cards. All the other stuff to this point has kind of been bells and whistles to make the board game seem and look real and fun. The cards are created by the students around one sole topic or TEK that you feel the students should work on. The game I created with my student was based on linear equations and solving and graphing them. The students love the freedom that they receive in this activity and often try to stump their fellow students. What they don't realize is by them creating the cards and answers to these cards, they are reading, writing, and learning math all at the same time. This activity also fosters a feeling of ownership to the students because if they are really proud of the game or question

they created they feel like they have accomplished something great. The example that will be shown in the pictures below is of the first board and card set I created with a few struggling students. I took the example for my assignment and also gave it a theme as a whole. My theme for the board game was Superheroes and the students really seemed to like that. I also took the theme one step further and bought different superhero player pieces that are what the students use to move along the board.

Creating the cards and having the students answer these cards is where the learning all takes place, but the bells and whistles you add to make it feel more like a real board game is what makes drive home the success of the activity. Some classes may not need all these bells and whistles, though. The first time I did this activity the kids literally grabbed a big piece of butcher paper and had their boards and game pieces made in all of 5 minutes. Some students will need that extra realistic style game to get them involved with this. The overall goal of this activity since my students seemed to really enjoy, it is to have a whole set of boards and multiple sets of cards to where I can come in and just say today is board game review day. Then, the students can just have a nice board game review session day. The dream will be a reality one day.

Finally I promised that this would work with multiple different subjects in a school setting and it one hundred percent does. I've seen it work in a math classroom and an English classroom, so history and science are next. All it takes is that the children create two to three cards per topic and you can get a full set of cards in one class period. Whether the topic be the American Revolution, anatomy of the human body, adding and



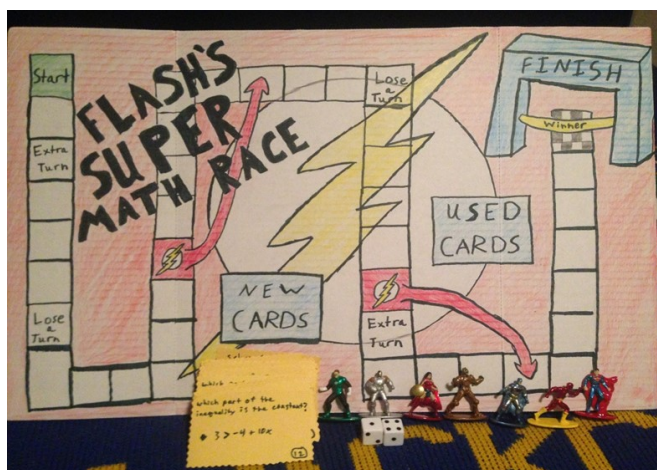
subtracting fractions, or punctuation at the end of sentences, all of these can be covered using the same board game. You just need different sets of cards for the students to use to play the game. My first experience with this board game style activity was in a fourth grade ELAR classroom, and my math based experience was in a seventh-grade classroom. The results were pretty similar in both instances. If you are looking for something different to possibly set you apart from the normal flow of teaching, give this a try and see how it works for you. Also it never hurts to have a little prize for the winner of each individual game. If you are struggling with students who don't want to participate, this has done the trick so far for me. You know your individual students though. Whatever makes them

get going. use that as a reward or prize for winning and participating in the games. I will have a full set of board games in my future classroom because of a substitute lesson plan I once received. I hope this article will help at least get your mind going about creative ideas. Who knows, maybe you really love this one and will have a set of board games and cards all your own.

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### Appendix 1



## Math Adventure Book

**Katelyn Dover**  
**Sam Houston State University—Texas**

I can remember as a little girl, admiring my great-grandmother's paintings and wondering how she created such beauty with her dainty, yet frail hands. Dainty, yet frail hands that miraculously I inherited from her and am able to fashion my own, unique works of art. I started with simple drawings of birds like my Mimi used to draw, and the further I explored my artistic talent the more I started to find my own style of drawing and painting. I found that I was exceptionally well at looking at any image from a picture, television show, or movie and recreate that exact image just by observing it. Once I realized what I could do, I decided to draw scenes from the most inspirational films produced of all time, Disney films. I loved seeing my favorite moments from Disney movies come to life as I sketched well-known characters that influenced my life.

I have found multiple ways to incorporate my drawings in several of my projects throughout my education to make my assignments have that extra "wow" factor. This semester, in my grades 4-8 literacy methods class, one of the assignments that we were assigned was a genre study project. The point of the assignment was to have future teachers select a genre of our choosing like media, picture book, song, etc., and create whichever form of genre we chose based on selected grades TEKS from our con-

tent area. As soon as she told us about the assignment, I immediately thought of the amazing Disney film, *UP*. I remembered how they made this grand adventure book together that had pictures and mementos of the places they had traveled, and the places they wanted to travel taped and pasted inside. I imagined that on every page we would travel to a different country in the world and solve a word problem, which aligned with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade TEK I chose, TEK 8.1a. At first, I was going to just base it on Mr. Frederickson and Russell going around the world solving math together, but then I decided to spice it up a little bit and incorporate Disney characters from several different films and visit them in the country that they are from and solve a math problem that they have developed. I also thought for a moment that this project might be too much for a student to recreate, but then I remembered Walt Disney's famous words, "Whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it they will want to come back and they will want to bring others and show them how well you do what you do." Disney.

### **Why a picture book is vital a tool in mathematics?**

Visual aids like picture books can be a very beneficial tool for teachers in the mathematics classroom who have students who are spatial or visual learners. “They can spark students’ math imaginations in ways that textbooks or workbooks don’t. Connecting math to literature can boost confidence for children who love books but are wary of math” (Burns, 2015). Teaching with visual representations helps students dive into high order thinking skills and can help them better analyze text or writing. Creating a math adventure book will assist students in visualizing and interpreting word problems and depicting how word problems can be expressed through visual representations to help students comprehend the content further.

### **How to make a Math Adventure Book?**

This assignment entails students recognizing problems in several situations, assessing the problem, finding the solution, and checking the solution. To create the book you will need a scrapbook album and manila and colored paper. The first thing I did was make the manila paper look aged by blotting coffee grounds on the paper so it would resemble the book from the film, *UP*. While I waited on the paper to dry, I typed up all of the word problems with their solutions and found ways to incorporate details from each Disney film into the word problem, like for example, on Pocahontas’ page we are trying to find the dimension of the hole that John Smith is trying to dig to find gold. Then, I cut out all the word problems and solutions, then pasted them on to colored paper and glued them into the scrapbook. I then decided to give my scrapbook a dash of creativity, and I drew each Disney character from the word problems on every page, but students could just put in pictures of

the characters if they want. I also added stickers and other decorations to further attract the readers and have them more engaged in the word problems. If I were to assign this as a project in my future classroom, I would make it a project that they students create throughout the year. Creating the book throughout the year will help students to see how you can illustrate any mathematical operations or questions into word problems that could arise in everyday life or society. The students will require a guide in order to properly set up a word problem and its solution, which the teacher will provide for them with the following steps:

#### **Word Problem:**

- What do you want in your word problem?
- What are you solving for?
- Include words that define the operation that you are having to solve.
- Does it make sense? If you were given this problem could you solve it?

#### **Solution:**

- Identify the Problem
- Devise a Plan
- Implement the Plan
- Review

By the end of the year, students should be able to conquer word problems with any mathematical operation easily. This project should boost student’s confidence in comprehending and answering word problems. Overall, I consider the Math Adventure book a very beneficial tool for any math teachers to have or create in their classrooms.

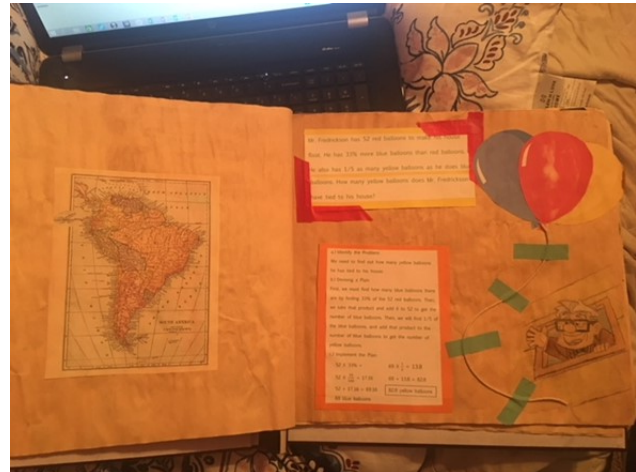
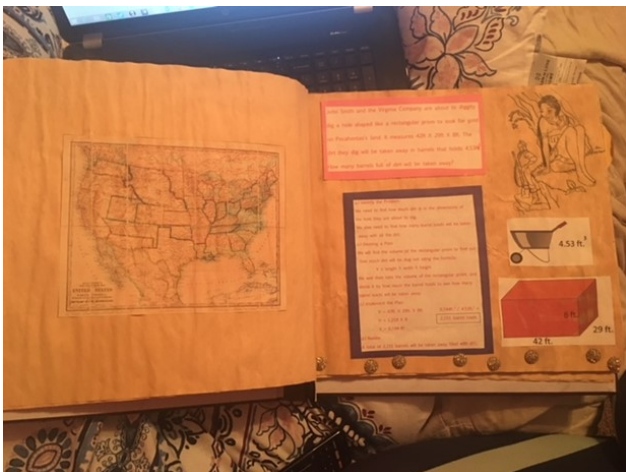
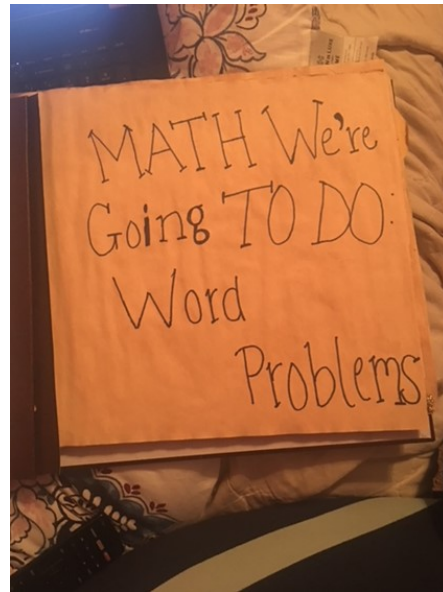
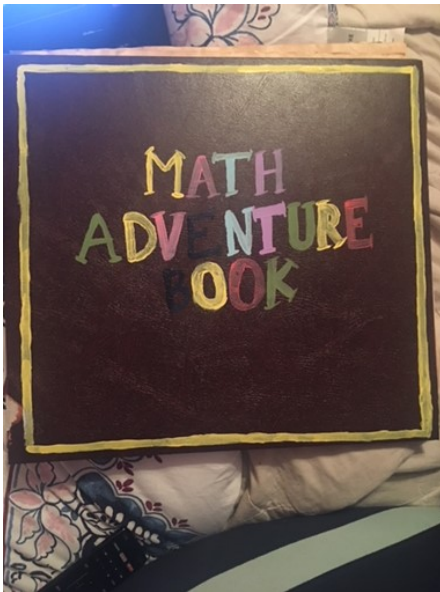
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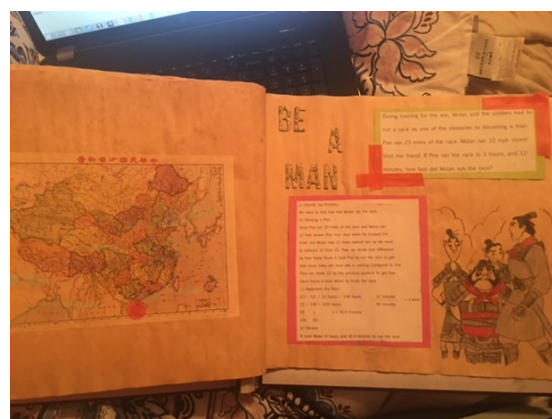
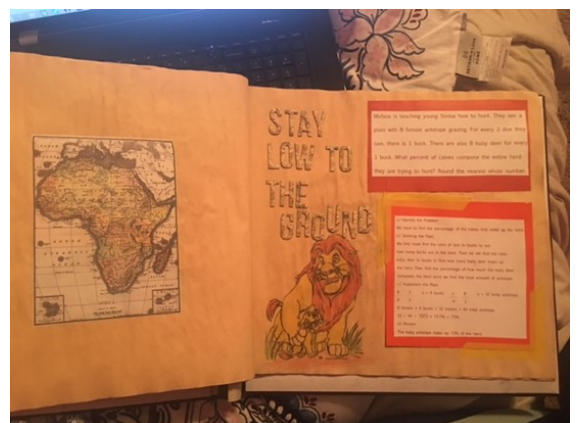
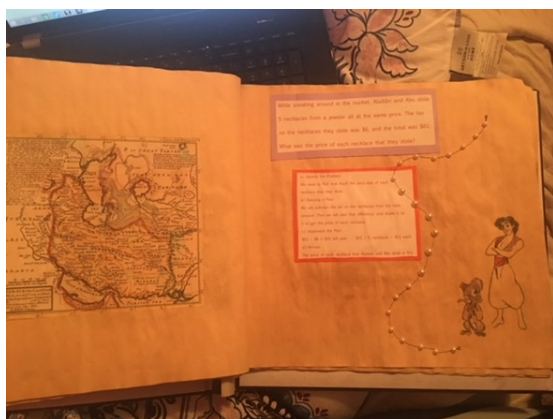
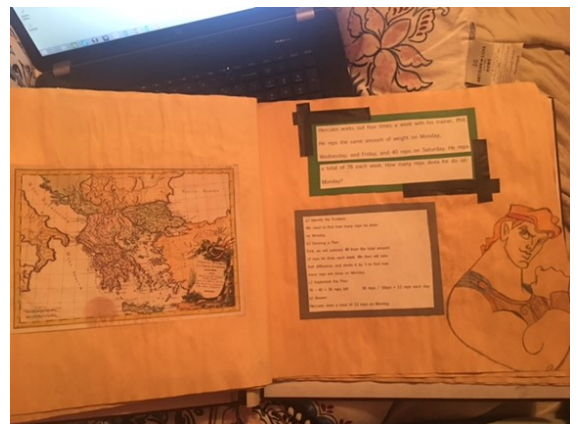
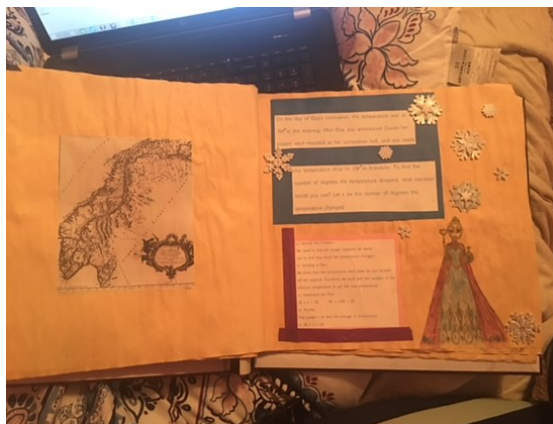
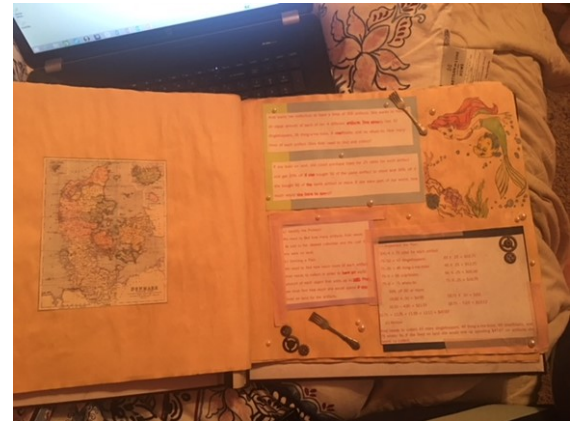
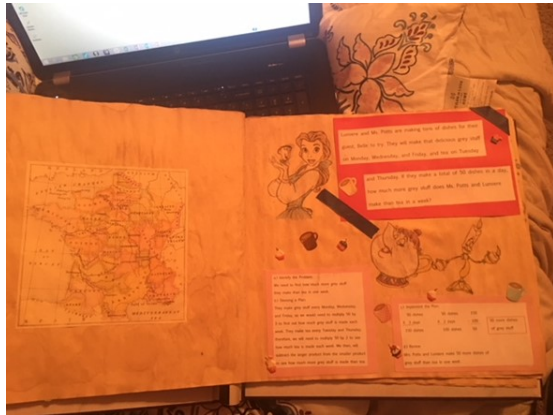
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## Appendix 1









## Incorporating Poetry into the Science Classroom

**Hania S. Ahmed-Teacher Candidate**  
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When we think about a science classroom, one of the first ideas that may come to mind is the idea of “hands-on” learning. Doing experiments, and observing data, to eventually come to a conclusion. But, like every discipline in education, there is always the foundation of literacy that can and should be addressed in a classroom.

In Akerson’s (2002 ) essay, “Teaching teachers: Bringing first-rate science to the elementary classroom,” she argued, “It is possible to use language arts to support science learning and to use science as a purpose for learning language arts.” She also reminds us that the “use of language arts to promote literacy and support learning in other content areas is (also) recommended and encouraged by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).”

While we do have this standard of teaching and learning, the question arises: How do we incorporate literacy into a science classroom, specifically writing? And when we do find a way, how do we keep the students engaged?

Rasinski, Zimmerman, and Bagert (2015), argue that poetry should be a focus when incorporating literacy into the classroom, as it gives students many advantages.

In his article “Physics and Poetry: Can You Handle the Truth?” astrophysicist Adam Frank (2013) declares, “Poems and poetry are, for me, a deep a form of knowing, just like science ... each, in its way, is a way to understand

the “world.” So, there is not a disconnect between poetry and science as some may initially think.

“Poetry has an advantage in that it typically consists of fewer words than expository-prose passages, and poems can be read and reread in very little time. The brevity of poetry is less intimidating to children who may be overwhelmed by longer prose and streams of new vocabulary, especially students acquiring English as a new language” (Vardell, 2014, p. 30). Poetry also allows students to experience all five senses, through the use of imagery and descriptive vocabulary (Vardell, 2013). It can be accessible to a multitude of students. Students could have affinities for writing, science, or even music and they would be able to craft a poem. It also allows students to work independently, without having to worry about writing a poem the “right way”.

However, before letting students write their own poems on a science topic of their choice, it is important to first give them examples, especially if they have not had any meaningful experiences with poetry.

Vardell and Wong (2015) provided a multitude of literature that incorporated poetry and science topics. They wrote:

There are many wonderful science themed works of poetry to choose about animals, weather, seasons, and space. In addition to short, visually appealing poetry collections such as *Water Sings Blue: Ocean Poems* by Kate Coombs, *Ubiquitous: Celebrating Nature's Survivors* by Joyce Sidman, and *A Strange Place to Call Home: The World's Most Dangerous Habitats and the Animals That Call Them Home* by Marilyn Singer, you can also find comprehensive anthologies such as *The Tree That Time Built: A Celebration of Nature, Science, and Imagination* compiled by Mary Ann Hoberman and Linda Winston; *The National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry* compiled by J. Patrick Lewis; and our own *The Poetry Friday Anthology for Science*. (p.16)

And of course, there are many other books that can be used to connect science to poetry. They can be used as read-alouds, or independent reading, depending on what a teacher determines will be best for the classroom.

Once the foundation for poetry is set, it will be beneficial to students to let them write their own poems. They will be allowed the freedom and creativity to decide how their specific topic can be crafted into a poem. According to Silverton (2015), "Middle School students respond well to humor, enjoying the freedom to play around with words and give them new meanings" (p. 38).

Silverton (2015) also stated, "Science, with its cold clinical logic, may be seen as the opposite to the creativity of poetry, with little or no connection between them, but each is creative in its own way" (p. 38). Rhyming is a key part of most poetry, and that can be beneficial to students. Silverton concluded that, "Given freedom, most students write a poem which rhymes. They are familiar with rhyming couplets from the songs they listen to, and often know by heart. Ask any teenagers to sing some popular lyrics, and rhymes will appear" (p. 38).

If the present unit in a seventh-grade science classroom is body systems, then students can write poems about a body system. Here is an example of a poem about the muscular system written by the author, Hania Ahmed:

### **Muscular System Poem**

Let's learn some things about the muscular system.

Try to keep up, or you might miss them.  
There's three major muscle types, didn't you know?

I'll tell you about them, nice and slow.  
First is the smooth muscle, these are involuntary

Want to know why they are necessary?  
These muscles help organs relax and expand.  
They help move blood in your body, from your eye, to your hand.

Next is the cardiac muscle, these are striated.  
Think these muscles are overrated?  
They pump blood throughout our bodies.  
With the help of veins and arteries.  
Last is the skeletal muscle, these you can control.

Use these to run or take a nice stroll.

Those are the muscles that you need to  
know.

Did you know them all a while ago?

If you did, then this was a review.

But, if you didn't, then I'm glad you learned  
something new.

The poem given above gives the main functions of the muscular system, which is almost imperative that students know for their unit tests. It also makes learning and absorbing the information easier with the rhyming couplets, and a rhythm that can be enjoyable.

Before teaching this poetry lesson, students can be given examples of previously published and created work, such as the poem above. By exposing students to the different formats and techniques to write their poems, they now have the groundwork to begin their own creations. This also allows students who may have trouble coming up with ideas to have resources to refer to whenever they may need it.

After giving students the desired time allotment to write their poems, the teacher can allow them to share their poems. This promotes ownership of their work, and could help other students to learn new information or remember previously learned information.

This use of differentiated instruction allows students in science classrooms to get the information needed in a newer, perhaps easier way. And once students have created their own poems, this could lead to the writing of science songs, which can be beneficial as mnemonics.

While the use of poetry has mostly been contained in language arts classes, the use of poetry in other disciplines can be very

beneficial to the students. The use of poetry in science classes, for example, can help students better understand more challenging vocabulary, and allow students to take in information in smaller increments, as opposed to an expository text. Lastly, it provides a bridge between writing and the content area, as education should be .

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## Literacy Pioneer: Seminal Works of James Paul Gee

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### Abstract

*James Paul Gee's seminal works have led to recommendations that support changes in current pedagogical approaches to learning. Gee's (1999) seminal work *An introduction to Discourse Analysis Theory and Method* describes the multiple factors, tools of inquiry, necessary for analyzing discourse: language-in-use with context, situated meanings, and cultural models. Gee has transferred his theory and method for discourse analysis to the field of video games, visual media, language, and learning. Gee's (2003) *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* explains on how well designed video games can enhance learning through effective learning principles. *Situated language and learning: A critique of traditional schooling* (2004a) includes video games in the sociocultural and sociolinguistic theory of learning and literacy as well as ways to reform school curriculum.*

*Keywords: social discourse, language, literacy, video games, education*

James Paul Gee's seminal works have led to recommendations that support changes in current pedagogical approaches to learning. The journey to Gee's current instructional recommendations begins with his seminal work *An introduction to Discourse Analysis Theory and Method* (1999). The book describes the multiple

factors and tools of inquiry necessary for analyzing discourse: language-in-use with context, situated meanings, and cultural models. Table 1 identifies the continuum of multiple factors Gee designates for qualitative discourse analysis.

Language analysis isn't a new research topic. It has been addressed by researchers focusing on language and literacy development for decades: Vygotsky, Piaget, Chomsky, Goodman, Brown, Bloom, Halliday and many more. So, why consider Gee's work as a relevant contribution to analyzing and understanding language development and discourse? The introduction of technology has altered culture models and therefore situational meanings. As Gee writes, "It can be problematic whether a Discourse today is or is not the same as one in the past...New Discourses emerge and old ones die all the time." (Gee, 1999, p. 21).

Twenty-first century technology and video media has brought a change in theorizing how language is constructed, the development of knowledge and learning, knowledge-making processes including communication media, social engagement, and grammar. Gee recognizes such changes with a second sociolinguistic discourse analysis key publication, *How to do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit* (2010). This book adds clarity to ana-



lyzing discourse based on the theoretical premise explained in *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (1999, 2005). For example, in *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (1999, 2005) Gee defined context as "... everything in the material, mental, personal, interactional, social, institutional, cultural, and historical situation" (p. 54). Gee clarifies the term 'context' in *How to do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit* as: "[T]he physical setting in which the communication takes place and everything in it; the basics, eye gaze, gestures and movements of those present; what has previously been said and done by those involved in the communication; any shared knowledge those involved have, including shared cultural knowledge" (p. 12).

*How to do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit* presents a set of "how-to" instructions including integrating principles from applied linguistics, education, anthropology, psychology, and communication. Emphasis is on how language is organized for integrating individuals' actions in social, cultural and political situational contexts. The tools for analyzing discourse include social languages, discourses, intertextuality, and conversations. Table 2 describes four categories and 27 tools used to analyze discourse data. \

Once again, as described in *An introduction to Discourse Analysis Theory and Method*, a valid discourse analysis is administered under four essential analysis elements, see table 3. The essential analysis elements contain 17 questions. The questions are connected to the six language tasks – semiotics, word building, activity building, social-cultural situations, political cues and clues, and connection building.

As stated previously, Gee's seminal works are part of his sociolinguistic theory as well as a catalyst for his influence on the field of

discourse analysis in the age of technological media. Gee's theory and method in the field of discourse includes, but is not limited to, language of gaming, literacy gaming, game analysis, digital fiction, characteristic of virtual worlds (community, identity, spatiality), video games, and relevant factors in computing systems (self-representation, player engagement, thinking, designing, and play).

So, how does Gee's theory in discourse analysis apply to literacy development within the field of education? From a sociolinguistic standpoint, Gee's research stimulates the sociolinguist debate between traditional schooling and alternatives to current educational practices. Sociolinguistics involves technology, visual media and video games in the twenty-first century. It exemplifies ways learners participate in social and cultural groups for social, cultural and mental achievement. In other words, access to technology has increased social and mental activity organized through culturally based constructs. This sociolinguistic premise in the twenty-first century brings to mind Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development through language development and play.

Vygotsky's (1978) theory emphasizes the role of social interaction on cognitive development which also involves problem solving and play. Learners acquire knowledge through contacts, interactions, and experiences with others as the first step (interpsychological plane). Learners assimilate and internalize acquired knowledge adding his/her personal value to it (intrapsychological plane). This transition is a transformation of what has been learned through interaction, into personal values. Such transitions require active engagement in

his/her world through the use of tools. The use of tools alleviate learners' dependence on others teaching him/her what to do, how to do it, and what not to do. Vygotsky's theory correlates with Gee's premise for discourse analysis and the use of video games.

Gee interpretation of the use of video games augments, extends and provides a clearer understanding of the nature of learning and literacy that may be missing from the current classroom environments. His connection between theory, method and educational practices are found in the following publications: *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning* (2003), *Literacy Situated Language and Learning: A Critique of Traditional Schooling* (2004), and *Game-Like Situated Learning: An Example of Situated Learning and Implications for Opportunity to Learn A Report to the Spencer Foundation* (2004).

Gee encourages a multi-literacy pedagogical approach that engages learners as designers of meaning and the use of a broad range of learning processes because of technology availability and the learners use of technological media (Gee, 2003; Gee, 2004a; Gee, 2004b; Gee, 2005; Gee, 2006). *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* (2003) identifies 36 learning principles incorporated in good games that correspond with research in the cognitive sciences. Emphasis is on empowering learners to direct their own learning. Game designs are challenging yet do-able and players customize the game to their own levels, abilities and adjust the game as their competence develops. Table 4 lists 16 of the 36 learning principles within three categories for learning.

*Situated Language and Learning: A Critique of Traditional Schooling* (2004) references students' learning to read and learning academic

content such as mathematics, science and social studies. Language in content areas is written in a "specialist variety of language and symbols" which is markedly different from the everyday (or vernacular) language used by children" (p. 15-17). Therefore, the use of video games such as Pokémon is a way in which the "human mind works best when it can build and run simulations of experiences its owner has had – like playing a video game in the mind .....Since learning to read and learning content can never really be separated" (p. 35).

In *Situated Language and Learning: A Critique of Traditional Schooling* (2004a) Gee explains that games can "exemplify good learning principles in particularly striking ways" (p. 52). Video games provide (1) learners continued voluntary engagement; (2) language and content in schools become "more equitable, less alienating and more motivating" (p. 4); and, (3) affinity spaces designed to "resource people who are tied together not primarily via shared culture, gender, race or class, but by shared interest or endeavor" (p. 83-84). This is evident in Gee's explanation of video games, such as 'Rise of Nations'. Learners construct mental simulations from the simulation of experiences within new worlds.

Gee's (2015) application for discourse analysis of video games is in *Unified discourse analysis: Language, reality, virtual worlds and video*. Gee explains connections between the video game world of avatars and their role in the game and player's everyday role in society. There is a common thread and integrated reference between the mono-modal analysis of discourse and the study of video game text. Gee specifies differences between reading print media and playing a game. Dis-

course analysis involves linguistic syntax and grammar analysis without the context of video games, transitioning to syntax or grammar of games from a visual viewpoint i.e. multimodal discourse analysis. A connection between linguistic syntax and grammar with and without video games reinforces the situated meaning aspect of discourse analysis. The last chapters of *Unified discourse analysis: Language, reality, virtual worlds and video* exemplify the framework for discourse analysis, examples including classroom interactions, and two-sample analysis.

Where does that leave us as educators? We know that literacy, especially emergent literacy, begins in the home. Pre-reading activities must connect with the early reading instruction that occurs in school, formally and informally. We cannot ignore learners' access or lack of access to technology that extends literacy beyond decoding to literacy comprehension, reading for understanding. Gee (2004a) recognizes that cognition is situational and contextual. Situated meanings are established in the organization of patterns of experience, action and subjective interests. Therefore, there needs to be an integrative approach between school and out-of-school learning experiences including familiar and unfamiliar text including video games. Motivating spaces, such as Pokémon or other video games, appear to facilitate learning opportunities for learners to quickly master complex systems without instruction by a teacher (Gee, 2004a; Gee, 2004b). This is how learners learn and we need to access this aspect of learning within the classroom.

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**Table 1.** Tools of Inquiry

Areas of Reality	Situated Meaning	Culture Models	Language Tasks	Discourse Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reciprocal process</li> <li>• Meaning and value</li> <li>• Activities</li> <li>• Situated identities</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Semiotics</li> <li>• Connections</li> <li>• “D” Discourse vs. discourse</li> <li>• Cultural context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acquisition</li> <li>• Pattern connections</li> <li>• Word meaning</li> <li>• Social context</li> <li>• Specific situation</li> <li>• Author-receiver</li> <li>• Point-of-view</li> <li>• Reasonable meanings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model conflict</li> <li>• Model inconsistency</li> <li>• Socio-cultural specific</li> <li>• Thinking</li> <li>• Acting</li> <li>• Talking</li> <li>• Pattern recognition</li> <li>• Social mind</li> <li>• Context – intertextual, historical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semiotics - Sign systems &amp; knowledge</li> <li>• Word building</li> <li>• Activity building</li> <li>• Social – cultural situations</li> <li>• Politics – social groups</li> <li>• Connection building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convergence</li> <li>• Agreement</li> <li>• Coverage</li> <li>• Linguistic details</li> </ul>

**Table 2.** Analysis of Categories and Tools

Social Languages - Language and Context	Discourses - Saying, Doing, and Designing	Intertextuality - Building Things in the World – context that shapes language	Conversations Theoretical Tools
<p>Tool 1: The Deixis - Deictic expressions, speech and writing to context.</p> <p>Tool 2: The Fill-in - Knowledge, assumptions and inferences brought to communication.</p> <p>Tool 3: The Making Strange -Listeners/ readers act as if they were outsiders.</p> <p>Tool 4: The Subject - Choice in what speakers/ writers choose to say</p> <p>Tool 5: The Intonation - Contributions to the meaning of an utterance.</p> <p>Tool 6: The Frame Problem - Allows for all aspects of context as relevant to the meaning of the data.</p>	<p>Tool 7: The Doing and Not Just Saying - What speakers/writers say and what they try to do.</p> <p>Tool 8: The Vocabulary - Words used in content, function, informal and formal words in contexts.</p> <p>Tool 9: Why This Way and Not That Way - design of messages in certain ways and not in others.</p> <p>Tool 10: The Integration - integrated words or sentences.</p> <p>Tool 11: Topic and Themes - Topic and theme is in a sentence (usual or unusual).</p> <p>Tool 12: Stanza - Groups of idea units clustered into larger chunks of information.</p>	<p>Tool 13: Context is Reflexive - content either consciously or unconsciously.</p> <p>Tool 14: Significance Building - Lexical and grammatical devices strength or significance</p> <p>Tool 15: Activities Building – activities for communication in social groups, institutions or cultures support and set norms</p> <p>Tool 16: Identities Building - Socially recognizable identity/identities the speaker/ writer tries to get others to recognize</p> <p>Tool 17: Relationship Building – Use of lexical and grammatical nuances building to sustain relationships</p> <p>Tool 18: Politics Building – Use of lexical and grammatical devices that build social goods and how social goods are distributed in society.</p> <p>Tool 19: Connection Building – Use of words and grammar to connect or disconnect things or ignore connections between things.</p> <p>Tool 20: Cohesion - How cohesion in text connect to pieces of information and in what ways.</p> <p>Tool 21: Sign Systems and Knowledge Building - Ways in which words and grammar honor or degrade specific sign systems.</p> <p>Tool 22: Topic Flow or Topic Changes – How the topics of main clauses are chained or switched.</p>	<p>Tool 23: Situation Meaning - Shared experiences and background knowledge to specific meanings in context and how the context is constructed.</p> <p>Tool 24: Social Languages - Grammatical structures that signal and enact a given various forms of social language.</p> <p>Tool 25: Intertextuality – Use of lexical and grammatical items reference to other "texts" or other styles of language.</p> <p>Tool 26: Figured Worlds – Use of assumed unconscious and taken-for-granted pictures, words or phrases of listeners &amp; readers.</p> <p>Tool 27: Big “D” Discourse – Use of speaker/ listener manipulation of language and ways of acting, interacting, thinking, believing, valuing, feeling, dressing and using various objects, tools and technologies.</p>



**Table 3.** Essential Analysis Elements

Convergence	Agreement	Coverage	Linguistic Details
Analysis offers answers to many or all of the questions arising from the set of the 27 tools.	Discourses implicated in the data should agree with the social language analysis.	Analysis applicable to related sorts of data.	Analysis connected to details of linguistic structure.

**Table 4.** Gee's 16 out of 36 Learning Principles for Good Games

Empowered Learners	Problem-based Learning	Deep Understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity – on-screen character</li> <li>• Interaction – communication</li> <li>• Cross-functional teams – multiplayer environment</li> <li>• Customized - learner experience</li> <li>• Agency – environmental control</li> <li>• Pleasantly frustrating – ability to overcome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk taking</li> <li>• Well-ordered problems to develop and master</li> <li>• Challenge and consideration</li> <li>• Just in time or on demand – information as needed</li> <li>• Explore, Think Laterally, Rethink Goals</li> <li>• Production - completing a level</li> <li>• Smart tools (in game tools) &amp; distributed knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situated meanings – vocabulary by experience</li> <li>• Systems thinking – think big picture</li> <li>• Performance before Competence – actions required to learn</li> </ul>

### Author's Biography

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## Book Reviews

### *Tiered Fluency Instruction: Supporting Diverse Learners in Grades 2-5*

By Chase Young, Timothy Rasinski. North Mankato, Minnesota: Capstone Press, 2017. 128 pages. ISBN 9781496608031

Reviewed by: Bahia Braktia  
Sam Houston State University

In *Tiered Fluency Instruction*, Chase Young and Timothy Rasinski (2017) discuss and offer solutions to the reading fluency challenges that learners in grades two through five might face. As the authors point out, reading fluency has not received much attention over the past several decades, which led to its instruction to be either ignored or misinterpreted, even though much research related to reading education emphasized on fluency as a critical reading element to achieve full proficiency in reading. Many students who struggle with reading show difficulties in some areas of fluency (Valencia & Buly, 2004). According to DiSalle and Rasinski (2017), The National Reading Panel (2000) and the Common Core State Standards (2016) described reading fluency as crucial for reading growth and should be learned in the elementary grades.

The book is a collaborative work by two researchers who bring together their research experience, perspectives and key skills areas that qualify them to introduce to readers a research based strategies for resolving reading fluency challenges. Dr. Timothy Rasinski, a professor of literacy education at Kent State University and head of its award winning reading clinic, is a high-profile researcher in reading fluency. He has published more than 200 articles and has

authored, co-authored, or edited more than 50 books or curriculum programs on reading education. He is the author of the bestselling books on reading fluency *The Fluent Reader* (2003) and *The Fluent Reader in Action* (2011). Dr. Chase Young, an associate professor in the Department of Language, Literacy, and Special Populations at Sam Houston State University, has an extensive experience in the field of reading. His research was published in journals such as the Journal of Educational Research, Reading Teacher, and Literacy Research and Instruction. He was also named the 2011 Outstanding Doctoral Student in Reading Education.

This book provides teachers of grades two through five with an instruction manual of strategies they can use with their students to increase their reading fluency. This allows the teachers to improve the students' reading proficiency. The authors structured, or tiered, the strategies according to the individual and group needs of the students to enable the teachers to choose the appropriate fluency instruction.

The authors argue that reading fluency is an essential skill in learning to read, and the students' needs identify what form and tiers of fluency instruction teachers can rely on. In order to measure students' reading fluency, the book offers assessment tools for teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses. The book tiers the fluency instructions into three, each tier includes activities teachers can incorporate, the materials they can use, and how to adopt them into their classrooms. The first tier is devoted to group fluency instructions, as it offers students an effective

model of what fluent reading looks and sounds like. The second tier targets students who did not respond to tier one fluency instructions. For that, the authors suggest several research-based methods that are best delivered in a small group setting. For students still struggling after tier 1 and 2, tier 3 presents one-on-one reading fluency interventions. The book also includes technologically enhanced fluency methods.

This book is practical and well-organized. Chapter one provides elementary teachers with assessment tools to evaluate fluency development in accuracy and automaticity in word recognition. As the authors state; “reading assessment should be sensitive enough to detect changes in students' reading after relatively short periods of instruction or intervention” (p. 11). The data teachers get from the assessment instruction in this chapter allows the students to see that they are making tangible progress in their development in becoming proficient and fluent readers.

Chapters two, three and four offer straight forward and efficient fluency instructions to tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3 students consecutively. Each chapter gives a variety of detailed methods to address each tier's fluency challenges. Each method is given a background, the necessary materials and procedures, and real life experiences from lower and upper elementary grade teachers who applied the methods in their classes.

This book also includes a section that offers fun activities where teachers can integrate easy and accessible technology into reading fluency instruction. For example, Avatar for Speeches, a website where students can build avatars and record their voices, is an engaging activity to help students refine their speech performances. The authors also gathered a list of fluency resources for teachers to use in their as-

essment or instruction.

In essence, *Tiered Fluency Instruction* is a practical text that can be a useful tool for elementary teachers who would like to assess and improve their students reading fluency. Its practicality relies on the way the challenges are addressed; teachers can evaluate their students and accordingly refer to the appropriate tier fluency instruction that is detailed and simplified.

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*Kids Deserve It: Pushing Boundaries and Challenging Conventional Thinking*

Written by Todd Nesloney and Adam Welcome, Dave Burgess Consulting, INC., 2016, 222 pgs., ASIN B01GF3UM8K

Reviewed by: Matthew Panozzo  
Sam Houston State University

The stretch from spring break to summer is arguably the most challenging time of the school year. Everyone is tired. Standardized tests, promotions, and graduations loom overhead. The finish line is in sight but just out of reach. Students, teachers, and administrators long for the relaxing days of summer.

It was our second week back from spring break, and all my energy was zapped after a series of failed lessons, student misconduct, and ineffective meetings. I needed some support and motivation, but I had no one to turn to for this consolation as my coworkers and I were all in the same boat. Then I found it: Nesloney and Welcome (2016) *Kids Deserve It: Pushing Boundaries and Challenging Conventional Thinking*. Instead of answering emails or grading assignments, I sat down and immersed myself in my reading. Immediately, I found solace in the first paragraph of Chapter 1: “What would happen if a teacher or principal came up with an idea, grabbed their students and--boom--tried something new? Just like that--without fear of failure” (Nesloney & Welcome, 2016, location 172). I had become aware that I allowed myself to become entrenched in the fear of failure, allowing the systemic pressures to extinguish my passion. I had not realized that I needed a simple rhe-

torical question to reignite my passion for teaching and taking risks in my classroom.

Parents, teachers, and administrators all have something to learn from Nesloney and Welcome. Their descriptions of the importance of empathy and understanding, and how these two qualities empower students, are relevant to a range of student interactions. To illustrate these values, Nesloney and Welcome remind the reader of the shared belief that “growing every part of a child is truly what’s best for education” (Nesloney & Welcome, 2016, Location 166). In doing what’s best for the students, they also advise educators to “remember our sense of childlike wonder, the immense human need to be valued and noticed and our ability to be creatively inspired and, in turn, inspire others” (Location 167-168). They emphasize that, beyond simply creating assignments that test mastery, teachers must be willing to take instructional risks and approach lessons with creativity and fresh eyes. Additionally, they stress that these ventures in outside-the-box thinking are further enriched in a collaborative setting involving all the stakeholders of a school.

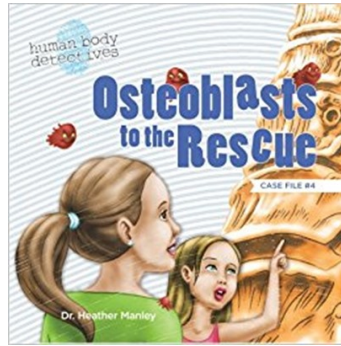
Rhetorically, the narrative style of Nesloney and Welcome builds trust with the reader. Both authors took a risk to make themselves vulnerable by opening their leadership style up to criticism. In turn, their story allows the reader to hear what they have to say, reflect on their advice, and find small ways to implement the “kids deserve it” mindset into their classroom. The novel also features challenges to educators to get involved in online spaces as a form of professional development. In doing so, Nesloney and Welcome reinforce to educators that they are not alone in this profession. Online spaces allow people to connect in different classrooms, different schools, and even in different places around the world. Ultimately,

they want the reader to remember that what we do is for the kids in our classroom, with implications that manifest on a local, national, and global level.

Upon finishing the book, I realized that I not only had the motivation to continue to take risks this school year, but also found the motivation to keep pushing my practice. I've taken Nesloney and Welcome up on their Twitter challenges. I've tried to reshape my remaining units. Their challenge to think differently feels urgent and valuable for both teachers and students. This is a book to read with your team to spur creativity and breathe new life into your school.

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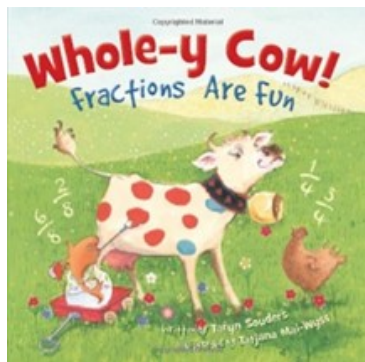
*Osteoblasts to the rescue: case file #4.*

Written by: Manley H. (2013). Place of publication not identified: Heather Manley.

Reviewed by: Elizabeth Stokes

“Pearl suddenly got an idea...” This catch phrase never bode well for Pearl and her friends the “Human Body Detectives.” In this installment of the Human Body Detective series, Pearl and her friend Merrin go inside Lily’s body so that they may learn about Lily’s fractured arm. Throughout their adventure, Pearl and Merrin encounter and learn about different bones in the human body, what makes up a bone, and eventually land on Lily’s fracture. Upon arriving at Lily’s fracture, Pearl and Merrin encounter osteoblasts (cells that turn the callus into new bone). Having accomplished their mission, Pearl and Merrin leave Lily’s body in just enough time to watch the rest of the game. In addition to the intriguing story, the book *Osteoblasts to the Rescue* also includes reference materials at the end so that the reader can further explore the bones that make up the human body. While the moving story line will keep readers engaged in the story, older readers might find the story a bit derivative, but the information useful. Despite this fact, readers will still walk away having learned something new about how our bones work. For the reasons stated above, this story receives a four out of five star rating.



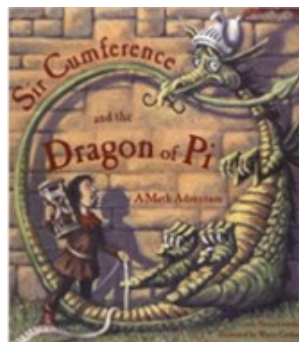


*Whole-y cow! Fractions are Fun*

Written by: Souders, T., & Mai-Wyss, T. (2010). New York: Scholastic.

Reviewed by: Monica Castaneda

“One whole cow” decides to be different for a day, that’s what the story line of the book *Whole-y cow! Fractions are fun* is about. Written by a graduate with a specialization in mathematics, Taryn Souders, creates a female cow character who did what no other cow should do on the average cow day life. From having a fish pet painting different color dots on her to playing the cello while eating a daisy of different color petals. After each crazy activity the “One whole cow” does the author asks the reader to find several fractions based on that particular activity. This gives the readers the opportunity to practice their identifying fractions skills while reading the funny story of a cow’s out of norm day. Even though the “One whole cow” is doing things no other cow does, she is doing somethings a human being would do, which helps to show the reader that there is fractions everywhere you look. Therefore, children will not only be learning to identify fractions from Souders first published book but they will also be giggling about what “One whole cow” does when she “decides to be different on this particular day”.

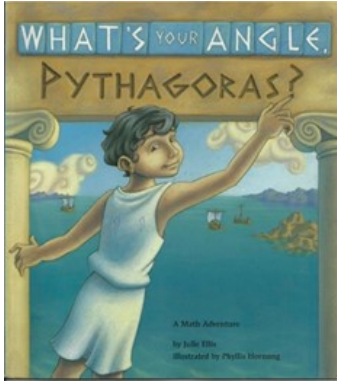


*Sir Cumference and the Dragon of Pi*

Written by: C. Neuschwander (1999). Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

Reviewed by: Syed Shah

In the race against time, one child must find the cure to turn his father from a dragon back into the body of a man! Cindy Neuschwander finds an enjoyable way to teach pi to a young audience through this medieval themed book. When Sir Cumference accidentally gets turned into a dragon, his son Radius finds a cure but to use it he must decipher a riddle. Radius sets out on a quest to find the answer where he learns about pi. Just before Sir Cumference is vanquished in his dragon form, Radius come to the rescue by delivering  $22/7$ ths of the cure thus returning Sir Cumference back to his human body! This story is quite entertaining and helps bring the number pi to life. The use of a medieval setting with interesting characters like Radius, Geo of Metry, and Lady Dia of Ameter keep the mathematical theme remain prevalent while engaging the reader. The quest Radius goes on also helps students learn how to find pi themselves. If used as text in the classroom though, the educator should be aware the book simplifies pi with the approximation of  $22/7$  rather than explaining pi’s irrationality. Nevertheless, this text is a definite read when it comes to teaching pi in the classroom.

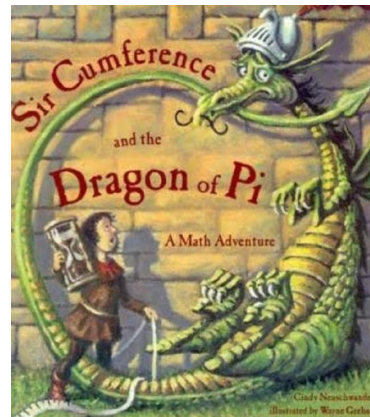


*What's your angle Pythagoras?: A math adventure.*

Written by: Ellis, J., & Peacock, P. H. (2004). Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

Reviewed by: Riyn Williams

“Angle, angle, angle. Side, side, side. All you have to do is tri-, tri-. Tri!” In this fictional picture book, Julie Ellis takes readers on an adventure on how the Pythagorean theorem was discovered by the young and curious Pythagoras. Ellis’ illustrations and catchy puns help the reader understand the theorem. Ellis allows readers to be involved in the book by displaying the process Pythagoras went through with his discoveries with temples and shipping routes. Throughout the book, readers are able to see how to build bases to support columns, tie knots in ropes to make triangles with different angles, experimenting the formula of a right angle through Pythagoras. Even though it is a great explanation of math, the picture book fails to apply the theorem. However, readers will remember practical applications and might possibly open their minds up to more exploration within mathematics. If readers know the Pythagorean theorem already, then this picture book will resonate well with them. Readers who are more math orientated may not like the use of dialogue or learning math through a narrative. This picture book is intended to introduce readers to the Pythagorean theorem in its simplicity and how it came about.



*Sir Cumference and the Dragon of Pi*

Written by: Neuschwander, C. & Geehan, W. (1999). Charlesbridge.

Reviewed by: Cassandra Wight

“Sois Chevalier, au nom de dieu, Avancez Chevallier,” the infamous saying the Knights of the Round Table used upon acceptance into King Arthur’s most elite force, catches the eye and begins the phenomenal children’s book “Sir Cumference and the Dragon of Pi.” Written by Cindy Neuschwander, this book receives a 5 out of 5 stars for its relatable, historical, and educational content. By reading this, the educator not only introduces fundamental mathematics such as pi and radius, but it also accommodates their explanation in a fun way. The length and vocabulary of the story creatively designed by Neuschwander makes this educational masterpiece suitable for a wide range of students starting from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. For mathematics educators, it is often problematic to find a new stimulating method of teaching concepts to students.

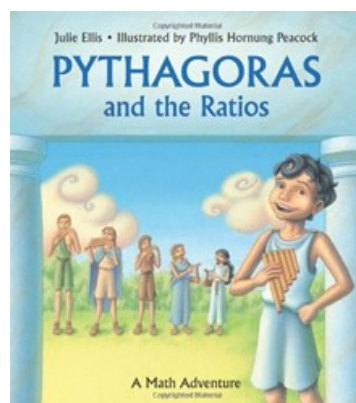
However, Neuschwander does an astonishing job at fusing together historical information, literature, and details about mathematical vocabulary by using cleverly named characters such as “Sir Cumference” and “Lady Di Amater.” Constructivism is a huge educational advantage in this book because it makes mathematic foundations relat-

able to students in an enticing way by mixing math and the middle ages. By using constructivism, Neuschwander is developing a plot that is retainable to students. This book is highly recommended for any educator who wants to create an enjoyable time with their class while keeping the lesson educational and influential. Will Radius solve the mathematical riddle to save his father Sir Cumference from remaining a dragon forever? Read to find out.

### TEK

(7.9) Expressions, equations, and relationships. The student applies mathematical process standards to solve geometric problems. The student is expected to:

B. Determine the circumference and area of circles;

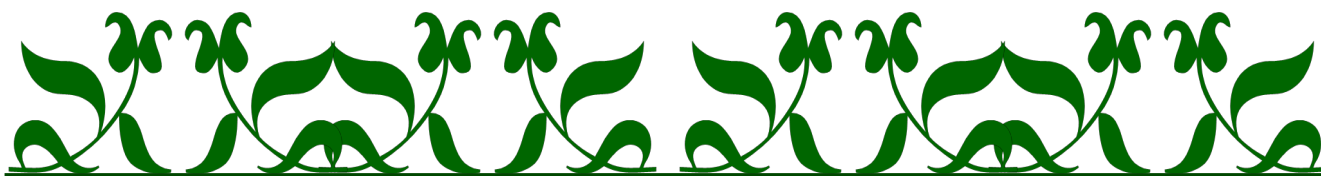


### *Pythagoras and the Ratios: A Math Adventure*

Written by: Ellis, J. & Peacock, P.  
(2010). *Pythagoras and the Ratios: A Math Adventure*. Watertown, MA: Random House Publishing Group.

Reviewed by: Renee Kelley

What is wrong with the ratios instruments? In this non-fiction picture book, Pythagoras and his five cousins set out to win a music contest in their town. But there is one huge problem. Their instruments aren't in tune. So, the Ratios, who are Pythagoras' five cousins, depend on him to fix their instruments before the contest commences. Pythagoras uses his sharp brain to figure out the ratio between his instrument and his cousins to tune them, all whilst managing the chores that his parents has assigned to him. This is a fantastic book that teaches more than one lesson. Not only does it teach about ratios between similar figures, but it teaches about the importance of responsibilities, which I think will really resonate with seventh graders. The illustrations were great and it showed all the calculations Pythagoras used to tune the instruments, throughout the story. This book deserves five stars and is a wonderful book to be added to your educational library.



# FUTURE THEMES

JUNE 2018—LITERACY IN A SOCIAL JUSTICE ERA

SUBMISSIONS DUE APRIL 30, 2018

DECEMBER 2018—WORKING TOWARD  
TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE IN LITERACY  
EDUCATION

SUBMISSIONS DUE OCTOBER 1, 2018

SEND SUBMISSIONS TO [READ@SHSU.EDU](mailto:READ@SHSU.EDU)

