A Tribute to the Life of Hoyte Snow

Tennessee Reading Teacher
Journal of the Tennessee Reading Association
The Tennessee Reading Association (TRA) has a membership of more than 2,000 people dedicated to promoting reading and literacy. The membership includes classroom teachers, instructional assistants, reading specialists, technical support personnel, administrators, parents, students, college educators, and others who work to promote improvement in reading. The mission of the Tennessee Reading Association is to promote the development of literacy among all segments of the population in the state of Tennessee in order to foster an informed, productive citizenry.

Cover Photo: TRA pioneer and reading advocate, Hoyte Snow, exemplified dedication to teachers, students, and readers of all ages. His sage advice and contributions will be greatly missed.
**Tennessee Reading Teacher**

**Vol. 40, No.2**

**Fall/Winter 2014 - 15**

### Table of Contents

**TRA CONNECTIONS**

Letter from the Co-Editors .................................................................-2

Letter from the State Coordinator------------------------------------------3

TRA 2014 Fall Conference Preview ....................................................4

**FEATURED ARTICLES**

Up, Up, and Away: Using Heroes of Flight with Middle Graders
by Deborah Wooten, Jeremiah Clabough, & Thomas Turner---------------------5

by Joyce Gulley, Kristin Rearden, Amy Broemmel, & Jeff Thomas----------------15

Back to Basics: Rethinking Thematic Reading Instruction for English Language Learners
by Amber Warren & Natalia Ward---------------------------------------------24

The Impact on and the Perceptions of Pre-service Teachers Participating in a Family Literacy Program
by Terri Tharp.....................................................................................43

Reasons for Rimes: Providing Support for Developing Word Identification Strategies
by Renee Rice Moran, Huili Hong, Karin J. Keith, Audra L. Gray, & Edward J. Dwyer------58

**COLUMNS AND COMMENTS**

“Read Any Good Books Lately?” TRT Professional Book Review .................71

Leadership Links: Messages from TRA Leaders--------------------------------72

Perspectives ...........................................................................................73

In Loving Memory of Hoyte Snow ............................................................78

TRA Officers 2014-15 ............................................................................81

Tennessee Reading Teacher: We Read Campaign .......................................83

IRA 60th Annual Conference ....................................................................84

Guidelines for Tennessee Reading Teacher Manuscript Submissions ..........85
Dear Readers:

It is our honor to bring you this Fall/Winter 2014-15 issue of the Tennessee Reading Teacher. Our editorial review board has selected several submissions that we believe have the potential to inform, and inspire all of us committed to the promotion of literacy as we strive to accomplish the goals established for the Tennessee Reading Association. With this edition, we pay tribute to our long time mentor and friend, Hoyte Snow. Hoyte was such a powerful force, he will be missed for a long time to come. Please see the special section honoring Hoyte and his contributions to TRA.

Hopefully, you have made plans to attend the 2014 TRA conference scheduled for December 7-9 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Murfreesboro, TN. We are confident you will find something of interest in the form of exciting and informative sessions, fabulous exhibits, and numerous opportunities to network with other professionals.

We continue to include photos submitted through our WE READ CAMPAIGN. Be sure to capture a photo of someone “reading” and send it to us for inclusion in future issues. This issue also includes several sample Biopoems completed by pre service candidates.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share our passion for literacy and the valuable resources available through TRA. We encourage and challenge each of you to share your expertise by submitting an article for publication in upcoming issues. The submissions guidelines section provides you with the information needed to complete this worthwhile contribution.

Look forward to hearing from you,

*Sandy and Kristen, TRA Co-Editors*
Dear Friends,

Fall has arrived and that means that the annual TRA Conference is right around the corner! I hope that your school year is off to a fabulous start. I can hardly believe that November is here. TRA had a busy summer as your officers worked to prepare TRA for the 2014-2015 school-year. Six State Board Members attended IRA’s Council Leadership Academy in July to learn more about the Council Transformation Program and exciting changes that are taking place at IRA. The weekend after the TRA Delegate group returned from Florida, they were joined by over fifty individuals from across the state who serve on State and Local Boards/Committees. While at Montgomery Bell, your Long Range Committee worked with Marcie Craig Post, IRA Executive Director and Angela Rivell, IRA Council Advisor to discuss changes that will take place in our Board and to continue TRA’s growth in the Council Transformation Program. Next steps in this process include revising our Bylaws and Policy Handbook. As a result in our partnership with IRA, TRA is in the process of redefining itself to become the “literacy go-to organization” in Tennessee. While these changes are exciting, we plan to continue to honor our history and our commitment to literacy for everyone in the state. We will keep you informed as we continue to transform to a new TRA.

Next, I hope that you are making plans to attend the Annual TRA Conference which will be held Sunday, December 7th, 2014 to Tuesday, December 9th, 2014. The conference will be held at the Embassy Suites in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Mike and his committee have worked together to ensure that you will have an opportunity to hear some fabulous authors and speakers that include: Dr. Michael Shoulders, T. A. Barron, Jane Feber, Julianne Scullen, Dr. Vicki Risko, and Bill Landry. Additionally, we are pleased to announce that we will be hosting two Authors’ Luncheons. The first will be held on Monday, December 8th and will feature Floyd Cooper. Margaret Haddix will be the speaker for the luncheon that will be held on Tuesday, December 9th.

Finally, I am sorry to share that TRA lost a dear friend and mentor who has served the Board in many capacities. Hoyte Snow passed away on October 20, 2014. Hoyte was a loyal member of Middle Tennessee Reading Association and Tennessee Reading Association. He served the association in many capacities, including President and State Coordinator. Hoyte touched many lives and left a legacy for Tennessee Reading Association to continue to build on as we plan to touch the future by supporting students, parents and educators in Tennessee. Thank you, Hoyte, for the memories and guidance that you provided to all of us!

Please feel free to contact me at janacrosby@comcast.net should you have any questions, concerns, or if you would like to know more about what is happening in your local reading council. I hope to see you in December.

Sincerely,

Jana

Jana Crosby, TRA State Coordinator
Tennessee Reading Association  
A State Council of the  
International Reading Association  
Presents  

DECEMBER 7-9  
TRA 2014 annual conference  

Embassy Suites Hotel, Murfreesboro  
Conference Chair, Mike Roe -- mikeroe@u-c.net, (931)267-2175  

Keynote Speakers  
Doug Fisher, IRA  
T.A. Barron, Author  
Julianne Scullen, IRA  

Authors’ Luncheons  
Margaret Haddix and Floyd Cooper  

Featured Speakers  
Michael Shoulders  
Michael Lockett  
Sammie Garnett  

Great Exhibits  
Silent Auction  

WWW.TNReads.org  

Improving Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Viewing, Visually Presenting, and Thinking Skills in Language Arts and All Other Curricular Areas
Up, Up, and Away: Using Heroes of Flight with Middle Graders

By

Deborah Wooten, Jeremiah Clabough, & Thomas Turner

Flight has always captivated the heart and soul of visionaries. In many ways, flying embodies not only the human desire for innovation and exploration but also personal growth. There were minorities and women among the early pilots who pushed past cultural and social boundaries. The ability to fly was both a way of proving themselves as individuals and a mechanism for escaping ethnic, racial, and gender stereotypes. The theme of flight is an important topic in the late 19th and early 20th century American society. Biographical picture books are one effective tool that can be used to engage students in the content material (Barton, 2011). The illustrations and content of such books allow students to gain a better understanding not only of the context of a time period but also the struggles and choices that historical figures faced (Schell and Fisher, 2007).

“There are an extensive body of children’s literature concerning flight in American history (See Appendix 1). Biographical picture books can be an important tool for middle grade students. Middle school students are undergoing physical and mental changes that make them very inquisitive about the world around them (Levstik & Barton, 2010). This means that teachers must carefully construct classroom activities and materials that take advantage of students’ inquisitive nature.”

“When books work together, effective teachers can use them to reinforce one another and promote higher order thinking. Reading one book leads to the next. The relationships of themes and ideas help the reader to see each book in a greater context and within the larger framework of history and culture.”
In this article, the authors will explore three biographical picture books that focus on flight in American history: The Wright Brothers (Edwards, 2003), Hallelujah Flight (Bildner, 2010), and Brave Harriet (Moss, 2001). They will discuss each book, provide classroom strategies that can be utilized with each of the three texts, and provide some recommendations for using a text set around a central theme.

**The Wright Brothers: First in Flight**

*The Wright Brothers* (Edwards, 2003) is informative though predictable in format. It has eye-catching illustrations, fascinating front and back page timeline ribbons, and charming and whimsical mice adding commentary about flight. The storyline tells about the inventors of the airplane. This non-traditional, biographical picture book will enrapture even middle school readers. The style imitates the English nursery rhyme, *This is the House that Jack Built*. It contrasts nicely with the clever dialogue of almost invisible mice who are shown observing the progress of Wilbur and Orville throughout the book.

**Illustration 1**

*The Wright Brothers*

Middle school students can interact with the contents of the book as well as the concepts related to flight that it introduces. One activity would be to simulate that first flight. This would get children actively involved and show the short distance of that first flight. This can be done in a series of steps.

**Steps for Flight Simulation**

1. **Preparing for the flight.** The first step is to measure out the distance of the Wright Brother’s first 12 second flight. Though not specifically stated in the book, this flight...
was 120 feet. This can be marked on a flat area of ground with a chalk line string.

2. Simulate the flight itself. Have the students in groups discuss what preparation the Wright Brothers went through to ready their heavier than air powered aircraft for the flight. They can write a script for this procedure. Then have each group pantomime with a narrator that preparation.

3. Next, prepare a 12 second narration about the 12 second flight. Pick the fastest student in the class to try and run the distance in 12 seconds. Other students can read the narration, which should also take 12 seconds. Discuss with the students why even such a short flight was so important.

4. After the simulation. Finally, have the students write a narration that a radio announcer might have given to describe the flight. While they are writing, play the “Flight of the Bumble Bee.” This piece communicates a feeling of flight. It can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QV1RGMLUKE.

A more sophisticated activity for older students would involve examining Orville Wright’s diary entry of the event. This diary entry can be found at http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/wright.htm. It can be read aloud as a guided imagery. Students shut their eyes and try to imagine being in the situation as the teacher reads. The experience is then followed with a discussion.

A writing activity extending the commentary of the mice might increase comprehension. First, go through the book with the students paying particular attention to the commentary voiced by the small mice on every page. These mice serve as filters and interpreters. They give editorial views and ask questions. Once the middle graders have a feel for what the mice are doing, have them write additional dialogue for the mice on every page. For example, as the book
opens, three mice are sitting on a rock watching birds in the sky. One of the mice comments, “Maybe someday mice will fly.” Discuss with the class why mice would want to fly. Talk about the responses that the other mice in the picture might make.

Follow suit with other images from the book. Have students compile their mice talk into a single book with pages numbered as in Edward’s original text. They can also illustrate it. This activity can be used as a group project.

This book is ideal for developing a sense of the chronology for the history of flight. As an activity to further develop this historical awareness, use a long piece of red ribbon stretched in twists and turns high in the room similar to the end pages of the book. Students can build mobiles of the various aircrafts shown and even add to the information and details as they measure time distances on the ribbon. This will enable students to see time as distance and the ever-accelerating development of technology.

Overcoming Race Boundaries in Early 20th Century American Society

The Hallelujah Flight tells the story of James Banning and Thomas Allen flight from Los Angeles to New York City in 1932 (Bildner, 2010). This trip marked the first time that two African Americans attempted this transcontinental flight. With a patched-together aircraft, Banning and Allen journeyed from the West Coast to the East Coast overcoming discrimination and hostile weather along their journey. In places that Banning and Allen were welcome, they received help in the form of food and fuel from people in exchange for being able to sign the propeller of the plane. The book is beautifully illustrated with an eye-catching stylized art that is reminiscent of the “Pop Art” of the 1930’s.
Illustration 2

The Hallelujah Flight

The endpapers of the book contain a map of James Banning and Thomas Allen’s flight. The book discusses how the two men were greeted along their journey in different cities, which opens the opportunity for creative writing activities. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has emphasized that implementing creative writing strategies in the classroom helps give students meaningful opportunities to write (NCTE, 2004). One writing activity that can be used with The Hallelujah Flight is perspective writing. Perspective writing allows students to assume the role of a historical figure and write about people and events of a time period. This type of warm personal writing can humanize historical figures and time periods. Through perspective writing, middle school students can also examine divergent perspectives on an event during a time period and explore the content material in-depth (National Council for the Social Studies, 2008).

One perspective writing activity is for students to write a brief column as a newspaper writer for one of the cities that James Banning and Thomas Allen landed in for supplies. Students might first be given an example like the one below.

Pittsburgh Press Column for “The Flying Hoboes”

Yesterday, there was a strange disturbance in farmer Ollie VonSnickle’s corn field. There were two black men that had a miraculous landing in a plane that many folks described as an “ole rust bucket.” After an astonishing landing that included part of the nose of the plane falling off, the two men looked at each other and said, “Hallelujah.” As word spread into the city, many people came to meet these two men that introduced themselves as “The Flying Hoboes” including Lloyd and Paul Waner from the Pirates. A lot of folks chipped in with spare parts to help these two curious men get their plane fixed. I have to say for myself and the great city of Pittsburgh… thank you “Flying Hoboes” for crashing here. You gave the folks of this area a great
relief from their troubles for one day in these tough times.

This perspective writing activity allows students to do research about the cities where Banning and Allen visited. Students gain a more in-depth investigation of the cities and the historical context for a time period. For example, one of the authors had to find a newspaper for the city of Pittsburgh during the 1930’s as well as local heroes that Banning and Allen could have met. He also had to consider how this event could serve as a distraction for people suffering during the Great Depression. Students could replicate this activity with any location on the map in the endpapers of the book or design a hypothetical situation where Banning and Allen landed in any city. The theme of the writing column can focus on many different aspects of a time period. Regardless of how the writing column is designed, students should be encouraged to use what they learn from their reading to practice their writing skills in role. This allows students to dig beneath the surface of a time period and have a more authentic understanding of life during a historical era.

30 Years before Rosie the Riveter there was Harriet Quimby: Women and Flight

*Brave Harriet* (Moss, 2001) is a fictionalized first-person narrative that tells the story of Harriet Quimby, the first female pilot to fly across the English Channel. Through her actions, Harriet broke gender barriers for women aviators. This victory was accomplished in spite of the discouragement she received. Even her close friend, Gustav Hamel, offered a plan to impersonate Harriet and to fly the channel for her, but she vehemently refused. Unfortunately, the news about her solo flight across the English Channel on April 16, 1912 was overshadowed by the devastating news about the Titanic sinking. The Author’s Note provides additional informational about Harriet.
Illustration 3

Brave Harriet

Many activities can be constructed around Brave Harriet. Students can role play the discussion between Quimby and Hamel when he offered to impersonate her. This can highlight her courage and integrity. They can also create a diary entry for Harriet describing her feelings about the flight and events surrounding it. Perhaps more importantly, middle graders would benefit from a discussion of what bravery is and their own acts of bravery.

A short example of a diary entry might be used. Below is an example that a teacher might use.

Diary Entry Example
April 6, 1912

Today, I put on my purple flying suit with a little trepidation. By tonight, I will be either the first woman to fly across the English Channel, or I will be drinking it. Since I do not like salt water and I do like attention, I certainly hope that my flight is successful. The 50 horse-power, Bleriot monoplane that I borrowed is certainly a good one for the job. I estimate the flying time around an hour. I will take off from Dover in England and land somewhere close to Calais.

By picking various points in Harriet’s short life, students can delve into questions about courage, daring, and fear. They can also examine when courage needs to be shown. Sometimes, taking a risk requires having to facing perils and overcoming cultural and gender barriers.

Books Working Together

Why do some books work together while others do not? We might assume that one trait of books that work well together is that they share common themes. There are a host of other important traits. Here are just a few:

1. Similarity of characters. The people who populate the books share similar dreams, occupations, and accomplishments.
2. **Content relationships.** The books deal with compatible periods of history, cultures, and geography.

3. **Achievement of Standards.** The books can be used to advance the same or related curriculum standards.

```
Used wisely, such books extend content and motivate further thinking, reading, and research. They turn students into scholars that are problem solvers, questioners, and seekers of truth.
```

4. **High Quality of Writing.** The books are written with elegance of style, thoroughness of research, and unerring accuracy.

5. **Powerful Illustrations.** The illustrators need to work in a way that contributes to and compliments the text.

6. **The Ability to Attract and Captivate Readers.** There must be a power about the books which entrances and inspires students to read them.

All of these qualities taken together create a compatibility that is cemented by the intuitive power of the caring, book-loving teacher. When books work together, effective teachers can use them to reinforce one another and promote higher order thinking. Reading one book leads to the next. The relationships of themes and ideas help the reader to see each book in a greater context and within the larger framework of history and culture.

**Reflections**

The books on flight described in this article would fit into a unit on flight or inventions during the first part of 20th century. Similar collections of books could be used to explore in-depth particular issues, historical figures, and events. For example, several of Demi’s books can be used that relate to world religions (Demi, 2012; Demi, 1998; Demi, 2003). Diane Stanley’s books could
similarly be used for defining leaders
(Stanley, 2002; Stanley & Vennema, 2001;
Stanley & Vennema, 1997). In fact, great
books with great illustrations can be found
to enlighten and explore nearly every unit
taught in the middle grades. Used wisely,
such books extend content and motivate
further thinking, reading, and research. They
turn students into scholars that are problem
solvers, questioners, and seekers of truth.

References
Association for Middle Level Education.
(2012). This we believe in action: Implementing successful middle level schools. Westerville, OH: Author.


Children’s Literature


Appendix A
Additional Flight Books in Children’s Literature


Dr. Deborah A. Wooten is an Associate Professor of Reading in the Theory and Practice in Teacher Education Department at The University of Tennessee. As a specialist in Children’s and YA Literature and content area literacy strategies, she has authored numerous publications including Valued Voices: The Writing and Sharing Connections Process.

Dr. Jeremiah Clabough is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. His research interests include student engagement through role-playing activities and using primary sources in the social studies classroom.

Dr. Thomas Turner is currently a Professor in the department of Theory and Practice in Teacher Education at The University of Tennessee. He is the author of several books and journal publications.

Marek enjoys his Halloween book just before bedtime.
Linking Science and Literacy in the Volunteer State:

Introducing the 2014 Tennessee Science Trade book

Annual Reading (TN-STAR) List

By

Joyce Gulley, Kristin Rearden, Amy Broemmel, & Jeff Thomas

Elementary teachers know that integrating science and literature is an effective strategy for fitting science instruction into an already full schedule. Finding the time to locate suitable resources that support the Tennessee Science Curriculum Framework Standards can be challenging, however. While many high quality national lists are produced to help identify suitable trade books, they fail to establish connections to the Tennessee elementary science standards. To help close this gap, this article introduces an inaugural list called the Tennessee (TN) Science Trade books Annual Reading (TN-STAR) list. The TN-STAR list is a teacher- and student-friendly set of trade books that are both appropriate for elementary classrooms and aligned to the Tennessee science standards. To determine the books for this list, we established a set of criteria based on other recognition arenas. The criteria utilizes six elements from the National Science Teachers Association/Children’s Book Council’s Outstanding Trade Books for Students K-12 and three author-developed criteria to select 18 trade books that teachers will find to be
valuable and exciting resources for the classroom.

**Introduction**

Trade books provide effective ways to generate student interest in topics, extend student learning about topics, and help teachers integrate language arts with other subjects such as science. Marzano, Pickering and Pollack (2001) conclude that using trade books along with effective guided reading strategies can increase learning in both subjects and improve comprehension of material. Both the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) have position statements encouraging the use of multiple methods, including the use of trade books with science, to expand students’ exposure to both content areas (International Reading Association, 1999; National Science Teachers Association 2002). Importantly, as classroom teachers know, trade books written and illustrated for the elementary grades combine distinctive visual and literary components to create engaging and meaningful experiences for children.

**The need and relevancy for developing the TN-STAR list**

Although there are national lists that recommend books for integrating elementary science and literacy, these lists lack purposeful and direct connections to the Tennessee Science Curriculum Framework. The TN-STAR list bridges this gap by identifying trade books that are appropriate for Tennessee elementary classrooms. This is accomplished by aligning the TN-STAR list selections to the Tennessee science content standards for elementary science in grades K-5. This alignment provides an implicit connection to the accompanying conceptual strands and guiding questions listed in the curriculum framework. To this end, we have created the TN-STAR list as a resource of recent, high quality trade books...
that Tennessee teachers can use to meet grade level expectations as they work hard to support their science instruction through the integration of literature.

**Modeling excellence to identify TN-STAR criteria**

Elementary teachers have many wonderful resources and checklist available to them to help evaluate books for using in their classrooms. Over time, some of the checklists have also been used to help evaluate student learning in order to validate the criteria used in the specific list. Several options available to teachers were considered to develop the TN-STAR criteria. For example, Sudol and King (1996) identified the criteria of accuracy, organization, layout, cohesion of ideas, specialized vocabulary, and reader interest as important considerations when selecting nonfiction trade books for classroom use. Pringle and Lamme (2005) provided up to nine criteria to evaluate picture books relevant to promote learning of science with literature. Broemmel and Rearden (2006) provide a review of the Teachers’ Choices Booklist, sponsored by the IRA, that help validate that list as an appropriate one to measure and evaluate trade books to help students learn science. Finally, the NSTA and the Children’s Book Council’s (CBC) jointly present an annual list titled “*Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students K-12*” which identifies the best recently published books that connect language arts and science.

The authors of the TN-STAR list ultimately decided to partially follow the NSTA/CBC list because of the highly valued reputations of these professional organizations. The criteria for a book selected for the NSTA/CBC *Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students K-12* annual list include:

1. The book has substantial science content;
2. Information is clear, accurate, and up to date;
3. Theories and facts are clearly distinguished;
4. Facts are not oversimplified to the point where the information is misleading;
5. Generalizations are supported by facts and significant facts are not omitted; and
6. Books are free of gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic bias.

Each of the first five criteria provide needed content benchmarks when evaluating titles. The sixth criterion ensures selections help teachers meet a universal responsibility to create nondiscriminatory classrooms. Some of the titles that associate with this criterion will also allow teachers to connect selections to other subjects and standards (e.g., social studies) and Tennessee science connections for Embedded Inquiry and Embedded Technology and Engineering. Three additional criteria were created to compliment the first six from NSTA/CBC. The book must:

a) connect to a Standard in the Tennessee Science Curriculum Framework for K-5;

b) be readily available in public libraries or bookstores; and

c) have received positive reviews in at least one of the following well-respected resources: Booklist, Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, Horn Book, Kirkus Reviews, Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal, and/or Science and Children.

The result is a final list of nine criteria that are used to evaluate books in the TN-STAR list selection process.

1. The book has substantial science content;
2. Information is clear, accurate, and up to date;
3. Theories and facts are clearly distinguished;
4. Facts are not oversimplified to the point where the information is misleading;
5. Generalizations are supported by facts and significant facts are not omitted;
6. The book is free of gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic bias;
7. Information can be connected to a Standard in the Tennessee Science Curriculum Framework;
8. The book is readily available in public libraries or bookstores; and

Using the above criteria we identify 18 books for inclusion on the inaugural TN-STAR list. We have identified two books for each grade level for kindergarten through fifth grade (K-5) and three honorable mention selections for each level of primary and intermediate. Each title is linked to the Tennessee Science Curriculum Framework that was approved in 2007 and implemented beginning in 2009 (Tennessee Department of Education, n.d.). The authors decided to align to grade levels in an effort to provide a more detailed connection to the Tennessee science standards. However, we recognize that elementary teachers possess the ingenuity and creativity needed to extend this relatively narrow “one grade” alignment to additional grade levels based on students’ reading levels and interests. Last, to ensure K-5 teacher voices in the selections, the authors have formed a Professional Advisory Committees (PAC) of current classroom teachers. These teachers provide a final review for the TNSTAR list selections as resources that they believe would be helpful to use with their students. The teachers are ones that are known in their school districts for possessing an expertise in working with elementary students and literacy.

The inaugural list provides selections for quality trade books for use in K-5 classrooms. Table 1 provides a summary of
the list of books with the associated standards. Additionally, if Tennessee transitions to the Next Generation Science Standards, the list will respond accordingly. We plan to submit TN-STAR list each spring for publication in the Tennessee Reading Teacher to help share our selections with Tennessee elementary teachers. We welcome, and would very much appreciate, nominations as we begin to compile a list for next year.

Introducing the 2014 TN-STAR List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>First Grade</th>
<th>Second Grade</th>
<th>Third Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### Fourth Grade

**LOOK UP: HENRIETTA LEAVITT, PIONEERING WOMAN ASTRONOMER.** 2013. Robert Burleigh. Illus. Raúl Colón. Simon & Schuster. 32 pp. ISBN-10: 1416958193. As a female astronomer in the late 1800s, Henrietta Leavitt was largely disregarded as a real scientist until she made a discovery that would forever change the way we look at the universe. **STANDARD 6.**

**VOLCANO RISING.** 2013. Elizabeth Rusch. Illus. Susan Swan. Charlesbridge. 32pp. ISBN-10: 1580894089. Two levels of text describe the destructive side of volcanoes as well as their power to transform landscapes. End notes extend the learning opportunities. **STANDARD 7.**

### Fifth Grade

**BEYOND THE SOLAR SYSTEM: EXPLORING GALAXIES, BLACK HOLES, ALIEN PLANETS, AND MORE.** Mary Kay Carson. Chicago Review Press. 144 pp. ISBN-10: 1613745443. The history of astronomy is showcased through timelines, diagrams, photographs, suggested experiments, and biographical sketches of the scientists who helped us understand our universe. **STANDARD 6.**


### Primary Honorable Mention


**MOUSERONAUT GOES TO MARS.** 2013. Mark Kelly. Illus. C.F. Payne. Simon & Schuster. 40pp. ISBN-10: 1442484268. Learn about space travel through the eyes of a mouse that sneaks aboard a manned flight to Mars. An afterword tells more about Mars and what it will take to send astronauts to the planet. **STANDARD 6.**

**SEEDS, BEES, BUTTERFLIES, AND MORE: POEMS FOR TWO VOICES.** 2013. Carole Gerber. Illus. Eugen Yelchin. Henry Holt. 32 pp. ISBN-10: 0805092110. Learn more about plants and animals through poems that are designed for two (or more) performers. **STANDARDS 2, 3, 4, and 5.**

### Intermediate Honorable Mention


**SEYMOUR SIMON’S EXTREME OCEANS.** 2013. Seymour Simon. Chronicle Books. ISBN-10: 1452108331. Budding ecologists and oceanographers will learn about various extremes of ocean life, from the impact of violent storms, to the effects of climate change, to the habits of the largest and most dangerous marine animals. **STANDARDS 7 and 8.**
Table 1. Books and Associated TN Science Curriculum Framework Standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>1 Cells</th>
<th>2 Interdependence</th>
<th>3 Flow of matter and energy</th>
<th>4 Heredity</th>
<th>5 Biodiversity and change</th>
<th>6 The universe</th>
<th>7 The Earth</th>
<th>8 The atmosphere</th>
<th>9 Matter</th>
<th>10 Energy</th>
<th>11 Motion</th>
<th>12 Forces in nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat like a bear</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s go nuts</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hide and seek</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight of the bee</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water in park</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frog song</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tree lady</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond solar sys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluto’s secret</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal book</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moustronaut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeds, bees</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eruption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical wizard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme oceans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Joyce Gulley, Associate Professor of Teacher Education, focuses in literacy in the elementary grades. She works with future and current teachers to identify high quality materials to use in their classrooms that promote literacy and student engagement with text.

Kristin Rearden, Clinical Associate Professor of Science Education, works with graduate teaching interns at the elementary and middle grade levels. She focuses on the integration of science with literacy and serves on the National Science Teachers Association’s Outstanding Science Trade Book selection panel.

Amy Broemmel, Associate Professor of Elementary and Literacy Education, works with graduate teaching interns. Her research focuses on effective professional development in literacy and using high quality science oriented picture books to facilitate literacy instruction.

Jeff Thomas, Professor of Teacher Education, works with emerging and current elementary teachers to promote integration of inquiry based science, children’s literature, and technology.
Back to Basics: Rethinking Thematic Reading Instruction

for English Language Learners

By

Amber Warren & Natalia Ward

Puzzled, Tan is watching his classmates who are laughing while trying to explain and demonstrate a word that is written on the board behind him. “What can it be?” And then the biggest grin appears on his usually reserved face. “Ancient!” he declares with pride. The boys put their thumbs up and Tan chooses the next person to go. Playing Hot Seat with new vocabulary words was one of student favorites during the ESL Book Club conducted at their school.

For young or inexperienced readers, exposure to texts is critical for developing keen interest in reading. However, some students, including those who are learning English as an additional language (EAL), have limited content and vocabulary knowledge, sometimes causing them to struggle with those texts. By engaging students with in-depth thematic reading, a practice based on Krashen’s “Narrow Reading” (2004), educators can increase focus on vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension in complex content-area topics, scaffolding students comprehension to access the types of texts needed for academic success. In this article, we describe and review an in-depth thematic reading approach in light of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). We illustrate the potential benefits of narrow or thematic reading by describing our work with an after-school book club we organized for multilingual students at suburban elementary schools in the southeast.

The Common Core and Academic Language

Common Core State Standards have now been adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia (Core Standards). Surveys conducted in school districts in states that have adopted the standards indicate that they are indeed perceived as more rigorous
(Kober & Rentner, 2011). Part of this is that the standards call for changes to both the types of reading and the focus of reading instruction in K-12 classrooms. Specifically, they require a greater balance of fiction to non-fiction reading, as well as continuously increasing levels of text complexity. This is based on CCSS research identifying a lack of non-fiction reading in the lower grades (Hiebert & Grisham, 2013) and research which suggests that ability to comprehend complex texts is a “high impact indicator of future success” (CEP, 2013). The emphasis on non-fiction reading, or reading in the content areas in the elementary grades is particularly significant, as it places importance on academic vocabulary and knowledge building activities that lay the foundation for academic success in upper grades.

While the CCSS has brought a concern with Tier 2 vocabulary (general academic words such as formulate and periphery) and Tier 3 vocabulary (domain-specific words such as carburetor and lava) to the fore in terms of meeting standards, academic language has been a focus of second language research for quite some time (e.g., Chamot & O’Malley, 1996; Cummins, 1979). Academic language is privileged in educational contexts and students must be able to use it successfully to survive in school (Cummins, 2000). Further, it takes significant time to develop. Linguistically diverse students may take five to seven years to develop grade-level proficiency (Cummins, 1992) and complicating factors such as poverty may increase this figure (Hart & Risley, 2003).

Knowledge of academic language varies relative to developmental and educational levels attained (Scarcella, 2003; Stahl & Nagy, 2006) and based on familiarity with a topic. And in some sense, academic language is always developing, even for native speakers. There are also many elements to understanding and using
academic language. It is comprised of social practices used to complete communicative goals (Scarcella, 2003), facility with content-specific vocabulary (Escarría, Vogt, & Short, 2008), complex grammatical structures (Cummins, 2003; Stahl & Nagy, 2006), recognition of morphological word parts (Escarría et al., 2008), and the ability to identify linguistic features particular to various academic disciplines (Cummins, 2000; Scarcella, 2003). Proficiency in academic English enables students to become part of a “culture of literate English” (Stahl & Nagy, 2006, p. 139).

**Academic Language and Reading**

Reading is the main way that academic language can be developed. In fact, research has shown that simply reading alone, without any other interventions, can be a valuable source of input for second language learners (Cho & Krashen, 1994; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Lituanas, Jacobs & Renandya, 2001; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Nation, 1997). However, for linguistically diverse students, reading comprehension is often hindered by English vocabulary knowledge that is limited in both breadth and depth (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Valencia & Riddle-Buly, 2004). In fact, even English language learners (ELLs) who exit supplemental ESL programs often lack the academic vocabulary needed to succeed in their grade-level classroom without intensive language support. For ELLs, the right kind of reading can therefore become an invaluable source of language input that not only provides opportunities for vocabulary acquisition but may also help them to become independent learners.

**“Wide” Reading**

One of the most frequently discussed approaches for providing additional reading instruction is “wide” reading. Most wide reading programs involve large amounts of
voluntary reading on any subject that appeals to the readers. Independent wide reading programs come under various names, including extensive reading, uninterrupted sustained silent reading (SSR), drop everything and read (DEAR), and silent uninterrupted reading for fun (SURF) (Renandya, 2007). All of these programs have the same purpose, which is to provide students with a large quantity of high-interest self-selected reading material that is on or below their reading level (Renandaya, 2007).

Wide reading has also been utilized in ESL classrooms in the US and related research shows students who participate in the programs often “develop positive attitudes towards books” (Elley, 1991, p. 375). This is might be due to the fact that, as students read a large amount of material they have chosen for themselves, they experience success and become intrinsically motivated to continue reading. In fact, one researcher theorized that this positive exposure to books might lead not only to greater amounts of reading, but also to improved reading proficiency (Anderson, 1996).

When independent wide reading programs are set up, the freedom of choice may keep students interested, but it may also negate valuable learning opportunities, such as increased content familiarity and repeated exposure to vocabulary that can arise from reading a series of more closely related texts. One possible weakness of using wide reading alone may be the lack of repeated opportunities for seeing the same vocabulary and content, known as vocabulary recycling (Nation, 2001). Research into vocabulary recycling shows that students typically need to see a new vocabulary word in context multiple times in order for the reader to recognize it. Nation (2001) argued that “repetition is very important for vocabulary learning […] because vocabulary items must not only be known; they must be known
well so that they can be fluently accessed” (p. 74-76). To know vocabulary well, students need multiple exposures to the same words in various settings. Gardner (2004) thus hypothesized that not only the volume of reading, but also its nature and quality, would affect vocabulary growth and second language acquisition. Indeed, if teachers want to offer ELLs a fair chance to succeed in the rigor of the CCSS, wide reading must be complemented by in-depth thematic reading, especially reading in content themes that are aligned with the Standards.

**In-depth Thematic Reading**

Common Core State Standards call for increased levels of strategic academic vocabulary instruction and development of content knowledge. Some of the practices associated with the CCSS include close reading, relying on multiple exposures to a short complex text, and an increased focus on non-fiction. We believe that the high expectations of the standards may be met by taking a more focused approach to reading with ELLs through in-depth thematic reading. Although wide reading and in-depth thematic reading are both currently in use to some degree, an in-depth thematic approach has received less attention until now (but see Bryan, 2011 for one recent review). Available empirical evidence suggests the potential benefits of in-depth thematic reading are great enough that this approach deserves additional attention. In particular, it can be an effective way to assist ELLs with increasing vocabulary knowledge and improving comprehension of complex content-area topics, both heavily emphasized by the Common Core State Standards.

We define in-depth thematic reading as using a collection of texts focusing on a specific topic or a theme as characterized by identifiably interconnected ideas and concepts. One example of this type of
reading can be found in Krashen’s (2004) notion of Narrow Reading. Narrow reading can be defined as repeated reading of thematically related texts (Min, 2008) or reading in one genre, area, or author (Krashen, 2004). Krashen and colleagues found this method scaffolds readers’ background knowledge, making texts more comprehensible (Cho, Ahn, & Krashen, 2005). Furthermore, native speakers frequently engage in Narrow Reading, even if unintentionally, as they tend to read books by one author or in one genre. For example, as we find an author we enjoy we tend to read numerous works by this author or series’ of books in one genre, (e.g., detective stories). Thus, Narrow Reading may simply reinforce a habit already acquired in students’ first language practices.

The following three tenets are essential to Narrow Reading. First, by using a single topic, author or genre, Narrow Reading offers extended exposure to a single theme. This increases background knowledge and provides necessary scaffolds for making sense of the text. Second, as with repeated content, repeated exposure to vocabulary may “facilitate incidental vocabulary acquisition” (Lee, 1996, p.13). Finally, as Narrow Reading focuses the reader’s attention to a single topic or style of writing, it eases the mental processing load for the learners, enabling them to focus their attention on other aspects of reading, such as fluency. Thus, the sustained content in Narrow Reading helps increase topic and text structure familiarity, improves reading confidence, and facilitates vocabulary acquisition.

**Potential Benefits for English Language Learners**

In a recent review of the literature on narrow reading, Bryan (2011) found that indeed this approach was useful for second language learners. We believe that in-depth thematic reading works particularly well with the
CCSS because as vocabulary and academic content reoccurs, it allows for acquisition of Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, repeated exposure to similar or related concepts, and increased familiarity with the topic for greater comprehension.

**Building Background Knowledge**

Sustained content can support multilingual students as they are reading. While these students may initially lack background knowledge due to unfamiliarity with content vocabulary, sustained content provides the familiarity needed to allow them to focus on the other aspects of the text. According to Ponder and Powell (1989), “reading at length and in depth about a single topic enhances the ability to deal with the linguistic elements of a novel text; as more and more texts on the topic are attempted, vocabulary and associated structures become increasingly familiar” (p. 7-8). Sustained content may in fact allow students to “accrete information, without which they are less able to compare, question, synthesize, and evaluate what they read” (Pally, 1997, p. 294). Further, Willingham (2006) argued that background knowledge allows readers to chunk information in the text, allowing working memory “to sort through the implications of a text” (n.p.). In other words, this style of reading has the potential to increase background knowledge enabling students to focus on other critical thinking skills, better preparing second language
students for success in academic content areas.

**Learning Domain-Specific Vocabulary**

Through bypassing the initial adjustment period usually required to develop familiarity with new content, in-depth thematic reading may afford students the opportunity to focus on other areas, such as vocabulary, comprehension, reading strategies, metalinguistic knowledge, and critical thinking skills. One major advantage of in-depth thematic reading is that there is a great chance of vocabulary reoccurrence, and this repeated exposure can lead to greater vocabulary acquisition (Hwang & Nation, 1989; Min, 2008; Schmitt & Carter, 2000). Not the breadth, but the depth of reading materials provide rigor for ELLs’ academic success. As the students read a number of books on the same topic, they repeatedly encounter a similar set of vocabulary words associated with a particular content topic. Over time, through multiple exposures, content terminology, in which the meaning is concentrated, becomes a part of a student’s active vocabulary.

Furthermore, teachers can be more strategic about the vocabulary instruction they offer to students, as the theme lends itself to a particular focus on domain-specific words.

**Enhancing Reading Comprehension**

Though more research is needed in this area, we do know that typical comprehension instruction is limited to a number of disconnected strategies that equate reading comprehension to a graphic organizer.

Dozens of basal readers offer so called thematically organized texts that often lack depths and ask students to utilize a given strategy (e.g., find cause and effect, predict, summarize) to comprehend a story.

However, as teachers, we saw first-hand that the comprehension strategies may or may not transfer from text to text. What carries over is students’ knowledge of a particular topic and the vocabulary associated with it.
As Hirsch (2006) noted, “[…] cognitive scientists agree that reading comprehension requires prior "domain-specific" knowledge about the things that a text refers to, and that understanding the text consists of integrating this prior knowledge with the words in order to form a "situation model." Constructing this mental situation model is what reading comprehension is.” In other words, through in-depth study of a particular theme or a topic, students accumulate content knowledge, as well as vocabulary, and as a result enhance their reading comprehension.

Implementing In-depth Thematic Reading: an After-school Book Club

In our teaching practice, we incorporated in-depth thematic reading both during and after school. For the purposes of this paper, we chose to focus on our experiences with an after-school book club that allowed students to read narrowly over an extended period in a safe and comfortable environment.

Context

We conducted ESL book clubs for three consecutive years with four different groups of children at two elementary schools (one urban and one suburban) in a mid-sized southeastern city where we (the authors) taught. In all, 26 total students participated in the book clubs, which each lasted for approximately four months. To begin, we invited any student receiving ESL services in the upper elementary grades (3rd – 5th) to join the club, which met for one hour, one day a week, after school. It is therefore important to remark that the students in this project were willing participants who volunteered to attend the meetings outside school hours, and this motivation may in fact have been a positive factor in terms of the improvements we were able to observe. Students’ language proficiency levels ranged from Level 2 through Level 4 on the ELDA (English Language Development Assessment) test. This also reflects the range in our daily ESL pullout groups. Data
collected included planning documents, student work, student interview recordings, and informal observation notes. In this article, we will include examples from just one of the book clubs, which was conducted with 3rd and 4th grade ESL students at one of the participating elementary schools. When we began our unit on Ancient Greece, our book club consisted of four third and two fourth grade boys who spoke Japanese, Spanish or Vietnamese as their first language.

In our after-school implementation, we used a set procedure, yet these steps are modifiable for any teacher’s plans, whether using in-depth thematic reading during school hours or after school, as part of a tutoring program or voluntary book club.

Our three planning stages for getting started were selecting a theme, choosing texts, and planning activities.

**Step 1: select a theme.** In-depth thematic reading hinges upon deep exploration of a topic, therefore we wanted to select a theme that would remain interesting to students over a span of several months. When choosing the theme, we also considered the CCSS and other standards to which our district adheres. We wanted to use this book club time to enrich students’ knowledge of topics related to their grade-level content work. Keeping an academic focus to the theme allowed us to relate the work the students did in the book club to their experiences in the classroom. For example, one of the themes we worked with was Westward Expansion, which fit easily within the fourth grade state social studies standards for recognizing and understanding American territorial expansion.

For the book club described in this article, we chose the topic of Ancient Greece, which offered numerous connections to the world the students live in today (e.g. the Olympics and the governmental systems). The theme was linked to such third and fourth grade
social studies standards as understanding “diversity of human cultures” and “identifying the contributions of individuals and people of various ethnic, racial, religious, and socioeconomic groups to the development of civilizations” (Tennessee Department of Education Social Studies Curriculum Standards).

**Step 2: select books.** After selecting a theme, we began to search for age and reading level appropriate books on that topic. We found that this took a little more time at the start than we originally had planned because locating high-interest low-complexity level books for the initial sessions was challenging to find. After selecting a theme, we began looking for books in our local and school libraries. At this point, we were considering the theme, the students’ interests, and their reading levels. We found that it helped to be creative when selecting reading materials. In our own search for books, we also found various reading sources available through the Internet. We used these to supplement the books students were reading.

We were able to provide one copy of each book for each student. However, in the classroom setting it was often difficult, but also unnecessary, because we had students read in small groups, selected sections of the books to read whole group, or had several selections on one narrow topic (e.g. three different texts about discovering King Tut’s Tomb) for each small group to read before passing their book to the next group.

Further, this kind of thematic focus allows for meaningful differentiation in the classroom. While students might read texts at different levels, they all become valuable contributors in the content discussion. In our book selection, we were particularly focused on ensuring the students would find the content interesting, both to encourage them in their desire to read and because the project took place after school, in their own
time. We purchased four books that were engaging and content-rich, while at the same time remaining conscious that the language needed to be simple enough for our students to grasp. To ensure that the books would be comprehensible to our students, we conducted FRY readability tests on each of the texts under consideration. We initially had to reject several texts as being much too difficult, which is one potential problem with using authentic literature. However, we chose to stick with authentic books because of the way it “automatically recycles language (vocabulary, grammar, etc.) as it represents coherent characters and settings and a particular time” (Gareis, Allard & Saindon, 2009). Eventually, we chose texts with reading levels about one to two grade levels above that of the participants. Although we would not recommend providing students’ sole reading instruction from texts this far above their reading level, the recreational nature of the book club, coupled with the scaffolded support we provided, made the use of these texts possible. It is also pertinent to note that the selected texts were still much closer to the students’ actual reading levels than the school social studies texts, which we found after conducting FRY readability tests were written at roughly an 8th grade level. Table 1 shows some of the books we used in our book clubs.

**Step 3: reading and vocabulary activities.**

The structure of our book club meetings was consistent throughout in order to ensure that the focus remained on reading and vocabulary, and to promote learner autonomy. We started each session by discussing the previously read material and by reviewing the vocabulary on the word wall. We regarded the word wall as an invaluable opportunity for students to take ownership of new vocabulary, as well as to provide additional practice with the words.
Table 1. Examples of Text Sets by Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texts used in Narrow Reading Project</th>
<th>Ancient Greece</th>
<th>Ancient Egypt</th>
<th>US Westward Expansion</th>
<th>Dinosaurs &amp; Fossils</th>
<th>Energy Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curious Kids Guides: Ancient Greece by F. MacDonald</td>
<td>Mummies, Pyramids and Pharaohs by Gail Gibbons</td>
<td>Ancient Greece by P. Connolly</td>
<td>Towns of the West, from Boom to Bust by D. Furey</td>
<td>The Day of Dinosaurs (First Time Books) by S. Berenstain</td>
<td>Oil by C. Ditchfield Oil and Gas by N. Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK Readers: Greek Myths by D. Lock</td>
<td>Who Was King Tut by R. Edwards and T. Kelley</td>
<td>You Wouldn’t Want to be a Slave in Ancient Greece by F. MacDonald</td>
<td>William F. Cody: Showman of the Old West by E. West</td>
<td>What Ever Happened to the Dinosaurs? by B. Most</td>
<td>Oil Spill! by M. Berger and P. Mirocha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Wouldn’t Want to be a Slave in Ancient Greece by F. MacDonald</td>
<td>The Egyptian Mummy (History Detectives) by F. MacDonald</td>
<td>Egyptian Mummies: People from the Past by D. Pemberton</td>
<td>Daily Life in a Covered Wagon by P. Erickson</td>
<td>Fossils (Early Bird Earth Science) by S. M. Walker</td>
<td>Generating Wind Power (Energy Revolution) by N. Walker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Geographic Readers: Mummies by E. Carney</td>
<td>They Came Around the Horn by R. V. Phelan</td>
<td>Trail of Tears (Step-Into-Reading Series) by J. Bruch</td>
<td>Dinosaurs!: The Biggest Baddest Stragest Fastest by H. Zimmerman</td>
<td>Our Earth: Clean Energy by P. Hock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brief new vocabulary introduction followed, and we assisted the students as needed in working out the vocabulary, which was then written on index cards by students for review at the beginning of the next session. Students also entered new vocabulary words into their personal dictionaries, which included a student-created context specific description of the word meaning, an illustration and an example sentence using the vocabulary word to help students recognize the part of speech. The students then formed smaller groups, read and discussed their book, and brought a few pertinent ideas or questions to share with the whole group. Students were also allowed to take the texts home, and invited to read or re-read passages to their family members or for their own enjoyment if they wished.

Though students spent the majority of the book club time sessions actually reading and discussing, in accordance with Min’s (2008) research into the effects of vocabulary enhancement activities indicated that additional focus on vocabulary words may be necessary to ensure that students are acquiring this language, we conducted a number of vocabulary-enhancing activities. Students discussed new vocabulary words, looked for cognates in their native languages, created personal vocabulary notebooks, word walls, participated in collaborative projects and vocabulary games such as Hot Seat, as illustrated by the vignette above. All of these ensured that we did not leave vocabulary acquisition to an incidental chance, but focused students’ attention to key words most meaningful to the theme.
Students also participated in additional enrichment activities to reinforce the content and encourage their interest in the topic. For instance, students created their own shields when talking about Grecian army, then they explained why they chose their particular design and what meaning it had; students also created a paper Parthenon before journaling about the construction of the Greek Parthenon. Additionally, we incorporated mini-projects and student-directed activities weekly to keep students’ interest high. We often used these activities as the basis for journal entries or other student writing. During most sessions, students completed journal entries related to that week’s particular reading and activities that yet again focused students on the content vocabulary of the topic.

**Image 2: The Parthenon Journal Entry**

---

**The Results**

Over an average span of 16 weeks, students read an average of four individual texts under a unified theme. Across each theme, vocabulary words were selected by the students and given additional attention through the word wall, games, and personal dictionaries. In other words, over the span of the book club, students were actively engaged in repeated reading and close study of texts written on or slightly above their grade level – all practices that are emphasized in the CCSS. Furthermore, we observed that students were able to take increasing ownership for their study as the book club progressed. This may indicate that the routine was useful to students, but it may
also indicate that as the theme continued, students became more familiar with the vocabulary associated with that theme and were able to read and work more independently. Ultimately, while we cannot make claims that this approach increased vocabulary learning in statistically significant way, anecdotally, we saw evidence of increased topical familiarity and more use of the key content vocabulary. In particular, we noted growth in the students’ ability to use domain-specific vocabulary words in context in their journal assignments and in their discussions related to Ancient Greece during the book club. We also noticed this, in some cases, carrying over to their regular ESL classes. Additionally, we informally interviewed the students to gather feedback related to the structure, content and their overall perception of the book club. One of the students’ favorite aspects of the book club was the word wall, which they created with almost no assistance from us. This remark indicates that, at least for this student, our goal of encouraging student ownership of the project was met. Furthermore, in spite of our initial concerns, the students did not seem to feel that reading materials on one topic over an extended period was boring and clearly expressed a desire to participate in a similar project in the future.

Conclusion

We present our experience with in-depth thematic reading with ELLs in light of the new Common Core Standards, but all struggling readers can benefit from extra support in reading to increase their comprehension. Without it, students often reach upper-elementary or middle school with limited exposure to the topics in the texts, yet they need to be able to read and comprehend this information and ideally should be learning to do this on their own. The increased emphasis on strategic academic vocabulary instruction and content
knowledge development mandated by the CCSS underscore the significance of this. By introducing in-depth thematic reading, we suggest it is possible to provide all students with opportunities to build background knowledge and recycle Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary – essential components for achieving reading comprehension.

References


from:


Amber Warren is a PhD Candidate and Associate Instructor in Literacy, Culture and Language Education at Indiana University. She has taught ESL and EFL in US primary schools and in Asia. Her interest areas include issues in teaching multilingual learners and pre-/in-service teacher education particularly in hybrid/online contexts.

Natalia Ward is a PhD student and a Graduate Teaching Assistant in Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She has taught ESL and EFL in the US and Russia. Her research interests include teaching reading to struggling students and using balanced literacy approaches in elementary classrooms.
The Impact on and the Perceptions of Pre-service Teachers Participating in a Family Literacy Program

By

Terri Tharp

Introduction

Research indicates that families play a crucial role in the literacy development of their children (Chance, 2010; Falk-Ross, Beilfuss, & Orem, 2010; Larocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011; Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005; Storch & Whitehurst, 2001), and many studies have shown that family involvement is associated with numerous benefits such as sustained gains in academic achievement, motivation, enhanced English language skills, better school attendance, cognitive growth, improved behavior in school, better home-school relationships, more favorable attitudes toward school, and higher self-esteem (Cassity & Harris, 2000; Epstein, 1996; Tice, 2000). Although the powerful role of parents’ models and perceptions in reading practices has been asserted, this is often not so obvious to pre-service teachers (Falk-Ross, Beilfuss, & Orem, 2010). Because of these factors, there is a real need to provide pre-service elementary education teachers with relevant...
experiential service-learning experiences which will help them to better understand the importance of family literacy as well as the importance of family-teacher interactions in our increasingly diverse and complex world. Today’s teachers must be able to effectively communicate and collaborate with families from different cultural, socio-economic, and ethnic backgrounds in order to foster optimal learning experiences for children, while teacher educators must provide experiences which embed culturally relevant pedagogy (Risko et al., 2008).

The question for teacher education programs is how to best prepare pre-service teachers to develop the needed skills and dispositions to effectively collaborate with families. Reflecting on this need was the focus of this research study with two research questions guiding the purpose of the study: 1) What are the perceptions of pre-service teachers who participate in a Family Literacy Night Program, and 2) What is the impact of participating in a Family Literacy Night Program for the future teaching careers of pre-service teachers? A social constructivist view of the learning process was the guiding tenet of the study with the utilization of a V Diagram (Gowin & Alvarez, 2005) for planning and design applications (Appendix A).
Background

Over the past several years, pre-service teachers in designated experiential learning (EXL) sections of various reading courses have participated in Family Literacy Night Programs along with local public school systems and Read to Succeed which is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting literacy in the local community. The experiential learning allows for a direct relationship between what the pre-service teachers are learning in the university classroom and their practice in the “real world” (Galline & Moely, 2003) while the service learning component involves integrating community service with academic goals (Wasserman, 2009). Under the supervision of the university faculty, pre-service teachers organize, plan, and lead literacy activities with a cross curricular focus incorporating social studies, art, music, math, etc. which relate to the featured book. Featured books have included "The Three Ninja Pigs" by Cory Rosen Schwartz, "Bailey Goes Camping" by Kevin Henkes, "Dear Mr. Henshaw" by Beverly Cleary, "Llama Llama Red Pajama" by Anna Dewdney, "The Lightning Thief" by Rick Riordan, "Click Clack Moo" by Doreen Corin, "Green Eggs & Ham" by Dr. Seuss, and "Holes" by Louis Saachar. Activities have included graphing favorite foods to reader’s theatre to creating journals to making wanted posters!

Information from informal surveys conducted by Read to Succeed indicate that families, classroom teachers, and school personnel see the program as a positive learning experience. Also, the pre-service teachers have routinely completed reflection papers in the past which indicated participating in the program as a positive, but no official data was collected or analyzed. In order to ascertain whether participating in a Family Literacy Program was truly a valuable learning experience for
pre-service teachers regarding the
time of family literacy and the home-
school connection, it was felt that the
experience should be more formally
evaluated. Results would then be used to
assess whether the experience should
continue to be a part of the course
requirements or whether other avenues to
address the issue of family literacy should
be considered.

Procedures

Pre-planning

After obtaining IRB approval in summer
2012, a designated EXL section of
READ4015 for the fall 2012 semester was
identified by the researcher for the study.
The next step involved identifying a local
Title 1 school and then coordinating with the
school and Read to Succeed to plan the
Family Literacy Night. It was decided to
specifically invite children considered at-
risk academically in the third grade along
with all of their family members. In light of
the presidential election, the selected
featured book was *Grace for President* by
Kelly DiPucchio. The event was to be held
on October 23, 2012 from 5:00 pm to 7:00
pm with approximately 160 people (eight
rooms of 20). The program activities would
include 1) dinner for the families and pre-
service teachers provided by Read to
Succeed, 2) a planned literacy program with
family members and their children led by
the pre-service teachers, and 3) free copies
of the featured books for the children and
additional free books for the family
members along with any created materials.

Family Literacy Night Planning

After being introduced to *Grace for
President*, pre-service teachers researched
possible activities for the night. They were
couraged to look for and create cross-
curricular activities that would actively
involve both the children and the families.
They first shared their ideas in small groups
selecting their top four ideas and then had to
present and share the chosen activities with the entire class. After much discussion and debate, two pre-activities and three core activities were agreed upon by the class. These included campaign buttons or flag name tags, presidential props, a read aloud with vocabulary Bingo, campaign vests with written campaign promises, and an Electoral College scavenger hunt.

Next, pre-service teachers were divided into activities teams (two groups of four and three groups of five) and were responsible for creating the materials list and set of directions for their activity. Since everyone was going to be utilizing their instructions, this was a valuable lesson in how important it is as teachers to communicate effectively. Being a member of the activities team also involved a great deal of teamwork because they were responsible for working together to assemble all of the materials for each of the eight rooms. After working through that process, room teams were then formed (seven groups of three and one group of two) who would be responsible for facilitating the activities. Again, teamwork was a crucial component because the participants had to negotiate how to lead and facilitate each activity. Both the activities teams and room teams had to provide specific plans (mini lesson plans) to the instructor for review.

**Family Literacy Night Implementation**

Arriving in red, white, and blue at 4:00 pm, the pre-service teachers quickly introduced themselves to school personnel and began to set up the rooms for all of the literacy activities. Then they assembled in the cafeteria to assist the Read to Succeed personnel with setting out the food, pouring drinks, etc. During the meal time, no more than two pre-service teachers were allowed to sit together in order to encourage conversation with the families at the tables.
Because of the different arrival times of the families, participants returned to their assigned rooms by 5:15 pm to greet early arrivals and begin involving the families in the pre-activities. After all of the families arrived in the rooms, the pre-service teachers began the read aloud and then preceded to the other literacy activities. At 7:00 pm, the rooms were dismissed back to the cafeteria to pick up copies of free books for all family members. Based on the families, some rooms were able to finish all of the literacy activities while some sent materials and directions home with the families. All of the children left the rooms with a copy of *Grace for President*. Pre-service teachers then assisted the families with picking out books in the cafeteria and then returned to their classrooms to clean up and put the rooms in order for the next day.

**Methodology**

Initially a qualitative study was planned, but after feedback from a Research Academy peer group, a mixed method approach was determined to be a more encompassing approach which would provide more specific data. Therefore, results from a brief survey utilizing a Likert Scale (Appendix B) and findings from student reflection papers (Appendix C) are included.

**Participants and Data Collection**

Participants were twenty-three pre-service teachers enrolled in READ4015, Language & Literacy K-6 which is a six hour course designed to introduce the teacher candidate to the concepts of language and literacy. Of the 23 pre-service teachers, 20 were female and 3 were male. The ethnicity disaggregation was as follows: 22 White and 1 African American.

READ4015 is designated as an EXL course where pre-service teachers participate in a hands-on learning project in order to experience relevant real-world learning opportunities. Participants participated in planning and implementing the Family
Literacy Night as a part of the course requirements, but completing the survey and allowing the use of their reflection papers was voluntary, and informed consent forms were collected. No data was examined until fall 2012 grades were posted.

Data Analysis

Responses from the surveys and the reflection papers were analyzed to provide data for insights into the participants’ experiences. A Likert Scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to tabulate the responses to the five statements on the survey, and open coding was used to identify key words and/or phrases from the research papers and comments on the surveys to identify recurring themes.

Findings

Table 1 presents the responses to the five statements on the survey with subsequent paragraphs addressing the major themes that emerged from the survey and the reflection papers.

For most of the pre-service teachers (61%), the concept of a Family Literacy Night was new to them. The remaining ones had heard of a Family Literacy Night, but had not actually participated in one. In the initial conversations, many were unsure and nervous about actually planning and leading the literacy activities and even more fearful of interacting with adult family members. Some also questioned the value of the experience and saw all of the team work that would be needed as a negative in the beginning. However, after the Family Literacy Night, 83% felt that planning and implementing the literacy activities in collaboration with their peers was a valuable learning experience for them as future teachers. Several students commented that they are expected to work with various teams and groups in the profession, but are not often taught how to be a team player or have such experiences in many college
classes, and this was one of the most beneficial pieces of the assignment.

**Table 1 Survey Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher Developed Statements</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was familiar with the concept of Family Literacy Nights before this semester.</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and implementing the literacy activities in collaboration with my peers was a valuable learning experience for me as a future teacher.</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>19 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with the families at the Family Literacy Nights gave me some insights into the importance of the home-school connection.</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>17 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After participating in this event, I would be willing to plan and organize a Family Literacy Night for my school once I become a teacher.</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>17 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Family Literacy Night should be a component of the READ4015 class.</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>22 (96%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aiden settles in with his favorite sports biography.
Another finding that emerged was that the Family Literacy Night was the first opportunity for several of the pre-service teachers to work with families from different cultural backgrounds, families from different socioeconomic backgrounds, children with exceptionalities, and families with different family structures (several children came with a grandparent, many single parent homes, etc.). Many of them had no experiences with Title 1 schools.

One pre-service teacher stated, “I have not had many opportunities to work with people with cultures much different than mine, so for me this was invaluable.”

A consistent theme that emerged from all of the reflection papers was the range of family involvement with the children. While many families were very involved and excited to participate with the children in the learning experiences, some were not. The pre-service teachers were shocked (and several mentioned “saddened”) to observe how many adult family members stayed on their cell phones or electronic devices rather than interact with their children. They also repeatedly mentioned how much the children wanted their families’ attention and how that affected the children’s behavior. Many family members were encouraging and
supportive of their children’s efforts while a few were critical or simply non-responsive, and the pre-service teachers realized this could be a reality in their classrooms as well.

Because of their exposure to the different family interactions, the most rewarding findings for the researcher were the pre-service teachers’ realization of the enormous impact that families have on a child’s literacy development and the importance of forming partnerships with the families to benefit the children. Many commented on the importance of really knowing their children and knowing about their home lives in order to be more effective teachers. One hundred percent said after the experience, they would be willing to plan and organize a Family Literacy Night once they became a teacher with 74% strongly agreeing, and many expressed the goal of providing multiple opportunities for home-school connections such as newsletters, welcoming parent-teacher conferences, and both inviting school and classroom events. One pre-service teacher stated, “While seeing the way some parents were involved versus those who were not, I realized what a huge difference an event like this could make for the parent who was not involved.”

Another repeated theme was a gain in confidence because of the experience. Several shared that they had struggled with wondering whether they were “cut out to be teachers” or whether they would be good teachers, and the night confirmed for them that they could (and would!) be effective teachers. They loved the atmosphere of the school setting and commented on the friendliness and positive support from the school community (all the third grade teachers as well as the literacy coaches and principal attended the event). The teachers helped them set up the rooms and talked to them about their children, their teaching career, etc.
They especially loved interacting and working with the children and the families, and it was a real confidence builder when many of the family members thanked them and told them that they were going to be wonderful teachers. One pre-service teacher shared that a father said he would be happy to have any one of them (there were three pre-service teachers in the classroom) teach his daughter in fourth grade next year, and it was such an affirmation for her.

**Conclusion**

Results from the study indicate that having pre-service teachers participating in a Family Literacy Night is a positive way to better prepare them to address the importance of the home-school connection, but with only twenty-three participants, more research is needed. The researcher plans to expand the study to include more courses and participants, and there is a need to replicate the study at other institutions as well.

Perhaps the most imperative concern is how to more closely align course work and field experiences to better prepare pre-service teachers to enter the teaching profession. As one of the pre-service teachers noted, we often do not “practice what we preach” in teacher education programs. While programs emphasize the importance of hands-on experience, service learning, teamwork, and community, these are many times neglected in traditionally designed education courses. Johnson (2010) reminds us that integrating course work and field experiences is vital because it allow pre-service teachers to build cognitive guides for efficient analytical thinking under varying circumstances, promotes a sense of community, and prepares them for instructional decision making and effective practice. How can teacher education programs most effectively accomplish this goal? Based on the results from this study, it appears that having pre-service teachers
plan and participate in a Family Literacy Night is a step in the right direction.

Appendix A

V Diagram

Focus/Research Questions:
1. What are the perceptions of pre-service teachers who participate in a Family Literacy Night Program?
2. What is the impact of participating in a Family Literacy Night Program for the future teaching career of pre-service teachers?

WORLDVIEW
It is important for elementary teachers to make positive connections with parents/guardians in order to foster optimal learning experiences for children.

PHILOSOPHY
Learning is more meaningful when it is "hands-on."

THEORY
Family Literacy Theory Experiential Learning Theory

PRINCIPLES
Forming positive home-school connections is important for teachers. Parents need to feel comfortable in their children’s schools. Teacher education programs need to provide active learning experiences that model and support the importance of parent-teacher interactions.

CONSTRUCTS
Educating pre-service teachers about the importance of family literacy and the home-school connection

CONCEPTS
family literacy, home-school connection, pre-service teachers, teacher education programs, experiential learning

EVENTS AND OBJECTS
This mixed method study will examine the impact on and the perceptions of 23 pre-service teachers who will participate in a Family Literacy Night Program conducting read alouds and literacy activities with the children and their families

VALUE CLAIMS
Pre-thoughts: Participating in Family Literacy Night Programs is a positive component of teacher education programs which better prepares pre-service teachers to interact and communicate with diverse families and to understand the importance of the home-school connection. (more)

KNOWLEDGE CLAIMS

TRANSFORMATIONS
Themes will be identified from the reflection papers and the survey.

RECORDS
Students will complete reflection papers documenting their perception of the event and how participating in the program will impact their future teaching. They will also complete a brief survey about the experience.
Appendix B

Family Literacy Program Survey

Scale: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree

1. I was familiar with the concept of Family Literacy Nights before this semester.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Comments:

2. Planning and implementing the literacy activities in collaboration with my peers was a valuable learning experience for me as a future teacher.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Comments:

3. Working with the families at the Family Literacy Nights gave me some insights into the importance of the home-school connection.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Comments:

4. After participating in this event I would be willing to plan and organize a Family Literacy for my school once I become a teacher.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Comments:

5. A Family Literacy Night should be a component of the READ4015 and/or READ4130 class.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Comments:

Ashlyn LOVES to read!
Appendix C

REFLECTION PAPER RUBRIC

Name: __________________________  Section:  ________

The purpose of the reflection paper is to communicate the ways in which you have been affected by your interaction with students, families, and personnel at the family literacy night events. Your reflection paper will be evaluated according to the following criteria and scale, therefore be sure to address each of these areas within your paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target – 20</th>
<th>Acceptable - 10</th>
<th>Not Acceptable - 0</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>Summary clearly reflects perception regarding the events.</td>
<td>Summary reflects perception regarding the events.</td>
<td>Summary does not reflect perception regarding the events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in thinking</td>
<td>Paper clearly states changes in thinking about family literacy (or if not, why).</td>
<td>Paper states changes in thinking about family literacy.</td>
<td>Paper does not state changes in thinking about family literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Numerous examples of interactions with the students, family, and personnel are provided.</td>
<td>Some examples are provided.</td>
<td>No examples are provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Paper clearly documents how this experience will impact their future teaching.</td>
<td>Paper documents how this experience will impact their future teaching.</td>
<td>Paper does not document how this experience will impact their future teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Summary is more than 2 pages, neat, typed, 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with correct spelling and grammar.</td>
<td>Summary is at least 2 pages, neat, typed, 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with correct spelling or grammar.</td>
<td>Summary is minimum of 2 pages, neat, typed, 12 pt. font, double-spaced, spelling or grammar mistakes are present.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL SCORE: /100

References


---

**Dr. Tharp is an Assistant Professor in the Elementary & Special Education Department at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.**
The teaching of phonics, the relationship of sounds to letters in an alphabetic language like English, is vitally important for success in learning to identify words, read fluently, and, consequently, comprehend what is read. Arguments have raged for decades over the importance of phonics; however, as part of a comprehensive study on beginning to read, Adams (1990) demonstrated conclusively that phonics instruction is an essential part of learning to read (Stahl, Osborn, & Lehr, 1990). Adams developed a foundation for effective and efficient instruction in word identification based on the seminal study of Wylie and Durrell (1970) who determined that learning phonograms is much more efficient for learning sound-to-symbol relationships than attempting to sound out words by focusing on individual letters. In modern parlance, the term rime has replaced the terms phonogram and graphemic base while many educators and children use the word “chunk” to indicate a rime. The term “word families” is also frequently used to describe rimes and accompanying onsets; however, this can be somewhat confusing with the reference to word families often being derivatives of the same word such as “farm, farmer, and farming”.

On the other hand, arguments remain concerning to how to implement and maintain an efficient and effective phonics instruction program. For example, the term...
“intensive phonics instruction” has even become popular among some politicians who see phonics instruction as the primary means to overcome reading problems (International Reading Association, 1997).

The teaching of phonics has become enormously complicated. There is a myriad of books, kits, and computer programs purporting to make phonics instruction both easy and effective and even enjoyable for children. Radio, magazine, and TV ads abound with advertisers claims touting the value of various phonics programs. This virtual Niagara Falls of phonics materials is evident at publishers’ displays at state, regional, and national reading conferences. There are numerous publications purporting to promote phonics learning for sale even in supermarkets and large multi-purpose stores where a shopper can find phonics instruction materials as easily as finding a jar of pickles!

The purpose of this article is to present a rather simple but sound and inexpensive approach for teaching children to enhance their word identification competencies by learning sound-to-symbol relationships (phonics), comprehensively described by Paratore, Cassano, and Schickedanz (2011) as vitally important “code related skills” (p. 111). In addition, suggestions presented herein can easily be modified to fit the needs of teachers and students in a wide variety of learning environments from relatively large classes to individual tutoring sessions. In this light, four basic principles, followed by
directions for producing phonics instruction
materials with accompanying instructional
strategies, are presented below:

**Four Basic Principles**

1. Children need to learn the sounds
typically associated with single consonant
letters at the beginning of words and
syllables. Start with familiar words and
names of students. The consonants are all
the letters except the vowels, a, e, i, o, and u.
Since q and u always (except in Shaq, Iraq,
and Embarq!) appear together, they can be
treated as if they are a single consonant
letter (Durkin, 1993). Granted, there are
some complications such as the initial
consonant sounds associated with /c/ and /g/
and with consonant digraphs such as /ph/,
/ch/, /th/, and /sh/, which must be afforded
specific attention. However, the single
consonants are highly reliable.
The typical word recognition/identification
lesson lasts about 20 minutes. The bulk of
instructional time, naturally, should be spent
in authentic reading and writing activities.
For example, students can apply their
blossoming knowledge of phonics while
composing original stories and in sharing
and reading good literature. In this light,
invented spelling, often called transitional
spelling, is encouraged. Invented spelling,
that is spelling words the way they sound to
the developing reader, actually promotes
knowledge of sound-to-symbol relationships
(Adams, 1990). In this light, Paratore,
Cassano, and Schickedanz (2011) concluded
that there is considerable academic as well
as social value in encouraging developing
readers to engage in “interesting and playful
experiences” (p. 118) with written language.

2. As suggested above, readers must be
familiar with the high frequency consonant
digraphs, especially those identified by
Durkin (1993): *ph, sh, th, and ch*. Durkin
also proposed learning the sound associated
with the letters *ng* and the sound associated
with *gh*. The *ph /ph/ consonant digraph*
(phonics, phone, Phil) does not serve as an onset for common rimes but can be taught separately. The /ng/ is dealt with when studying the rime ing. The gh is rare in words (“rough” and “tough”, rhyming with “fluff”) and can be learned through direct instruction and reinforcement through encountering the gh /gh/ consonant digraph during independent reading.

3. Blending the letters in consonant clusters into the sounds they represent is also a very important competence for all readers. The 24 high frequency consonant clusters identified by Durkin (1993) are: bl, br, cl, cr, dr, dw, fi, fr, gl, gr, pl, pr, sc, sk, sl, sm, sn, sp, st, sw, tr, tw, scr, str (p. 188).

4. Rimes are syllables beginning with a vowel and usually containing one or more consonant letters. Adams (1990) concluded through a comprehensive study of the research that rimes are highly consistent in how they are pronounced in different words. English, as Adams indicated, is an alphabetic language where symbols correspond with sounds. Although far from being perfectly alphabetic, approximately 80% of English words are regularly spelled. For example, the word “tent” corresponds to sounds associated with the initial consonant /t/ and the rime /ent/. On the other hand, the word “one” does not correspond to the alphabetic principle.

Foorman, Fletcher, Francis, Schatschneider, and Mehta (1998) determined that use of sound-spelling patterns (rimes) proved highly effective when working with high risk second graders (N= 285). In addition, an extensive survey of meta-analyses led Foorman and Connor (2011) to conclude that there is substantial evidence supporting “explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle” (p. 138) for developing readers. Johnston, (2001) determined that learning to spell as well as learning to read is greatly facilitated through the use of onsets and rimes. In addition, extensive review research
led Vacca, Vacca, Gove, and Burkey (2011) to determine that students can more readily identify words when they have substantial knowledge of rimes than when they attempt to sound out all of the individual letters and try to blend the individual letter sounds. On the other hand, Morrison and Wilcox (2013) cautioned that although correct pronunciations can often be readily attained, pronunciation does not guarantee comprehension. Consequently, reinforcement and development of reading competencies, including learning sound-to-symbol correspondences, can best be undertaken when developing readers read great amounts of material and; eventually, become what Atwell (2007) described as “skilled, passionate, habitual, critical readers” (p. 17) who inhabit “the reading zone” (p. 19).

Gaskins (2005) has studied the application of spelling patterns (rimes) extensively for many years and found this to be a highly effective strategy. Gaskins and her colleagues explicitly teach spelling patterns to their students with the instruction to use analogies to determine unknown words. In the words of this researcher:

For example, when students encounter an unknown word with a familiar spelling pattern, they think of a word they know with the same spelling pattern (i.e., the vowel and letters that follow). If the unknown word were rent, students might think of the key word tent and say to themselves, ‘If I know tent, then I know this word must be rent (p. 163).

As mentioned above, a study that launched interest in looking at rimes, referred to as phonograms by the authors, rather than sounds associated with individual letters in patterns of letters, Wylie and Durrell (1970) reported that more than 500 words typically found in primary grades reading materials could be made from the 37 rimes. See Appendix A for a list of key rimes. After nearly 50 years, the seminal Wylie and Durrell study is still the foundation for study of rimes and onsets. For example, Cunningham (2005) referred to the 37 rimes...
in the Wylie and Durrell study as “spelling patterns that allow children to read and spell over 500 words commonly used by young children” (p. 101). In addition, Gunning (2013) emphasized the efficacy of using onsets and rimes based on the very high level of predictability of sounds associated with rimes. For example, the rime “ack” is found in many words and syllables but always is associated with the same sound. The Common Core State Standards (www.corestandards.org) are replete with references concerning the implementation of study with emphasis on onsets and rimes. Rimes can be taught at a rate of about five per week, depending on the competence level of the students. In this light, an excellent set of teaching strategies titled Teaching Word Identification is modeled in a DVD titled Teaching Reading: Strategies from Successful Classrooms (Center for Studies in Reading, undated). This DVD features the program using rimes, called word patterns in the DVD, from the Benchmark School in Media, Pennsylvania.

Studying onsets and rimes encourages phonemic awareness. On the other hand, too much emphasis on phonics generalizations of limited application is time not well utilized and takes time away from authentic reading and writing activities. In addition, extensive study led Moustafa (1997) to conclude that there is ample evidence that young “children
manipulate onsets and rimes without being taught to do so” (43).

Materials

Materials described herein can be modified both in construction and application depending on teaching/learning environments. Whole class, learning center, and tutorial applications are encouraged. Suggestions are presented below:

1. Type all the single consonant letters using approximately 60 point bold type. Arial font is developing-reader-friendly and resembles the style of print found in most books printed for young children. As suggested above, use qu rather than just q since q is nearly always followed by u. This also helps to avoid confusion with the letters b, d, and p and the numeral 9. Unobtrusively underline the letters b, d, and p. In addition, underline the letter n to keep students from confusing n with the vowel u. Leave about one-half inch between each letter and three-quarters of an inch between each row of letters. Print the rimes in a similar manner on another sheet of paper and the consonant clusters on another sheet. The rimes have to be bunched more closely together to fit on one sheet but this can be done by using .5 inch margins all around the page. Getting all the rimes on one sheet saves time, effort, and paper.
The key consonant digraphs (ch, sh, th, sh) can fit on one line of print and eight lines can appear on one page. An option is to simply include the consonant digraphs with the consonant clusters.

2. Prepare a sheet with 16 pt. printed numbers from 1-24 and another sheet with the numbers from 1-37. The numbers from 1-37 must be spaced so they can be copied on the backs of the sheets with the rimes while the numbers from 1-24 must be spaced to they can be copied on the back of the consonant clusters. For example, the rime “ack” would have the number 1 on the back, “ake” would have the number 2 on the back, etc. This involves matching the placement of the numbers with the letters. Since the copying will be front and back, the onsets and clusters are printed from left to right while the number progression would be from right to left. Numbering is helpful for keeping track of the rimes and consonant clusters because it is quite possible to lose a few. Periodically, the students can line up the rimes and consonant clusters by number to determine if any are missing. Numbering is not essential but can be helpful. In addition, we keep a full sized master list that can be used to match with onsets and rimes. In addition, each full set of onsets can be numbered so the sets can be kept together. There is no need to number the consonants since they can be easily lined up alphabetically. Since there are only four key consonant digraphs there is no problem keeping track of them.

3. Photocopy the sheets containing the consonants, consonant digraphs, rimes, and consonant clusters using 110 lb. cardstock of different colors (67 lb. is adequate but not as durable). This sturdy paper is available in several different colors in office supply stores and large multi-purpose stores. It is typically used for cover sheets on reports. Use colors that mildly contrast but avoid dark colors. For example, print the rimes on
yellow paper, the consonant clusters on blue, the single consonant letters on green, and the consonant digraphs on gray paper. Using the front and back option on the copy machine, copy the appropriate numbers onto the backs of the consonant cluster and rime sheets. If you have only access to a desk top printer you can put the numbers on by hand. Most desk top printers can copy on the 110” paper; however, some high speed desk top printers produce poor quality copies. Consequently, large office models are better for copying. Copying in different colors is not essential but can be helpful, especially if the teacher wants to concentrate on individual consonant letters or on clusters.

4. Cover the sides of the sheets with the letters with a protective clear coating. Self sticking clear plastic film such as ConTact or self-sticking sheets of laminating film work well. In addition, a laminating machine can be used efficiently. Self sticking clear plastic adhesive covering such as ConTact has the advantage of being less slick and reflects less light than typical laminating film.

5. Use a paper cutter or scissors to cut the rows between the letters. Then cut the individual units with a scissors or with a paper cutter. The full collection of individual pieces can then be put in zipper sealed sandwich bags. An option is to have students keep individual pieces that are gradually presented for study and put them into a sandwich sized zipper-lock bag. In this way, the students would have ready access to the pieces for future study.

6. Individual and small group practice can be undertaken using boards containing key rimes. Pieces of foam board and plastic signs can be covered with heavy paper. We have found, for example, that after an election (or event such as a road race) there are many sturdy signs available for recycling. When cut in half, the typical sign is 24” x 18”. Glue the paper to the base
board and then cover with clear plastic covering such as ConTact. Glue the rimes to the paper covering. Students can practice matching onsets with rimes on the board to make words. Rime boards can be made that contain fewer rimes and students presented with fewer onsets if greater ease in matching is deemed advisable.

7. Make a classroom set using 175 pt. type. Although not essential, it is helpful to keep the colors the same as in the individual kits. Cover the large set with a protective plastic covering. Add a small piece of magnetic tape in the middle of the back of each piece. The pieces can then stick to any metallic surface. Students can manipulate the onsets and rimes on a magnetic surface. Further, the larger pieces are very useful for whole class or group activities. Make smaller work surfaces by covering baking sheets with plain shelf-liner plastic covering for students to use during small group activities. Old baking sheets can often be purchased at yard sales very inexpensively. Be aware, however, that many newer non-stick surfaces are not magnetic! Office supply and general multi-purpose stores have small magnetic boards that are highly appropriate. Produce a classroom set of words each containing one of the key rimes. For example, the key word for “ank” might be “bank”. Prepare the key words also using 175 pt. type so that the words can be visible throughout the room. The target rime within the key word can be underlined to call attention to the particular rime (bank).

Gradually, all 37 key rimes are presented on a word wall embedded in a common word. See Appendix A for a listing of rimes. The key word serves as a base for learning other words by analogy. For example, the student might learn to think in this way: “I know ‘bank’ so this word must be “drank”. After the 37 key rimes have been mastered additional rimes can be presented.
8. Word wheels for practice can be produced using coated paper plates. The materials needed are: 1. Onsets that make a word when matched with an accompanying rime printed using bold Arial 60 pt. type; 2. A wing-tip brad; 3. Coated paper plates; 4. Circles to match the interior of a paper plate to trace on 110 lb. cardstock; 5. Scrap pieces of ConTact or clear tape; 6. Pieces of mat board 1.5” x 1”; 6. Glue sticks, and 7. Scissors.

Cut out a circle on the cardstock. Punch a small hole in the center of the circle and in the center of the paper plate. Reinforce the area that has been punched with ConTact. Punch though the ConTact. This makes the wheel more durable. Cover the wing tips under the plate with ConTact as well. This last step prevents students from getting scratched by the wing tip or lifting the brad from the surface of the plate.

Glue the rime to the outer edge of the interior circle. Glue the mat board to the outer edge of the circle on the opposite side. Place the onsets on the outer edges of the plate. When the wheel turns, words can be made.

9. Kitchens and Crawford (2003) developed flip books for reinforcing learning of onsets and rimes. A plastic comb binder is used to produce a book with a key rime and about ten onsets. The learner can flip the pages and practice. The cover is made from mat
board which can usually be obtained free of charge from frame shops while 110 lb. wt. cover weight paper is used for the pages. A comb-binding is used to hold the pages together. See Photograph 4.

Many instructional variations, including games, can be made to facilitate learning of common words containing rimes and onsets.

Production of the materials described herein can be a wonderful and enjoyable teacher in-service experience. The phonics kit and classroom size set of onsets and rimes provide for an enjoyable and academically sound, hands-on learning environment.

**References**


Center for Studies in Reading (Undated) *Teaching reading: Strategies from successful classrooms*. Urbana, IL: Author. ([http://csr.ed.uiuc.edu](http://csr.ed.uiuc.edu)).


Appendix A

Key Rimes

Rimes from the Wylie and Durell Study:
ack, au, am, ake, ale, ame, an, ank, ap, ash, at, ate, aw, ay, eat, ell, est, ice, ick, ide, ight, ill, in, ing, ink, ip, it, ock, oke, op, ore, ot, uck, ug, ump, unk.

Rimes starting with a: ace, a, ab, ad, ade, ag, alk, all, am, amp, and, ar, ark, art, as, ask, are, ave.

Rimes starting with e: e, each, eak, eal, eam, ear, ed, ee, eed, eel, een, eep, eet, eeeze, em, en, ent, er, es, ess, et, ew.

Rimes starting with i: i, id, ife, ig, ike, ile, im, ime, ind, irt, is, ish, ite, iver.

Rimes starting with o: oat, ob, og, oil, old,ong, oo, ood, ook, ool, oop, om, on, one, or, ore, orn, ose, ought, ound, ould, our, out, ow, own, oy.

Rimes starting with u: ub, ue, udge, uff, um, umble, un, ung, unt, up, urn, us, ut, use, ust.

Dr. Renee Moran is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at East Tennessee State University. She teaches courses in Reading Education and co-coordinates the ISED/K-6 undergraduate program. Dr. Karin Keith is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at East Tennessee State University. She also coordinates the Master of Arts in Reading Education program. Dr. Huili Hong is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at East Tennessee State University. Her research interests include early childhood literacy research, second/foreign language education, teacher preparation, and discourse analysis. Dr. Ed Dwyer is a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at East Tennessee State University where he teaches classes in literacy development/reading/language arts instruction. Dr. Audra Gray is a former assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at East Tennessee State University. She is currently employed at Western Governor’s University.
Read Any Good Books Lately?


Looking for a resource filled with practical, helpful, teaching ideas? Looking for a great gift book for that special colleague or brand new teacher down the hall? Lori Oczkus provides a wonderful “survival guide” for teachers looking for a valuable resource of research-based teaching strategies. Whether you are a novice or veteran educator, there is something of value for you in this book. Each chapter features advice from literacy leaders, descriptions of specific instructional strategies, Q & A segment, suggestions for online and other resources; sample lesson plans, assessment tips, and reproducible activities to use immediately. There is a wealth of useful information that range from topics such as: specific teaching strategies, the value of reading aloud, and effective grouping techniques. The easy-to read handbook-style format and affordable price make this book a favorite on our list.

BIO POEMS

We have featured sample Bio poems created by pre service teachers throughout this issue of the Tennessee Reading Teacher. Having students create Biopoems is great way for students to think about aspects of their own identities and, when shared, can contribute to the development of a sense of community in any classroom, at any level. Visit IRAs ReadWritethink.org site for information about Biopoems and may other great teaching ideas!

Leadership Links: Message from TRA President

What is the Tennessee Reading Association? It is NOT a social club, a sorority, or a group of people without a purpose. It IS a group of professional members with a vision and a plan for future growth and development. It IS a membership dedicated to promoting literacy and service within our communities.

This has been and will continue to be a transformational year for TRA. We created a new vision statement as well as a new mission statement. To better understand where we are as an association, we focus on our new mission statement: *To promote an informed, productive, and literate society by bringing together a network of people dedicated to sharing knowledge and information about literacy through the delivery of programs and services.* When we embrace this mission statement, we embrace a dedication to sharing, informing, and fostering a love of reading.

To plan for the future, goals and objectives are established as a framework. We established three long range goals as well as objectives to help achieve each goal.

**Goal #1: Increase New Members**
Objectives for meeting this goal include increasing and enhancing communication tools and developing incentive programs.

**Goal #2: Increase Retention of Members**
Objectives to meet this goal include developing processes for collecting and analyzing member data; increasing communication with former and current members; celebrating members.

**Goal #3: Increase Visibility and Enhance Image**
Objectives identified include increasing and/or expanding communication of council work; developing new programs; developing community outreach.

Beginning in 2015, the International Reading Association annual conference will be held in July. This conference has formerly been held in April or May. With a date change, it is hoped that more members and prospective members will be able to attend and take advantage of the many workshops and educational offerings.

TRA committees have been consolidated and streamlined from more than 20 committees to 4 Committees of the Board: Long Range Planning, Finance, Governance, and Council Support. Six special committees are Awards, Grants, and Scholarships; Community Service and Outreach; Communications and Public Relations; Advocacy/Legislative; Membership Recruitment and Retention; and Studies and Research. Committee members are diligently meeting and planning for the continued success of our association.

As you can see, our work is before us. Ask yourself, “What can I do to help TRA reach these goals?” Therein lies the challenge posed to our members. I challenge you to help us continue our success through communication, caring and commitment.

Melanie Collins, 2014-2015 President
Throughout the semester, I have students perform various Reader’s Theater scripts. Some of the scripts are published, others I have abridged from titles such as The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963, by Christopher Paul Curtis. In this script, the scene includes Kenny and his brother Byron, who has his lips frozen to the Brown Bomber’s side-view mirror. As students develop an understanding of how these scripts work (prep time, practice, expressive reading, and performing for an audience) it then becomes their turn to write their own scripts in groups.

Each group had its own, self-selected books. I assigned books based on each student’s top three choices from a booklist I provided and constructed groups of 3-4 people. Groups then had time in class to develop, write, and practice a script they designed to introduce the book without giving away the ending or climax – a key to good scripts. Everyone in the group had to be involved in the performance, which included playing a dead body as in The Teacher’s Funeral by Richard Peck! Throughout the process, we discussed the importance of Reader’s

---

**Example Standard Covered by Readers Theater**
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

**Seeds**
- Students use the Simon Basher books with their anthropomorphic movers and shakers of the Wave Gang in Physics: Why Matter Matters by Dan Green.
- Present materials not effectively covered in textbooks to increase understanding of what is being studied and/or read
- Provide a way to bring history and other topics to life for readers as well as the audience.
Theater for improving fluency, providing readings for multiple reading levels, and reading with expression. Almost any section of a book lends itself to development of a Reader’s Theater script.

Get Your Head into Word Clouds

One of my favorite Web 2.0 tool creations has to be word clouds. To illustrate possibility, I used the text from Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech. It is fascinating! The basic idea behind word cloud generators is the more times a word appears in the text, the larger the word will be in the cloud. This encouraged students to critique and investigate a work in a unique way. The following are two sites I use most often and the example using King’s speech text.

- **wordle.net**: The text is filtered for common and small words such as conjunctions and prepositions. Phrases “hold together” by using a tilde between the words. Warning for Mac users: wordle uses Java, which can be a nuisance when Apple and Java choose not to play well together.

[See Figure 5]

**Example Standard Covered by Word Clouds**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

**Seeds**

- After writing a paper, letter, etc., have the students put their text into a word cloud to see what their high frequency words are, a help with the editing process.
- Use wordle.net – advanced feature and use ratios to determine word size that correspond with a desired impact.

- **tagxedo.com**: The filters work similarly to wordle, however, now the words fit into shapes – some are available through the website, such as countries, Abraham Lincoln, and hearts, others come from monochromatic shapes uploaded by the user.
In this example, I uploaded a stock black and white photo of Martin Luther King, Jr. and was able to edit the image to suit my needs. [See Figure 6]

While these examples show what may be done with a speech or part of a book, many of my students choose to input their own words. This allows them to choose vocabulary and important words and phrases to represent the story.

**Comic Strips: To Be Funny, or Not To Be Funny**

The opportunity to use comic strips brought up some interesting issues. “Do you share a scene from the book or share discussion about the book?” “More intriguing, do comic strips need to be funny?” Time is definitely a factor in learning how to use the following websites. Nevertheless, students had a great time exploring and publishing something many never thought they could.

With both the following sites, accounts need to be created so the strips can be saved.

- **toondoo.com**: There are many layers to

---

**Example Standard Covered by Comic Strips**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3**: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

**Seeds**

- Students who enjoy graphic novels can explore adaptations of classics and contemporary favorites as well as create some of their own. Compare and contrast major events in the two formats. (e.g. *Baby Sitters Club* and *Artemis Fowl*)
- Students use comic strips to show their understanding of specific science and social studies concepts.

the creator: a plethora of characters, various props and scenes (backgrounds), text types
and bubbles, and much more. Editing features feel hidden at the bottom of the screen, so don’t miss those. My favorite feature is *Posture*, which gives the character different facial expressions and/or poses.

- **bitstrips.com:** Unlike toondoo, you generate an avatar of/for yourself to start. The options for other characters are not as deep as toondoo, but a lot of clothing changes are available. An abundance of scenes makes for unique settings. The site bitstripsforschools.com, has costs, but may be worth it because of the resources already created by other teachers suitable for classroom use. Application for math, science, and social studies.

**Animations: And… Action!**

Like the tools used to create comic strips, animation tools take time to learn. With pre-service students, I wanted them to learn independently as much as possible. Online animation tools are versatile and varied. The following two tools prove to be accessible and fairly uncomplicated. My students shared segments from their books with animations, more so than with the word clouds or comic strips.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Standard Covered by Animation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6:</strong> Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Seeds**

- Pair students, each writes one part of a dialog, then collaborate to create the animation.
- These tools can also help with the speaking and listening standards.
- Create animations using personified concepts as the characters, for example Communism talking with Democracy about an issue.

- **zimmertwinsatschool.com:** Scene clips of twins Edgar and Evan and their cat are sewed together to make a mini-movie.

While there is no real speech, sound effects abound and talk bubbles allow some dialog.

- **voki.com:** Create an avatar or use established avatars to speak using your voice or a computer-generated one based on text.
you input. Avatars allow teachers and students to share their words and ideas with a new face.

**Works Discussed**


Emily

Kind, Adventurous, Clever
Dancing, Super Heroes, Jason Mraz
Love, Happiness, Gratitude
Spiders, Heights, Loneliness
Who has travelled to 30 States and 3 Countries
Travel to Europe, Get married, and Help people in need
Mt. Juliet
Hawkins

(Author: Emily Hawkins, Cumberland University)

---

**Dr. Julie Stepp is the primary professor for the graduate concentration in School Library Science in the College of Education at Tennessee Tech University. She has proven to be an avid pusher and audiobook fiend. Her students will tell you that 1) collaboration and 2) lifelong readers = lifelong learners best describe highly successful librarians and teachers.**
In Loving Memory

Hoyte Snow

September 20, 1929 – October 20, 2014
IRA – TRA – Local Councils
Community Leader, Dedicated Educator, Mentor, Family Man and Friend

Our mentor and friend Hoyte Snow was a man of his word. His life was one of integrity, dedication and purpose. No task seemed too big for him to undertake and he knew how to surround himself with a diverse group of people who could work together to accomplish mutual goals for the community, school, church, or the Tennessee Reading Association (TRA). Hoyte was a “people-person” and he instinctively knew how to engage others in projects that would benefit the person, the project and the community at large. Hoyte was a careful listener and a good example for children and adults, even after his 1992 retirement from Metro Schools Hoyte had served as an interim principal in Metro

Hoyte will be missed but remembered fondly by his friends in TRA as a humble man, an influential educator and a passionate advocate for reading education and the promotion of literacy.
Nashville and Williamson County Schools. Hoyte exemplified this quote by Robert Frost, “Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence.”

Born in Gassaway, Tennessee, a rural unincorporated area of Cannon County near Woodbury and Short Mountain, Hoyte grew up in a close-knit family and community, where the Church of Christ, the Cannon County Public Schools, and his family influenced and shaped him into the dedicated son, brother, cousin, uncle, husband, father, friend, teacher, mentor, and principal we had the honor of knowing. Hoyte was a veteran of the Korean War, serving in General Headquarters Command in Tokyo, Japan. He was a member of the Middle Tennessee Kidney Foundation Board of Directors, a member of the Metro Sunshine Singers Chorus, and District Commissioner of the Middle Tennessee Pony Club.

Hoyte led and served others as the director of middle schools for Metro Schools and as an Elder of the Granny White Church of Christ where he was a member for over 60 years. He attended David Lipscomb College in Nashville and was always a “VOLUNTEER” as he traveled his life’s journey. As Nelson Mandela said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Hoyte was a member of the Tennessee Reading Association (TRA) and the Middle Tennessee Reading Association (MTRA). He served on a number of committees, including the Executive Committees and Board of Directors for both organizations. Hoyte was President of MTRA in 1980. He also served as president of the Metro Nashville Elementary Principal’s Association, Association for Childhood Education (Nashville Chapter) and Parent Teacher Organization. Hoyte’s commitment to education is exemplified in Margaret Meade’s quote, “Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.”
From 1983 – 1984, Hoyte was named the eighteenth president of the Tennessee Reading Association, founded in 1966. He served as the seventh TRA State Coordinator from 1987 – 1996. He was Chairperson for the 5th Southeastern Regional Conference in 1980 and Local Arrangements Committee for the 11th Southeastern Regional Conference in 1985. He also served as co-chair for the 1st combined 1996 Southeastern IRA Regional Conference held at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville. Hoyte was a lifetime member of the International Reading Association.

Hoyte loved his country, family, horses and being an educator. Teachers touch tomorrow and Hoyte’s legacy will extend far into the future. Hoyte will be missed but remembered fondly by his friends in TRA as a humble man, an influential educator and a passionate advocate for reading education and the promotion of literacy.

Ryan
Hard-working, quiet, adventurous
Son of Scott and Lisa
My family, my dog, sports
Happiness, optimistic, confident
Needles, clowns, failure
Graduated from Trevecca
Travel to new places, U.S. make it to World Cup Final
White House, TN
McDonald

Emily
Caring, Giving, Adventurous
Daughter of Kim and Daniel
Outdoors, Live music, Individuality
Joy, Grace, Excitement
Spiders, Mirror Mazes, Clowns
Who does life to the best of her ability
See a meteor shower and experience a different country and its culture
White House, TN
Owsley

(Author: Ryan McDonald, Cumberland University)

(Author: Emily Owsley, Cumberland University)
Tennessee Reading Association Officers
2014-2015

President ............................... Melanie Collins
President-Elect ........................ Mike Roe
Vice President ........................ Nancy Carter
Corresponding Secretary .......... Mary Truka
Recording Secretary ............... Carnella Mitchell
Treasurer ............................... Benita Bruster
Director of Membership Development ... Jill Barnett
State Coordinator ................... Jana Crosby
Immediate Past President ........ Angel Viera
District Coordinators ............. Betty Denton  
                             Vickie Manus  
                             Mary Pullen  
                             Deborah Setliff

Aiden enjoys reading his new biography of sports stars.
As educators, we understand the importance of visual representations. Few things are as heart-warming as the image of a young child listening to a story while snuggled in the arms of a caring adult, as reaffirming as the image of an adolescent curled up with a favorite novel, or as poignant as the image of someone’s grandfather sitting in the sunshine, relaxing and reading the newspaper. In our efforts to share ideas and support our mission and goals through our publication, the *Tennessee Reading Teacher* is launching a campaign to collect images of individuals engaged in reading. We plan to use these images in our upcoming issues to capture and demonstrate our continued commitment to the development of literacy skills and the enjoyment that comes from reading.

We need your help to compile our collection. Please send us photos of individuals reading. We hope to collect photos that represent all ages. We also hope to collect photos of individuals reading many different types of reading materials in various situations. The photos will be saved in a library collection and used in future TRT issues. We will not publish identifying information about the individuals in the photos, with the exception of first names.

If you are interested in submitting photos for our collection (WE HOPE YOU ARE), complete the accompanying Photo Release Form, sign, and mail a hard copy of the signed form to:

Dr. Sandy H. Smith, 156 Reed Lane, Cookeville, TN 38506 OR
Dr. Kristen Pennycuff Trent, 324 Quail Pointe, Knoxville, TN 37934 OR
Scan the signed form and send an electronic copy to: sandy.smith@cumberland.edu or kpennycuff@tntech.edu
ALSO
Send the photo(s) electronically to: sandy.smith@cumberland.edu or kpennycuff@tntech.edu

We will be unable to include any photos without the accompanying Photo Release Form.

Thank you and we look forward to receiving photos from you soon! *Sandy and Kristen*
PHOTO RELEASE FORM

TENNESSEE READING TEACHER
A publication of the Tennessee Reading Association

I grant to the Tennessee Reading Association and its representatives the right to use photographs of me, provided by me or my representatives, limited to the use of my first name only, for no compensation, for any lawful purpose including publicity, illustration, advertising, and Web content.

I have read and understand the above:

Printed name ______________________________

Address __________________________________

Email Address _____________________________

Date _____________________________________

Signature ________________________________

Signature of parent or guardian ____________________________
(if under age 18)

Mail a hard copy of the signed form to:

Dr. Sandy H. Smith, 156 Reed Lane, Cookeville, TN 38506
or
Dr. Kristen Pennycuff Trent, 324 Quail Pointe, Knoxville, TN 37934
or
Scan the signed form and send an electronic copy to: sandy.smith@cumberland.edu or kpennycuff@tntech.edu
Transform your practice...

Build your own professional learning experience at IRA 2015. You'll have **more than 400 sessions** from which to choose, including a **turbo-charged Teaching Edge series**—four sessions, each one pairing some of the best minds and voices in literacy education today.

Transform your network...

**Thousands of literacy educators** will be attending IRA 2015. Grow your PLC by connecting with colleagues from around the globe.

Transform your life.

There's something electric about an IRA conference. That magic combination of dedicated educators, innovative exhibitors, and award-winning children's book authors and illustrators... Sure, you'll earn clock hours. But you'll also **feed your soul**.

Never been? Now is the perfect time. Here are some resources to help you plan:

**REGISTRATION RATES**

- Friday, July 17
  - Institute Day
  - Average rate = $199–$269

- Saturday, Sunday, Monday, July 18-20
  - Conference & Exhibits
  - Average rate = $399–$479

**HOTEL RATES**

- Average range = $119–$205 per room night
- Taxes range from 15.929%–17.929% per room night; be sure to include these additional fees in your figures
- Hotel requires 2 nights room deposit at time of reservation

**REGISTRATION OPENS EARLY FEBRUARY 2015**

GUIDELINES FOR TENNESSEE READING TEACHER MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS

The Tennessee Reading Teacher is published twice yearly in the Spring and Fall. The journal is refereed and published by the Tennessee Reading Association (TRA). Tennessee Reading Teacher is seeking manuscripts directed toward the improvement of reading and language arts instruction at all levels of education. All submitted manuscripts will undergo blind review by multiple reviewers.

Submitting Articles to the Tennessee Reading Teacher

1. Submit only by email using Microsoft Word (e.g., doc).
2. All Manuscripts must be prepared according to the style specified in the 6th edition of the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).
3. The manuscript should be double-spaced throughout, including quotations and references. Include a brief abstract or summary, not to exceed 150 words, and a running head on each page, which reflects the title of the article.
4. Each manuscript must include a cover sheet containing:
   - Author’s Name
   - Affiliation
   - Position
   - Mailing Address
   - Telephone Number/s
   - E-mail Address
   - Short Professional Biography

Note: Identifying information must not appear elsewhere in the manuscript to ensure an impartial review.

Submit manuscripts to:

Dr. Sandy H. Smith and Dr. Kristen Pennycuff-Trent

Email: sandy.smith@cumberland.edu and kpennycuff@tntech.edu

Tennessee Reading Association Publications Committee

Mike Roe, Chair .................................................. Tennessee Tech Council
Sandy H. Smith, Journal Co-Editor............................... Tennessee Tech Council
Kristen Pennycuff-Trent, Journal Co-Editor................... Tennessee Tech Council
Brooke Brown, Newsletter Editor............................... Tennessee Tech Council
Julie Baker and Jeremy Wendt, Home Page Editors .... Tennessee Tech Council
Anne Wall, Conference Web Site............................... Mid-Cumberland Council
Cumberland University  
School of Humanities, Education, and the Arts  
1 Cumberland Square  
Lebanon, TN 37087-1408  

Tennessee Technological University  
Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
TTU Box 5042  
Cookeville, TN 38505