



American  
Reading Forum

*Yearbook*

*2023*

## American Reading Forum Yearbook, Volume 2023

### Teaching Beyond Silos: Transdisciplinary Perspectives of Theory, Research, and Pedagogy

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## Featured Articles

**[Supporting and Preparing Literacy Teachers and Leaders in DEI through Intentional Awareness](#)** by Michelle Kelley, University of Central Florida, and Adam Brieske-Ulenski, Bridgewater State University

The authors explore literacy coaches' challenges with engaging in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices. They describe data collected from the Literacy Coach Self Efficacy (LCSE) Scale related to confidence in performing DEI-related tasks. Highlighting the current socio-political landscape's impact on DEI initiatives, the paper suggests activities for higher education institutions to better prepare literacy professionals, emphasizing awareness-building and fostering cultural consciousness. The authors stress the importance of integrating DEI principles throughout teacher education programs to address the needs of increasingly diverse student populations and advocate for equitable practices in literacy education.

**[Shifts in Teachers' Self-Efficacy: The Role of a Reading and Literacy Master's Program with Clinical Experience](#)** by Valerie Gresser and Carla K. Meyer, Duquesne University

Dyslexia is currently a hot topic in the field of reading. There is a large push in the United States in terms of policy to include dyslexia specific legislation into educational law, with 46 states and the District of Columbia presently having dyslexia laws on the books (Dyslexia, 2023). Teachers can have the greatest impact in helping dyslexic students to become successful readers. However, much of the dyslexia research involving teacher education exclusively involves the cognitive aspects of teaching reading and teachers' pedagogical approaches (Berninger et al., 2013; Fallon & Katz, 2020; Spear-Swerling, 2018; Spear-Swerling et al., 2022; Yuzaideyet al, 2018). Less of a focus exists on teacher efficacy and how education programs can empower teachers to teach reading to all students. This article explores the shifts in participants' knowledge and self-efficacy beliefs before and after completing required coursework in which graduate students enrolled in a Reading and Literacy Education program and provided intervention for children with dyslexia.

**[Context-Specific Language and Literacy Problems of Practice: Connecting Culturally Relevant Pedagogy with the Science of Reading Using Dialogic Reading and Oral Storytelling](#)** by Mary J. McIlwain, Jamie L. Harrison, and Chad M. Cunningham. Auburn University

A common problem of practice today is the implementation of the Science of Reading using culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate pedagogies. Dialogic Buddy Reading & Storytelling is a service-learning project that addresses this problem. The project has the potential to raise language and literacy proficiency levels of children and adolescents; engage families and communities; and impact literacy knowledge for teacher candidates, teachers, and university faculty. The following work details the theoretical framework from which it comes and the four areas of research that converge to support the conceptual framework that leads the design of the proposed study.

**Trending in the Classroom: The Secondary ELA Teachers of TikTok** by Lauren May, Longwood University, and Heather Wright, Gardner-Webb University

This paper describes a pilot study on popular TikTok video content generated by secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers and their potential influence. We examined the TikTok videos through the frameworks of Goffman's (1956) 'performances' and Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's (2010) 'promoter positions.' We collected the 20 most-liked videos on 50 secondary ELA teacher TikTok accounts via three approaches and reviewed them systematically. Our understanding was that re-enactment TikToks when teachers re-enacted specific exchanges and interactions related to education, were the most common category produced. We believe these TikToks can be utilized to support current and aspiring ELA teachers.

**Bridging the Silos of Induction and Local Community: A Qualitative Study in a Rural Setting** by Kristina Bell and Michael Coleman, Virginia Tech

One challenge rural schools face is hiring and retaining teaching staff. Induction has the potential to support teachers' retention in the profession. This qualitative study uses data generated from 12 interviews with employees who work in a rural school district in the southeastern United States with the goal of understanding how new teacher induction programs are attentive to the realities of community adjustment. Findings suggest that induction practices can ease newcomers into the profession by assisting them in navigating a variety of workplace and community contexts.

## **Past President American Reading Forum: Dr. Jennifer VanSlander**

### **Reflection**

Dear ARF Members and Conference Participants,

It was an honor to serve as the American Reading Forum President in 2023. The ARF Yearbook is the perfect place to reflect on the accomplishments of our organization and acknowledge those who helped us navigate unique challenges.

First, I would like to thank the ARF Board members. This dedicated group met regularly during the year to facilitate bylaw revisions, examine finances, negotiate the conference contract, and discuss critical changes needed to keep ARF afloat post-pandemic. The diverse perspectives represented at each meeting led to meaningful changes that will impact the organization for many years. Most importantly, thanks to board leadership, ARF is in a better financial position heading into 2024. There are many board members who work quietly behind the scenes to make ARF operations look effortless. I will not list specific names for fear of leaving someone out. However, please know your work did not go unnoticed!

Next, Dr. Nance Wilson and Dr. Vicki Cardullo planned and executed a highly effective conference. The theme, “Teaching Beyond Silos: Transdisciplinary Perspectives of Theory, Research, and Pedagogy,” was relevant to current educational issues and led to lively professional conversations. Furthermore, the Dolphin Beach and Resort in St. Pete, Florida was, for the second time, the perfect backdrop for our annual conference. Although we hoped to convene in Sanibel Island in December 2024, we are thankful we can return to the Dolphin again.

Finally, I thank everyone who contributed to the 2023 yearbook. The ARF Yearbook is a historical document that captures the important work ARF members do to forward literacy

research and practice. It is a special way to keep the memories and connections made during our annual conference alive.

As I move into my role as ARF Past President, I eagerly look forward to Dr. Brittany Adams' leadership of ARF in 2024. I have had the pleasure of working closely with her and getting to know her this past year, and I can assure you that our organization is in capable hands. I am confident that our special organization will only get better with her guidance.

I look forward to convening with all of you again in 2024!

Yours respectfully,  
Jennifer VanSlander  
ARF Past President

## **Personal Reflection on Becoming a Legacy Winner of the Brenda S. Townsend Service Award 2024**

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, I sat at a table with newfound American Reading Forum friends enjoying a wonderful lunch in St. Petersburg, Florida. It was an awards luncheon where colleagues were recognized for their contributions to the field and service to the organization. Then, in the middle of eating my lunch, I hear my name called. At first, my Judeo-Christian upbringing kicked in and I thought “what did I do now”? Little did I suspect and to my absolute surprise I was awarded the Brenda S. Townsend service award for 2024. Even after my name was called, I still couldn’t believe that I was receiving an award that had previously been given to so many literacy scholars and colleagues that I respect and admire. It took a while for it to sink in that I was now a legacy winner like: Vicky Cardullo, Vicky Zygouris-Coe, Carla K. Meyer, Lynn Yribarren, Mona Matthews, George G. Hruby, Nance Wilson, Jill Lewis-Spector, Missy Laine, Chet Laine, Cindy Hendricks, Joyce C. Fine, Sarah L. Dowhower, Donna E. Alvermann, Gary Moorman, and of course Brenda S. Townsend herself! All people I knew and had met through the American Reading Forum. I thought about the people who previously received the award and wondered what I had done to merit such recognition and remembered the many times that Brenda S. Townsend herself greeted me at the registration table.

I remember admiring Brenda for her kind and welcoming smile, sitting at the registration table for the American Reading Forum. She was actually probably the first person I met when I attended my first ARF conference on Sanibel Island in 2003 with a small group of Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence (FLaRE) Center colleagues from the University of Central Florida. As a first-time attendee, I was in awe of all the academic giants attending this intimate conference, that I had never heard of, on a small island in Florida. Giants whose work and

research influenced and continue to influence my thinking, teaching, and career over time. Little did I realize at the time that many of those giants would turn into friends, mentors, and editors of my work regarding narrowing the gap between theory, research, and classroom application.

Recently, I enjoyed a two-week holiday in the United Kingdom (Scotland and England). I got a Eurail pass that got me from Manchester to Chester to Edinburgh to London to Newbury (with a side trip through the Chunnel to Paris). Every time I boarded the train, the message was the same (with an English accent). “Mind the gap... between the train and the platform.” Suddenly, it dawned on me, that mind the gap could be a great metaphor for my involvement and service to ARF. As a teacher-researcher, ARF, or better said...many ARF members, made me reflect on the gap between theory, research, my professional language, and classroom application. I have found that ARF attendees are very mindful of the gaps in education and are always more than eager to share their work and engage with you, face to face and online, to seek solutions or point you in the right direction to seek solutions towards closing gaps. Service-wise, ARF welcomed me into the fold and engaged me minding the gap and in seeking solutions to improve the conference experience for attendees. Subsequently, I’ve been on the board, co-chaired a program with Nance Wilson, and have sat at the registration desk like Brenda S. Townsend welcoming old friends and new attendees, many who have become old friends.

I see ARF as the metaphorical platform, and the metaphorical train is all the professional attendees that take you from where you are to where you’d like to be. By definition, a platform is a raised surface on which people can stand on or a place for public discussion. Nothing could describe ARF more perfectly. Consequently, as a platform, ARF provides its members with a network of colleagues, research, and information to keep us thinking deeply and critically on the edge of our field and research interests. I’ve come to realize the whole organization is service



oriented with a goal of improving transdisciplinary literacy instruction via culturally responsive instruction. Train, on the other hand, can mean a specific type of instruction to ensure replication of a behavior or performance or it can mean a succession of vehicles traveling in the same direction. I prefer to think of ARF as a succession of vehicles traveling in the same direction. I see our direction as improving transdisciplinary literacy instruction on a track of culturally responsive instruction or curriculum. Here I use the word curriculum broadly to encompass anything that impacts transdisciplinary learning and leading as compared to a narrow definition of curriculum that simply means disciplinary content or a series of published materials. With that said, the words of the late Marie M. Clay haunt and taunt me, “by different paths to a common outcome.”

As in most writing, I’ve started this reflection piece multiple times. I originally was going to incorporate Rudine Sims Bishop’s metaphor with mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors as my anchor for my reflection. The well-known metaphor could easily be translated to the role of service and the role of the American Reading Forum. Then I started to rethink it to make it more personable and tap into my own experiences and reflect on my 44 years career and the role that service and the American Reading Forum has had on my career since 2003.

Teaching, in public school or higher education, and all that comes with it, is not for the faint of heart. I started my education career as a first-grade teacher in 1979. Ten years later, I got my master’s degree in educational leadership. Thirty-three years into my career, I got my doctorate in curriculum and instruction with a research focus on K-12 literacy learning over time. At each stage of my career, “service” meant something different. As an elementary school teacher, in addition to academics, service meant taking care of students’ physical needs...clean clothes and food. As a secondary teacher, service meant taking care of students’ social emotional

needs while maintaining a focus on academic standards towards graduation. As an educator in higher education, service means extending and expanding my experiences through professional organizations while focusing on quality instruction at the undergraduate and graduate level to ensure a mindful, caring, and knowledgeable teaching population for the future. Fundamentally, receiving the Brenda S. Townsend Service Award 2004 from the American Reading Forum means that I've been recognized for minding the gap between the platform and the train.

Humbly, thank you.  
Enrique A. Puig

## **Gary Moorman Early Career Literacy Scholar Award Recipient**

### **A Commentary on My Early Career in Higher Education**

When I initially entered study to become a teacher, I never imagined or guessed that being an associate professor would be where I am today. I entered education for various reasons; I enjoyed educating our future, providing ah-ha moments of conceptual understanding, and offering a space where all my students felt valued, recognized, and appreciated. I guess it really should not be a surprise that I am in higher education because I feel the same way about my current role and what I want to offer to my college students. This journey took some time. Before becoming a literacy professor at Bridgewater State University, I had some amazing opportunities as an elementary educator. I got to work in TCRWP project schools, became a literacy lab-site teacher, eventually became a reading/literacy specialist, and later a literacy coach. It was during my Educational Specialist program in Educational Leadership that the chair of my research project pulled me aside after my defense to say that I needed to become a professor and get my doctorate. Did I really think this was an option for me? I am glad it became one and that I chose this path.

As I look back, I feel that the reason that I have been able to make the impact that I have had on the literacy educational community is a direct influence of the professors that I had in my doctoral program. Drs. Zygouris-Coe and Kelley were brilliant in how they intertwined our coursework while simultaneously preparing us for becoming future professors. This was careful planning on their part because they sought out our goals and tailored their courses, instruction, and assignments to them. Their mentoring, guidance, and support transformed my Ed.D program into one that prepared me for interviewing and eventually performing well as a professor. Dr. Zygouris-Coe was strategic in feedback that helped me as a doctoral student publish articles and

present at national and international conferences before I graduated from the University of Central Florida (UCF). Dr. Kelley sought ways to help me teach college level courses and refine my own practices for teaching adult learners. This multi-layered approach transformed how I looked at myself as an educator and prepared me for the rigors of teaching in higher education.

During my time at UCF, both professors helped lay the groundwork for my research and scholarship. Both sat on my dissertation, which eventually led to a publication in *The Teacher Educator* for a new psychometric instrument to evaluate the self-efficacy beliefs of elementary literacy coaches. As a result, this spawned into a new research project to develop a K-12 instrument for all literacy coaches that was recently published in *Literacy Research and Instruction*. Along the way, I continued to work with Dr. Kelley from UCF as we wrote many articles about literacy coaching that led to us developing a new framework called the Clinical Literacy Coaching Framework, published in *The Reading Teacher* and shared internationally through an intensive with the International Literacy Association. This has led to my latest work, a book contract with Teachers College Press about the framework in detail.

I am beyond grateful for these amazing, intelligent, insightful, and dedicated professionals because they provided me with the opportunity, support, and time to become who I am today. It is an absolute honor to receive this award from the American Reading Forum because it reminds me that my hard work is making an impact, which I have always wanted to do since I started studying to become an educator 20 years ago. Additionally, I am grateful that ARF exists to provide a platform for someone like me to present and discuss work that I find important. I am proud of this accomplishment, and I look forward to my next chapter as an educator.

Adam Brieske-Ulenski, Ed.D

## Supporting and Preparing Literacy Teachers and Leaders in DEI through Intentional Awareness

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### Abstract

The authors explore literacy coaches' challenges with engaging in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices. They describe data collected from the Literacy Coach Self Efficacy (LCSE) Scale related to confidence in performing DEI-related tasks. Highlighting the current socio-political landscape's impact on DEI initiatives, the paper suggests activities for higher education institutions to better prepare literacy professionals, emphasizing awareness-building and fostering cultural consciousness. The authors stress the importance of integrating DEI principles throughout teacher education programs to address the needs of increasingly diverse student populations and advocate for equitable practices in literacy education.

**Keywords:** Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Teacher Preparation Programs

While coaching is not a new approach to teaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Showers & Joyce, 1996), it really was not until the Reading First Initiative that coaching was used to support reading initiatives in schools (Bean et al., 2010; Deussen et al., 2007), and more recently the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) called for coaches to provide professional development on topics of literacy instruction and assessment, which resulted in an increase in literacy coaches in public schools. These literacy professionals work with teachers to improve literacy teaching and learning (Pletcher et al., 2018; Stover et al., 2011). To guide higher education faculty in overall program design for specialized literacy professionals (such as literacy coaches) and classroom teachers, the International Literacy Association (ILA) published the *Professional Standards for Literacy Professionals 2017* (2018a). The seven ILA standards include foundational knowledge, curriculum and instruction, assessment and evaluation, diversity and equity, learners and the literacy environment, professional learning and leadership, and practicum/clinical experiences (ILA, 2018a). Each standard has a statement that summarizes the standard, four components describing the standard, and examples of how to implement the standard.

As faculty who prepare in service and future literacy professionals, we are familiar with the standards but struggle with fully and authentically addressing them within and across courses. Specifically, we wondered how literacy coaches felt about the laundry list of roles they are expected to fulfill. To address this, we conducted a research study to better understand literacy coaches' beliefs about their capabilities to perform coaching tasks (Brieske-Ulenski & Kelley, 2023). The *Literacy Coach Self-Efficacy* (LCSE) Scale was developed and validated to determine whether literacy coaches felt confident enacting the ILA standards and these varied roles (Brieske-Ulenski & Kelley, 2023). The LCSE Scale items represent the ILA standards 2-6.

Standard 1 was excluded from the scale because it is foundational knowledge dispersed in standards 2-6, and standard 7 relates to the practicum experience of an institution rather than an individual. After collecting evidence of validity for the LCSE Scale, we analyzed the efficacy beliefs of our respondents related to the ILA Standards, which were moderate to high overall (see Brieske-Ulenski & Kelley, 2023 for more information on the LCSE Scale and findings). However, reflecting the ILA Standard 4, *Diversity and Equity*, the LCSE Scale includes three items listed in Table 1 (Brieske-Ulenski & Kelley, 2023), and these diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) items had the lowest mean scores of our study participants.

Our findings led us to reflect on and infer why our study participants reported being less confident performing DEI scale items and, more importantly, how we could address this phenomenon in higher education. This article describes specific activities teacher education programs can employ to better prepare future literacy teachers and leaders related to DEI awareness based on a Problems Court presentation at the American Reading Forum (ARF) conference in December of 2023 and further research conducted by the presenters.

## **Literature Review**

### **Literacy Coaching Models**

In addition to the ILA standards (ILA, 2018a), several ILA publications guide teacher education programs to prepare in-service and future literacy professionals. One describes three coaching models that literacy coaches might implement based on their school context (ILA, 2018b). Coaching to conform involves the coach observing and providing feedback to teachers related to standards implementation (ILA, 2018b). Coaching into practice encourages teacher self-reflection based on student data, and the coach uses student work to determine the appropriate next steps (ILA, 2018b). Coaching for transformation includes the coach supporting

the teacher in challenging the status quo when it impedes student and professional growth (ILA, 2018b). While these models offer some clarity related to the stance a coach might take when coaching, they do not provide specific support for doing the work, especially in the areas of DEI. In particular, when coaching for transformation the coach may engage in double-loop reflection with an educator questioning their practices and structures. For example, a teacher may want to utilize their read-aloud time better and question why they must have read-aloud after recess and whether it is primarily used to help students calm down rather than a support for comprehension. Additionally, they may question the text selection because the published curriculum does not reflect the students in their classroom and school, which might be why many students have difficulty connecting to the read-aloud. These reflections and discussions can be uncomfortable and require the coach and classroom teacher to act as change agents. While some support is offered for these challenging conversations, politicized topics can be difficult to navigate in reality because one might feel personally and professionally vulnerable (Berg, 2019).

### **Literacy Coaching Roles and DEI**

Beyond coaching models, literacy coaches also engage in a variety of roles, such as debriefing with teacher-colleagues, helping with lesson planning, engaging in lesson demonstrations, delivering interventions to struggling readers (DiMeglio & Mangin, 2010), building rapport with colleagues (van Leent & Exley, 2013), conducting walkthroughs (Hanson, 2011), collaborating with administrators (Blachowicz et al., 2010), co-teaching (Poglinco et al., 2003), and conducting workshops (Bean et al., 2015). Post-pandemic, Ippolito et al. (2021) found that coaches now reported addressing and supporting equitable teaching practices, incorporating and addressing the social-emotional needs of teacher colleagues and students, reflecting on social justice, and becoming advocates for minoritized communities. However, it is



recommended that literacy coaches need additional training and support when taking on these tasks (Ciampa et al., 2023).

### **Barriers to DEI Coaching**

While we recognize the need to and the importance of incorporating DEI practices in coaching and teaching, anti-DEI reforms, laws, and policies have swept the U.S. since 2021, specifically targeting higher education (Contreras, 2024), making DEI work challenging. In 2023 alone, 45 bills were introduced in state legislatures attacking DEI (Martinez-Alvarado & Perez, 2023). The defunding and dismantling of DEI initiatives has left educators confused (Wong, 2023) and teacher preparation programs wondering how to navigate the current socio-political environment. Other barriers to DEI include entrenched practices that educators have always performed, helping those who already do the work (but at a surface level), addressing those who view DEI as another fad that will go away, and politicians passing laws and policies that hinder or prohibit educators from engaging in critical conversations and practices in their classrooms (Zozakiewicz et al., 2007).

### **DEI Professional Learning**

Creating conditions for DEI professional learning begins by fostering an environment for educators to be vulnerable with their thoughts, practices, and ideas of what learning looks like through a multicultural lens. Zozakiewicz et al. (2007) explained that DEI professional development needs the following components: 1) teachers need to be heard and able to observe DEI sustaining pedagogies being modeled, 2) a variety of supports offered, and 3) be able to share ideas and make connections. When these are part of long-term professional learning, teachers have reported that they impact their teaching and student learning. Literacy coaches who

incorporate these components as they plan and deliver professional development and as they coach their colleagues may help address the barriers to DEI we previously discussed.

## **Methods and Results**

### **Our Participants**

Our study included 100 literacy coaches representing 12 states. Forty-five percent came from Florida, 44% from Massachusetts, and 11% from 10 other states. Most participants had a degree and/or certification beyond a bachelor's degree, 57% had a master's degree, 21% had a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies or Educational Specialists Degree, and 9% had a doctorate (Brieske-Ulenski & Kelley, 2023). The participants reported being in education from 7 to 43 years, with a mean of 20.39 years. The range of years as a literacy coach was 1 to 20, with a mean of 6.31 years in the role. Related to professional development (PD) in the ILA standards, 55% reported having none, 34% reported having PD once a year, 10% reported monthly PD, and 1% reported having more than monthly PD (Brieske-Ulenski & Kelley, 2023).

### **Brief Summary of Validity Evidence and Results**

After establishing content validity for the LCSE Scale utilizing literacy coaching and self-efficacy experts, the LCSE Scale was disseminated using the snowballing technique (Brieske-Ulenski & Kelley, 2023). Validity evidence was examined through correlations with other established instruments. Exploratory factor analysis resulted in three distinct factors with a high internal consistency: professional learning and collegiality, coaching instruction, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (Brieske-Ulenski & Kelley, 2023). The LCSE scale uses a Likert scale from 1-7, with 1 representing *cannot do at all* and 7 representing *highly certain I can do*. Participants' item mean scores averaged 5.95, demonstrating moderate to moderately strong efficacy for the aligned ILA standards. All scale items below the 5.95 mean included terms

related to advocacy, diversity, equity, and inclusion (Brieske-Ulenski & Kelley, 2023). The item with the lowest mean score (4.96) was *I can coach teachers to use literacy approaches that advocate for social justice*. Table 1 below provides the mean scores for DEI items in the LCSE scale.

**Table 1**

*LCSE scale factor 3 items and means*

LCSE Item #	Factor 3: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	Mean
12.	I can communicate knowledge of instructional approaches related to diversity (e.g., culturally responsive instruction, and use of diverse materials).	5.45
13.	I can collaborate with teachers as they implement diverse learning experiences that are culturally and linguistically responsive to their student population.	5.54
14.	I can coach teachers to use literacy approaches that advocate for social justice.	4.96

### **Discussion**

As noted, our data revealed that participants in our study felt less confident performing DEI tasks compared to the other tasks on the LCSE Scale. Many anti-DEI legislation and policies have made educators feel constrained (Wong, 2023), especially in Florida (Izaguirre, 2023). Since 45% of our participants were from Florida, we were not surprised by the lower scores for DEI scale items. We believe these anti-DEI efforts present a challenge for K-12 literacy coaches and teacher preparation programs because they prohibit them from engaging in discussions about social and racial justice, addressing biases (inherent and structural), and using diverse literature. While our data suggests that K-12 literacy coaches, especially our Florida participants, need additional support and professional learning opportunities regarding DEI

coaching and literacy leadership tasks, this issue is more pervasive than with our study participants. We suspect that most undergraduates and higher education faculty feel vulnerable regarding DEI (Berg, 2019). Coupled with recent curricular challenges, the teaching workforce lacks students' diversity in our schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 80.3% of U.S. public school teachers identified as White non-Hispanic, but only 45% of all public school students were white (NCES, 2023). Since most teacher educators are white (NCES, 2023,) we believe we must prepare all educators to work with the diverse learners reflected in our schools, even if they are not diverse.

Our findings and concerns as teacher educators led us to present a Problems Court at the American Reading Forum (ARF) conference in December 2023. At ARF, we posed three questions for discussion with our teacher-colleagues: What are higher education institutions currently doing to prepare future literacy leaders to address issues related to DEI? How can teacher preparation programs prepare future literacy leaders for addressing DEI topics without causing tension with state or local laws/policies? In what ways can higher education institutions and K-12 districts use digital tools to support one another in developing literacy leaders' understanding and ability to engage in DEI initiatives? We used a carousel brainstorming approach in the Problems Court. The teacher-colleagues in attendance contributed their ideas related to our questions, which were written on three different posters. After the brainstorming, we facilitated a whole group discussion. During the debriefing session, participants identified the themes of awareness, support, and collaboration, which they believed were represented across the three questions. After the conference, we transcribed the posters and dug deeper into the implications for higher education faculty to identify actionable next steps. Due to space limitations, we have focused on the theme of awareness for this article.

## Implications

### Developing a Common Language Related to DEI

We recognize that it is important not to superficially address DEI in our programs through one unit, project, or course. Therefore, we have included awareness activities that can be strategically and intentionally incorporated across courses. To begin this work, a common language should be established and used consistently throughout a teacher education program. Relevant terminology should begin with defining DEI terms. If your institution still needs to identify DEI definitions, you could use those included in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*The University of Iowa's Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion definitions*

Factor 3: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Terms	
Diversity	“Refers to all aspects of human difference, social identities, and social group differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, creed, color, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual identity, socio-economic status, language, culture, national origin, religion/spirituality, age, (dis)ability, and military/veteran status, political perspective, and associational preferences” (University of Iowa, n.d., para. 2).
Equity	Equity differs from equality. “Being equitable means acknowledging and addressing structural inequalities — historic and current — that advantage some and disadvantage others. Equal treatment results in equity only if everyone starts with equal access to opportunities” (University of Iowa, n.d., para. 3).
Inclusion	“...refers to a campus community where all members are and feel respected, have a sense of belonging, and are able to participate and achieve to their potential” (University of Iowa, n.d., para. 4).

*Note:* Adapted from <https://diversity.uiowa.edu/resources/dei-definitions#:~:text=Equity%20is%20different%20than%20equality,advantage%20some%20and%20disadvantage%20others>. N.d. by the University of Iowa.

Other terminology should also be explored. This includes but is not limited to asset-based pedagogy, culturally relevant teaching, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally sustaining teaching (Will & Najarro, 2022).

### **Raising DEI Awareness through Cultural Consciousness**

Once a common language is established, teacher education programs should seek to develop teacher candidates' cultural awareness and capacity to teach for social justice by first encouraging critical reflection and awareness of how one's beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors are influenced by one's own ethnicity, race, and social class (Sanders et al., 2014). Cultural consciousness involves being aware of how one's background influences one's thoughts and actions and realizing that understanding others involves respecting how their cultural and ethnic backgrounds shape their beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Gay and Kirkland (2003) noted that some educators may intentionally avoid developing cultural consciousness by evading, averting, and deflecting diversity-related topics. For example, some teachers think racism is a non-issue and no longer a problem in U.S. schools (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Thus, leading educators to be culturally conscious can be challenging and sometimes uncomfortable. Hall's Cultural Iceberg Model (1976) provides a visual and conceptual analogy for the hidden cultural codes that underlie a society, organization, or individual, which can serve as a starting point for this important work. While there are visible parts of an iceberg on the surface and above the water, most of the iceberg's actual area is hidden under the water. Hall suggested that culture and behaviors similarly have visible and invisible components. Those things visible include food, dress, and the way we interact. In contrast, those things that are invisible tend to be our opinions, beliefs, and values. Like an iceberg, these often stay below the surface. Our challenge is to make the invisible visible.

### ***Case Studies and Scenarios***

One way to raise cultural awareness is to provide students with intentional case studies or scenarios. While we may be unable to control injustices in the world, we should be aware of them and how they affect our students' lived and school experiences. Higher education faculty can use Gorski's and Pothini's (2018) text, *Case Studies on Diversity and Social Justice Education 2nd edition* to facilitate discussion of DEI topics using their seven-step equity literacy case analysis approach. Faculty can use forty-two real-life scenarios to help students understand and challenge existing mental models (Gorski & Pothini, 2018). Many topics are addressed, including poverty, race, (dis)ability, and immigrant status (Gorski & Pothini, 2018). Each scenario includes questions to encourage reflection, brainstorm solutions, and develop a plan of action. These scenarios could be strategically included throughout courses across a program to promote and develop cultural understanding by modeling how to analyze, reflect, and take action using one particular scenario based on the course topic and information. Similarly, Loyola University of Chicago (2022) has developed nine [Profiles in DEI](#) on topics such as English inclusion, Black History curriculum implementation, and LGBTQ+ inclusion. This publication includes links to infographics, videos, and webinars to further support faculty using the profiles.

### ***Scales and Quizzes***

A scale or quiz can also help to uncover unconscious opinions, beliefs, and values. The [equity and justice awareness quiz](#) developed by Gorski (n.d.) can be used in a variety of ways, as noted on the EdChange website. The data-based questions bring out false perceptions on topics such as sexism, racism, and economic injustice, and the website includes suggestions for discussing misperceptions. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Readiness (CRTR) Scale (Karata & Oral, 2017) is a 21-item scale developed to help establish one's personal and

professional readiness for culturally responsive teaching. Twelve items measure a teacher's perceived emotional and cognitive individual readiness to enable the learning-teaching process for students of different cultures. An example of one of these items is *I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures*. Nine items measure the teacher's perceived professional pedagogical readiness to create a learning-teaching process for students of different cultures based on their teacher education program preparedness. An example of one of these items is *My required courses I have taken have contributed to my sensitivity to cultural values*.

Moore et al. (2021) used the CRTR Scale with 36 final semester undergraduates and found a statistically significant difference between personal (M=4.46) and professional readiness (M=3.98). In addition, students identified field experiences as influential to their cultural awareness. This would suggest that course work alone is not enough to adequately prepare educators to meet the needs of culturally diverse students; teacher education programs should also carefully select field placements and intentional experiences that help students apply knowledge and skills to employ culturally responsive teaching. In addition to using the CRTR at the end of a teacher preparation program, the CRTR personal readiness items could be given to students when they enter a program and a professional development plan based on their responses could be developed using some of the strategies in this article (such as case studies and scenarios).

### ***Book Studies***

Book studies offer another way to raise cultural awareness. [Goodreads](#) (n.d.) offers over 100 books that can be used for a DEI book club or as a shared reading. Book clubs can be used within a course and/or among faculty to create a safe space to understand others better and appreciate the world around us. Many universities have developed recommended DEI reading



lists, such as the [University of Missouri](#) (Miller Nichols Library, n.d.) While discussion guides are readily available for most books, using a protocol adaptable from one book to another can be useful. NC State University (2023) has done this and created a [TIP](#) (Toward Inclusive Practices) to guide conversations around a common DEI experience.

### ***Raising Colleagues' Cultural Awareness***

Raising cultural awareness is not limited to our students, this also includes faculty. As previously mentioned, integration of DEI should occur throughout the curriculum and not be a one-and-done course. By reviewing existing curriculum, creating inclusive learning objectives, using inclusive teaching methods, addressing sensitive topics, and building relationships with students, faculty can create a curriculum that reflects a commitment to DEI. The [Carnegie Mellon DEI Course](#) (n.d.) is a great resource for higher education faculty to reflect on their courses and guide course development. Course design topics addressed in this course include learning objectives, assessments, and course content and examples. Course delivery topics in this course include grading and feedback, active learning, discussion, and group work.

### **Conclusion**

With the teacher workforce needing more diversity compared to student populations, educators must be prepared to work with diverse learners. Teacher programs need to creatively prepare educators to address inequities despite recent laws and policies restricting DEI initiatives. We recognize that this work is challenging; however, we have provided several supports that can make this work easier. For example, faculty professional development around inclusive course design and delivery is important and provides supportive spaces for open dialogue. Teacher programs should raise awareness by establishing a common language around DEI, and then building cultural consciousness by facilitating reflective activities through

scenarios/case studies, quizzes/scales, and book studies throughout the curriculum, not just in one course. Programs should also intentionally provide authentic field experiences that allow teacher candidates to apply cultural responsiveness skills with ongoing feedback and support. Teacher preparation programs that employ the DEI activities and resources described in this article will hopefully produce educators who can adequately prepare a diverse K-12 student population that understands various cultures and beliefs and advocates for one another.

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**Shifts in teachers' self-efficacy: The role of a reading and literacy master's program with clinical experience.**

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**Abstract**

Dyslexia is currently a hot topic in the field of reading. There is a large push in the United States in terms of policy to include dyslexia specific legislation into educational law, with 46 states and the District of Columbia presently having dyslexia laws on the books (Dyslegia, 2023). Teachers can have the greatest impact in helping dyslexic students to become successful readers. However, much of the dyslexia research involving teacher education exclusively involves the cognitive aspects of teaching reading and teachers' pedagogical approaches (Berninger et al., 2013; Fallon & Katz, 2020; Spear-Swerling, 2018; Spear-Swerling et al., 2022; Yuzaideyet al, 2018). Less of a focus exists on teacher efficacy and how education programs can empower teachers to teach reading to all students. This article explores the shifts in participants' knowledge and self-efficacy beliefs before and after completing required coursework in which graduate students enrolled in a Reading and Literacy Education program and provided intervention for children with dyslexia.

**Keywords:** Dyslexia, Teacher Efficacy, Teacher Education



Since the inception of both the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and Common Core Standards (CCSS), there has been an increased focus on teacher quality and its effect on student achievement (Cohen et al., 2022; Kelcey, 2011). Both policymakers and educators center reading at the center of the discussion. Reading affects students' success in many curricular subjects, and research suggests it is also associated with a person's economic, social, emotional, and physical health (Moats, 2020). Policy makers and advocacy groups all agree that all students have a right to read and access high-quality literacy educators (International Literacy Association [ILA], 2019). As such, teachers must know how to effectively teach reading. As a result, teachers feel immense pressure to scaffold their instruction to meet the diverse needs of every student in their classrooms (Dahl-Leonard et al., 2023), especially students who struggle in reading, particularly those identified as dyslexic.

According to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), dyslexia is a neurobiologically associated specific learning disability, with those who have dyslexia exhibiting the symptoms of inaccurate and dysfluent word recognition, and poor spelling and decoding abilities (2024). Currently, a body of research exists that offers general guidance for both parents and teachers regarding the 'symptoms' of dyslexia (Hasbrouck, 2020; Moats & Dakin, 2008; Williams & Lynch, 2010) and how students can "conquer" it (Hasbrouck, 2020, p. 4). Yet, teachers who work on the front lines with dyslexic children daily need much more explicit support (Allen, 2020). Unfortunately, in recent years, legislation surrounding dyslexia instruction (Gabriel, 2018; Phillips & Odegard, 2017; Worthy et al., 2016) has rapidly outpaced teachers' professional development in teaching dyslexic students to read.

Research suggests a teacher's knowledge and skill set directly affect students' reading achievement (e.g., Cash et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ehri & Flugman, 2018;

McCutchen et al., 2002; Piasta et al., 2009; Spear-Swerling & Swerling & Zibulsky, 2014). Conversely, within the field of dyslexia research, little research exists regarding the knowledge and self-efficacy rates of teachers working with dyslexic students. Although many teachers feel they bear the responsibility to meet their students' needs (Dymock & Nicholson, 2022; Worthy et al., 2016) several studies report many teachers report feeling ill-prepared to work with dyslexic students. According to the research, reasons range from the dyslexia label placed on students (e.g., student with dyslexia vs. student with reading difficulties) (Gibbs & Elliot, 2015), to limited knowledge, training, and experience in providing effective instruction to dyslexic students (Dymock & Nicholson, 2022; Gwernan-Jones & Burden, 2009). These perceived barriers can have a definite effect on teachers' self-efficacy. However, with sustained professional development in effective teaching methods and the opportunity to work with children with reading difficulties, teachers can feel successful in meeting the needs of all their students (Didion et al., 2020).

Although many teachers receive superficial training experiences in programs such as Orton Gillingham's Wilson Foundations© (Gabriel, 2018), we believe to become knowledgeable and confident in their abilities teachers must have opportunities to learn research-based theory and pedagogy consistent with the International Literacy Association Standards ([ILA] 2017), and then be given scaffolded opportunities for them to provide intervention based on these tenets (see Table 1 for the ILA Standards Key Concepts).

**Table 1**

*ILA Standards Key Concept*

<b>Key Concept</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
Foundational Knowledge	Includes understanding of the theoretical, historical, and evidence-based foundations of literacy and language, their interconnections, and the role of literacy professionals in schools.

Curriculum and Instruction	Includes utilizing foundational knowledge to analyze and implement literacy curricula that address the needs of all learners.
Assessment and Evaluation	Includes understanding, identifying, and implementing valid, reliable, and appropriate assessments to screen, diagnose, and measure student literacy growth/achievement with the purpose of informing instruction, evaluating interventions, communicating assessment results, and advocating for appropriate literacy practices.
Diversity and Equity	Includes understanding research, relevant theories, pedagogies, and essential concepts related diversity and equity; understanding all forms of diversity are central to students' identities in order to establish inclusive and affirming classrooms/schools, and to advocate for equity at school, district, and community levels.
Learners and the Literacy Environment	Includes collaborating with school personnel to address the developmental needs of all learners by integrating a variety of print and digital materials to engage and motivate the learners and to create a literacy-rich learning environment that fosters a positive climate.
Professional Learning and Leadership	Includes recognizing the importance of engaging in and facilitating ongoing professional learning as part of leadership responsibilities.
Practicum/Clinical Experiences	Includes applying theory when implementing best practices practicum and clinical experiences.

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(Adapted from ILA, 2017)

In our Reading and Literacy master's program, the capstone experience requires the students to work in our university's reading clinic for two semesters with three children with reading difficulties. We believe the combination of knowledge learned during the program in tandem with our students' clinical experience better prepares them and builds the self-efficacy necessary to meet the needs of children with reading difficulties, including dyslexia. In order to confirm our beliefs, we opted to investigate the shifts in practices and identify those experienced by our students. We designed an exploratory case study in which we explored if shifts occurred in how the students approached reading intervention as well as their self-efficacy in providing reading intervention. The research questions which guide this exploratory study are:

(1) How has the participant's approach to reading intervention changed since completing the program?

(2) Does the participant feel they can meet the needs of all students in terms of reading intervention?

## Context of the Program

Students in our Reading and Literacy Education (RLE) master’s program complete a two-year, 36-credit hour program to earn their degree. Students take courses in which they learn about theory, reading and writing development, literacy assessment, children’s literature, etc. (see Table 2 for a complete list and descriptions of courses). Program faculty designed the courses to align with the ILA Standards (2017) and the IDA Standards (2022). The focus of the program is to prepare our students to use literacy assessment data to develop instruction based on the strengths and needs of children. We use the term coined by Walpole and McKenna (2012), “instructional diet,” to help our students understand the concept of differentiation and designing instruction and/or intervention with the learner(s) centered, not a commercial program.

**Table 2**

*RLE Requirements*

<b>Course</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
Introduction to Literacy Theories	Students will critically examine the theories and models to identify their strengths and weakness, as well as their lasting effect on reading instruction. Students will use their knowledge to develop effective literacy instruction.
Diversity and Equity in Literacy	Students will critically examine and understand equity and diversity in literacy research, policy, and practice. Students will understand the importance of creating classrooms and schools that are inclusive and affirming as well as the importance of advocating for equity at their school, in their system, and at community levels.
Reading Development and Instruction	Students will gain knowledge in oral language & reading development (e.g., concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Students will have opportunities to examine a variety of issues related to teaching reading to children as well as developmentally appropriate research-based instruction.
Theories, Models, and Instruction of Writing	Students will critically examine the writing theories and models to identify their strengths and weaknesses as well as their lasting effect on writing instruction. Students will also learn knowledge about writing development and how these elements translate into effective writing instruction for students from diverse populations.
Advanced Children’s Literature and Multimodal Text	Students will learn about the role of literature in literacy development. Students will learn how digital and print children’s and young adult literature can enrich, extend, and enliven the teaching and learning process in schools and communities.

Literacy Assessment and Intervention	Students will learn (1) general education assessment concepts; (2) how the components of literacy can be assessed; (3) how to interpret those assessments and use them to identify instructional strengths and needs; and (4) design instruction/intervention to meet the learner's instructional diet.
Disciplinary Literacy	Students will learn and create effective integrated literacy experiences for all secondary students in every discipline. An important focus of the class is the development of discipline-specific and academic language.
Structured Literacy	Students will be trained in Structured Literacy. Students will study the nature of dyslexia, the structure of the English language, and structured literacy instructional strategies. The instructor has a deep understanding of dyslexia
Seminar in Literacy	Students will gain a foundational understanding of literacy research. Students will also learn to be critical consumers of research as well as to design action research they can conduct to benefit their PK-12 students.
Reading Clinic Experience	In this capstone experience, students will assess, analyze data, and design an intervention for a child (6-16) who has reading difficulties. The student will tutor the child under the supervision of the class professor and/or the certified reading specialist.
The Roles of Literacy Leaders	Students will learn about and explore the following roles and responsibilities that certified reading/literacy specialists, literacy coaches and other school personnel assume in the areas of literacy development: instructional leadership, professional development, coaching, program design and assessment, curriculum development, family school connections, and community partnerships.
Advanced Reading Clinic Experience	The purpose of this capstone experience is to extend students' clinic experience to a year-long learning experience. An extended experience in the clinic allows students to engage with multiple children who struggle with reading in a long-term environment in which the student learns the nuances of working with children with a reading difficulty.

### **Context of The Clinic Experience**

Reading clinics have a long history in the field of reading education (Laster, 2013). Clinics provide the opportunity for potential reading specialists to work with a child who needs reading support while they hone their skills as an interventionist. The current clinic director redesigned the program to develop and implement interventions centered on the child. <sup>1</sup>As the clinic exists in a state where public school psychologists typically provide a “specific reading disability” diagnosis in lieu of a dyslexia diagnosis, coupled with the fact that private

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<sup>1</sup> As the ability to diagnosis dyslexia and the terminology used differs from state-to-to, for the purpose our student we include “dyslexic students” under the term, reading difficulties.

assessments are prohibitively expensive, our clinic accepts children without an official diagnosis. The clinic team reviews applications and selects children the team believes most need support. Parents from the local community apply to the clinic on a semester-by-semester basis. The clinic fees are minimal, \$17 a session, and scholarships are available which allows parents a low-to-no-cost alternative to costly private options. The application includes a series of questions that requests information about each child (i.e., does the child have an IEP; does the child receive services from a reading specialist, etc.). In order to qualify for tutoring through the clinic, a child must have an identified reading disability, another disability that impacts reading achievement (e.g., ADHD), or the child does not meet grade-level benchmarks for reaching achievement. The clinic does not accept children who receive life-skills support or intensive Autism intervention as the child's needs goes beyond our staff and students' ability to meet all the learners needs, nor does the clinic accept children with content-specific tutoring needs (see Table 3 for demographics of accepted children for duration of the study).

**Table 3**

*Accepted Clinic Children Demographics*

		<b>Fall 2022</b>		<b>Spring 2023</b>		<b>Academic Year</b>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>Participants</b>		37	N/A	37	N/A	74	N/A
<b>Gender Identity</b>	<i>Male</i>	16	43%	15	41%	31	42%
	<i>Female</i>	21	47%	22	49%	43	58%
<b>IEP</b>	<i>Yes</i>	23	62%	20	54%	43	58%
	<i>No</i>	14	38%	17	46%	31	42%
<b>Financial Aid Scholarship</b>	<i>Yes</i>	11	30%	8	22%	19	26%
	<i>No</i>	26	70%	29	78%	55	74%

	<i>White</i>	26	70%	22	60%	48	66%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<i>White</i>	1	3%	1	3%	1	2%
	<i>Latina</i>						
	<i>Black</i>	10	27%	14	19%	24	32%

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Program students enroll in the Reading Clinic courses during the final two semesters of their master's program. The clinic experiences serve as a capstone to the 36-credit program, during which the students are expected to apply the knowledge and skills ascertained earlier in the program. During the first semester, the clinic team pairs each student with a child; during the second semester, each student works with two children. Throughout their clinical experience, students work with a clinic staff member who serves as a mentor. Mentors' reading intervention experiences range from 7-20+ years. All mentors have experience providing intervention in both the classroom setting as well in the reading clinic. Mentors use set criteria for each aspect of the clinic experience to provide support and feedback to students in relation to assessment, data analysis, goal creation, and weekly intervention plans. Specifically, students must submit rough drafts of their intervention plans, which mentors review and provide feedback on. Students must revise their lessons before delivering the intervention to their child(ren). As such, the mentors serve as quality assurance to ensure the children enrolled in the clinic receive high-quality intervention that meets their nuanced needs and scaffolds their growth in reading.

### **Theoretical Framework**

We framed the study using Bandura's social cognitive theory on self-efficacy. Bandura's theory (1977) posits that people's perceptions of their abilities and the results of their actions significantly shape their behavior. Further, self-efficacy beliefs, according to Bandura (1986), help individuals make choices, determine their effort level and the amount of anxiety they are willing to endure, and how resilient they are in overcoming challenges. Researchers have used

Bandura's theory to investigate teacher self-efficacy (e.g., Ashton & Webb, 1982; Guskey & Passaro, 1994). A great deal of research based on Bandura's theory has been done on teacher efficacy (Delapenna, 2017; Guadiano, 2024; Ocasio, 2023; Shannon, 2023; Thompson et al., 2021), which can be defined as an individual characteristic, sometimes referred to as personal efficacy, related to their perceptions about their skills and abilities (Ashton & Webb, 1982). More specifically, a teacher's self-efficacy stems from their confidence in their capacity to impact student learning, even amidst challenges, obstacles, or barriers that students may present in the classroom (Guskey & Passaro, 1994).

Beginning in the 1970's researchers have considered the role teacher efficacy may play in both teacher education and educational reform (Ashton, 1984; Goddard et al., 2000; Ross, 1998). It cannot be assumed that teachers acquiring new knowledge and skills will instantly lead to positive self-efficacy beliefs. In fact, research has also shown that doubts in a teacher's self-efficacy can be beneficial for their learning (Settlage et al.; Wyatt, 2015, 2016), with Jones and Nimmo (1999) claiming that "transformative change, genuine learning, happens only through disequilibrium" (p. 8). Additionally, Wheatley (2002) notes the potential benefits of a teacher's self-efficacy include fostering reflection, collaboration, motivation to learn, responsiveness to diversity, and fostering change.

We believe our students in the Reading and Literacy master's program have had opportunities to develop positive self-efficacy. Our study investigates how our students' self-efficacy beliefs may have changed throughout the program, whether they feel they can provide quality intervention instruction for children with reading difficulties, including dyslexia, and whether they feel they can meet the needs of all students in their own classroom contexts.

### **The Current Study**



This exploratory study took place in a mid-sized, private university in a Mid-Atlantic state. Although many studies on teacher efficacy are quantitative in nature, with many using Likert-type scales (Wheatley, 2002), we opted to employ a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A) because we believed we could garner a better understanding of our participants' unique perceptions regarding their self-efficacy through interviews. Our research team consisted of two members; one of whom also serves as the clinic and program director. The research team member who is not the program/clinic director conducted interviews to avoid a conflict of interest and allow participants to openly express their thoughts. We use pseudonyms when referring to all participants. The interviews occurred after the participants had finished a two-year master's program in Reading and Literacy Education.

We used a case study methodology to answer our research questions. This methodology allowed us to focus in-depth on a single issue or case, thinking about its important contextual issues while retaining a holistic perspective (Yin, 2018). The study was bound by place, time, and participants (Thomas, 2015).

Using Zoom, the researcher conducted interviews using a semi-structured interview protocol. Interviews lasted about 30-45 minutes per participant. She recorded each interview, and Zoom provided transcripts of the audio. The interviewer then cleaned the data and organized data in an Excel spreadsheet, creating a page for each question. Working together, we established initial codes for each question (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To ensure reliability and validity, we discussed the data and codes to establish an inter-rater reliability of 100%. Next, working together with data for each question, we collapsed codes to establish axial codes (Charmaz, 2006). Once we identified the axial codes, we placed codes into a mind map to determine major themes (see Appendix B for the program mind map example).

## **Results**

Based on the data analysis, we identified two significant time periods which foster shifts. The participants' shifts are the first four semesters of the program (referred to as the program) and the final two semesters of their clinic experience (referred to as the clinic experience). We discussed shifts in the following two sections.

### ***The Program***

Three major themes were found based on participants' responses regarding their experiences in the master's program: shifts in knowledge and skills, confidence, and perceptions. The reader should note that participants fell on a continuum with their responses. While one participant felt comfortable and fairly confident in these areas, the other nine did not. However, all participants conveyed that they believed they grew in these areas as a result of the program.

### ***Shifts in Knowledge and Skills***

We asked the participants how they felt about teaching developmental reading and writing before and after the program. The majority of participants (nine out of ten) indicated that prior to the program, they believed they provided adequate reading instruction but had the potential to implement better instruction. Casey explained how she felt her self-efficacy shifted as she described teaching developmental reading before and after taking the developmental reading, class stating, "I went through my first master's in education, in the 90's. So, it was before the NRP report in 2000, and we were learning Whole Language, now, understanding the concepts involved with the Science of Reading is life-changing changing for me as a teacher. I get it much better now and I see kids through a different lens".

The data also suggested participants experienced a significant shift in teaching developmental writing due to their learning. Nine of the ten participants noted a lack of

confidence in teaching writing before the program; however, all ten participants stated they grew in their knowledge and skill set in this area. Madeline exemplified this shift best stating, “I never learned how to teach writing in my undergraduate courses. We didn’t do a lot of writing, or even dabble in writing, but the writing course was really beneficial, and now I know how to tie in writing to other content areas to make it meaningful and purposeful.”

### **Shifts in Confidence Meeting Students’ Instructional Needs.**

The largest shift we noted was the participants’ ability to identify students’ instructional needs and deliver instruction based on those needs. In this area, more variability existed among participants’ answers. Before the program, participants said they would rely on colleagues, such as the reading specialist, for advice or to provide instruction to children with reading difficulties. Additionally, participants shared they did not deviate from their basal scope and sequence, because they simply did not understand differences in children’s reading needs. Liz stated, “I wouldn’t know what to look for. I didn’t know if students struggled with vowel teams or fluency, but now I know how to assess a student and analyze the data to meet their needs.” After the program, participants discussed how they now taught the “big five” literacy components recommended by the National Reading Panel (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000) to mastery and used assessments to pinpoint students’ strengths and areas for growth. More importantly, they recognized the important role of differentiation in meeting the needs of all learners, utilizing centers, small groups, and one-on-one instruction. Shelby said it best, “I just feel like I have a greater understanding of the reading process and reading development, and I know the type of instruction that everybody needs at the level that they are at.”

### ***The Reading Clinic Experience***

We identified three major themes from participants' responses regarding their experiences in the Reading Clinic courses: an increase in participants' knowledge and skill set when working with students with reading difficulties, seeing students as more than their struggle, and a shift in beliefs about their ability to teach reading to all students.

**Shifts in Knowledge and Skill Set.** We asked participants in what areas their clinic students needed the most support and how participants knew if their students were making progress. After reviewing the participants' responses, we knew that prior to their involvement in the program, most participants did not feel comfortable identifying and meeting the needs of children with reading difficulties. However, after working in the clinic, all ten participants stated they incorporated progress monitoring data to determine if students achieved the goals set in the intervention plans. Moreover, participants used the data to build on their students' strengths while noting the specific skills that students needed additional support with in future sessions. Sydney's answer exemplifies how knowledgeable she became about her student's strengths and areas of growth based on her assessments. "Lila is 100% making growth. She was struggling with prefixes and suffixes but now when she's reading, she recognizes them. Her word attack skills have improved and so has her comprehension".

We also asked the participants how they used their knowledge of students to design engaging interventions, monitor student engagement, and adjust if the intervention did not go as planned. All ten participants shared the importance of knowing their students' likes and interests and how the knowledge helped them to design engaging interventions. Shelby stated, "Susan really likes games. She loves the sight word games. She comes up with some of them herself, and if we have two minutes at the end, she'll tell me what she wants to do next week. We play Go Fish and she does better when I'm playing too." Similarly, participants used their knowledge

of students to adjust during a session. Liz illustrates this knowledge best, saying, “The biggest thing is I don't want them [the clinic students] to get frustrated, because then they'll have a negative attitude about reading. If I see that I will try to stop that as soon as possible if I see they're getting frustrated with tasks. I might tell them we'll revisit this and move on to the next thing. I gauge my students' attitude”. These statements show a positive shift in both participants' knowledge and skill sets as well as their self-efficacy when working with struggling readers.

**Seeing Children with Reading Difficulties as More than Their Struggle.** The opportunity to work with children with reading difficulties also helped participants see their students in a different light. Each of the ten participants could identify positive attributes of their students beyond reading. Diana noted that her student, Kennedy, was an excellent artist. Diana bought a sketchpad for her and gave her a few minutes at the end of each session to sketch. Sydney described her student Genevieve as “super funny with a great sense of humor”. Casey called her student Kevin “incredibly bright.” The clinic experience allowed participants to see their students as more than just their reading difficulties and the importance of seeing the entire child, not just their label.

**Shifts in Self-Efficacy in Teaching All Students to Read.** The final theme we identified from our data was a positive shift in the participants' ability to teach all students to learn to read. We asked the participants if all students could learn to read and if, as teachers, they could make a difference in students' lives. All ten participants responded yes to both questions, although many qualified that students' proficiency levels would indeed differ. Lauren's student, Max, is autistic and struggled learning to read. Although she acknowledged that tutoring sessions could be challenging, she said, “he challenges me, but he also is helping me to become an

amazing person and an amazing teacher and tutor. I'm learning so much.” Michelle’s passion was evident as she explained her feelings. “I've always felt everybody has the capability to learn how to read. I think everybody's different, and they’re going to learn differently, and that's why we're here is to learn how to help these children better. We can learn to teach these kids. Not everybody is going to understand how they work. Students are going to come into the classroom, and they're going to be looked over, forgotten about, and written off. Students will be held back because they can't read, and they'll never learn how to read and they’ll be lost. It angers me because there's no such thing as somebody that will never be able to read. It's just going to take a unique person or the right person to teach them different ways of how they learn. Everybody learns differently”.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although the results were promising, this was an exploratory study with limited data because of the number of participants and the study duration. We only had ten participants and only conducted the interviews once near the end of our participants’ program. As such, we must be cautious not to overstate the results. However, we see the results as a foundation for conducting additional research. Moving forward, we plan to conduct interviews at the beginning, middle, and end of our students’ program. In addition, we plan to collect assignments in which we ask our students to create and reflect upon their instructional plans. We believe the additional artifacts will add a layer to the data that we can use to better understand our students shifts in practices and beliefs. We hope to collect from an additional three cohorts over a six-year period. We feel the additional, longitudinal data collection will give us a better understanding of the ebb and flow of students' self-efficacy. Finally, as this was an exploratory study, we plan to refine the

interview protocol to better understand the distinct moments, whether in the program or in the clinic experience, which contributes to building participants' self-efficacy.

### **Conclusion**

Educational policy regarding dyslexia affects teachers and the reading instruction they provide to children. Research suggests many teachers feel dissatisfied with the training they receive when asked to support students with dyslexia (Dymock & Nicholson, 2022; Knight, 2018; Sumar et al., 2021). Too often, the cognitive aspects and corresponding instructional approaches are the sole focus of dyslexia research (ILA, 2024). The ability to obtain a dyslexia diagnosis differs from state to state, as does the terminology used to label students with reading difficulties (Dyslexia, 2023).

Though limited in scope, our findings suggest a deep understanding of literacy, which encompasses multiple theoretical frames and topics, scaffolds teachers' knowledge and skills, strengthening teachers' self-efficacy. Instead of the blanket adoption of programs coupled with limited training, we believe broadening the scope of teacher professional development, not narrowing it, better serves children with reading difficulties, including dyslexia. Mills (2006) argues what matters most for children with learning difficulties is the knowledge and dedication of their teachers. We know from research teachers with higher self-efficacy demonstrate more dedication to meeting the needs of their learners (Wheatley 2002). As such, research must continue to investigate the role and importance of teacher knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy in effective reading instruction for all students, including those with dyslexia. Additionally, we believe teacher preparation programs must take the stance that a holistic approach that promotes a broad understanding of reading instruction and pedagogy that is required to adequately prepare teachers to work with all students (Gabriel, 2018). Moreover, research

suggests that a “best program” does not exist for teaching reading, even for students labeled as dyslexic (Johnston, 2011; Shaywitz et al., 2008). Further research is needed to investigate how to prepare both pre- and in-service teachers to develop instruction that centers the learner and pushes back against the narrative that a specific narrow approach meets the needs of all learners.

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### **Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol**

Focus on Program

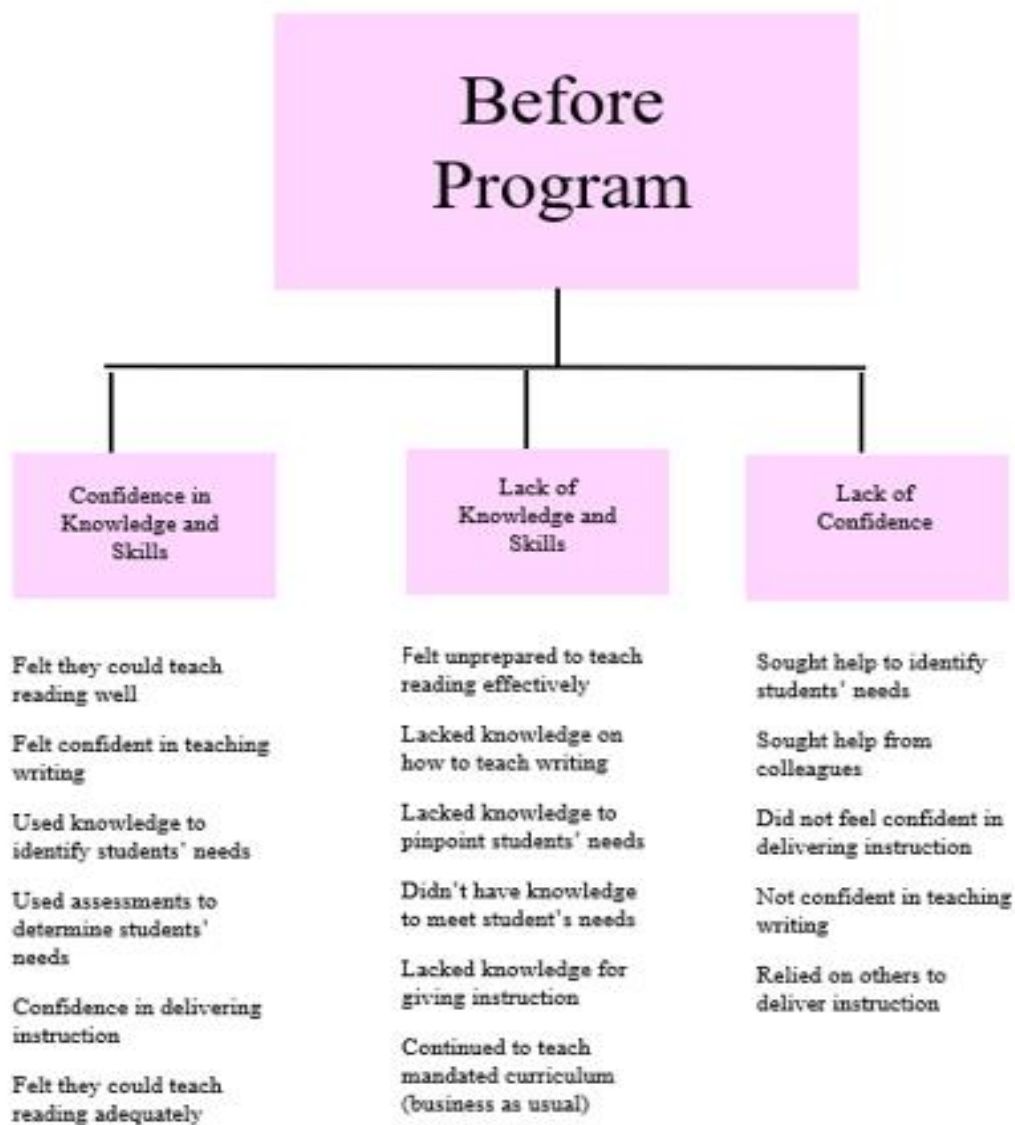
1. Before beginning our program how comfortable were you teaching developmental reading? How do you feel since beginning the program?
2. Before beginning our program how comfortable were you teaching developing writing? How do you feel since beginning the program?
3. Before beginning our program how comfortable were you in identifying a student's reading needs? Since starting the program how do you feel now?
4. How did you perceive student's reading needs in your classroom before the program? How do you perceive student's needs now?
5. Before the program how comfortable were you in delivering instruction for children with reading difficulties? How comfortable do you feel with that now?

#### Focus on Clinic

6. Tell me about your student. What are their strengths and weaknesses?
7. Do you feel your student is making growth in reading?
8. Do you see a change in your student's attitude toward reading?
9. During a lesson has your student's willingness to engage in activities changed since you started working with them?
10. After a lesson, how do you determine if your student has met goals?
11. How do you use personal knowledge of your child to make lessons engaging?
12. If your student is not meeting goals, do you know how to monitor and adjust? Do you have examples you can share?
13. After spending time in the clinic do you think that all children can learn how to read?
14. Do you believe you are making a difference in your student's life?

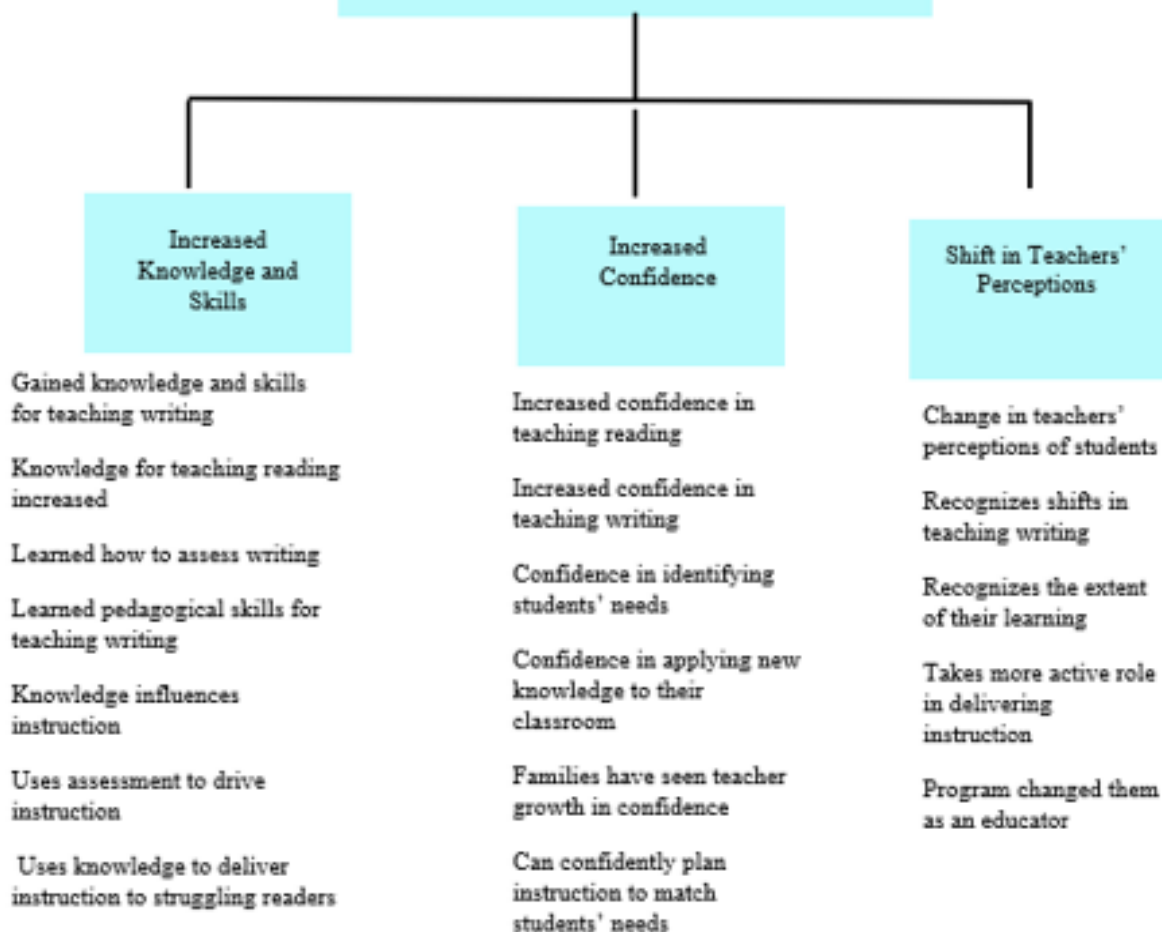
15. Is there anything you'd like to add about your experience in the clinic and with working with your student?

### Appendix B: Mind Maps





# After Program



**Context-Specific Language and Literacy Problems of Practice: Connecting Culturally  
Relevant Pedagogy with the Science of Reading Using Dialogic Reading and Oral  
Storytelling**

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**Abstract**

A common problem of practice today is the implementation of the Science of Reading using culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate pedagogies. Dialogic Buddy Reading & Storytelling is a service-learning project that addresses this problem. The project has the potential to raise language and literacy proficiency levels of children and adolescents; engage families and communities; and impact literacy knowledge for teacher candidates, teachers, and university faculty. The following work details the theoretical framework from which it comes and the four areas of research that converge to support the conceptual framework that leads the design of the proposed study.

**Keywords:** Language & Literacy Learning, Dialogic Reading, Oral Histories, Service Learning

A common problem of practice today, amidst the socio-political discourse surrounding literacy teaching and learning, is how to best implement the Science of Reading (SoR) using

culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and developmentally appropriate pedagogies (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Dialogic Buddy Reading and Story Telling (DBR&ST), a proposed service-learning (SL) project, is one such solution. DBR&ST can raise language and literacy proficiency levels of young children and adolescents, engage families and communities; and impact content and pedagogical literacy knowledge for teacher candidates, teachers, and university faculty. The work that follows details the theoretical framework that drives this project, the four areas of research that converge to support the innovation, the future study's conceptual framework that details the service-learning project, Simultaneously, authors ask readers to consider ways such a process might resonate with the problems of practice framed in their contexts. The conclusion invites teams of teachers, ESOL specialists, reading specialists, and instructional coaches to design ways to implement a culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate language and literacy pedagogy within a conceptual framework that embodies action research as a means of program evaluation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Simple View of Reading (SVR; Gough & Tunmer, 1986) and the Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001) are two reading models prioritized in the current iteration of SoR (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). Prioritizing these models with a single interpretation poses threats to teacher preparation, professional development, and student learning, particularly given the diversity that exists in today's schools. The Active View of Reading (AVR; Duke & Cartwright, 2021) expands the models to include cultural and content knowledge, active self-regulation, and bridging processes. As such, AVR firmly grounds DBR&ST research and development in SoR processes and capitalizes on discourse, sociocultural, and sociolinguistic theories.

Discourse theory (Gee, 2013), which posits that an individual's identities, actions, and beliefs intersect with language and social practice, provides the overarching framework for our research. According to Gee (2013), a Discourse is a way of being in the world. Students in classrooms come with a primary Discourse developed and refined at home. As they grow and interact with the world, they continue to develop other discourses that interplay with their original Discourse (Gee, 2013). In addition, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Cole et al., 1978) suggests that learning is shaped by our interactions with a more skilled other who scaffolds discussions to support the learner's knowledge and skill growth over time. In practice, these interactions form the foundation for differentiated small group work, especially for preK-K and early adolescents. Sociocultural and sociolinguistic theories (Hymes, 2010) interact at the contextual level, noting that culture, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic resources of students influence language use and communication patterns and have value in supporting their learning.

### **Literature Review**

Oral histories and dialogic reading (DR) are both pedagogical options that align with the above theories. Oral histories seek to expand children's repertoire for articulating the important stories of their and their families' lives, thus establishing the language that has become essential for how they have learned to express aspects of their identity. Dialogic buddy reading (DBR) is an application of DR that scaffolds read-alouds among older and younger learners and integrates cultural and linguistic patterns of interaction around a text of high interest to the readers. Service learning (SL) is a platform for conducting oral histories and DBR in developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant ways. The following review synthesizes the research in these areas and explains the importance of overlaying AVR, SL, and DBR to the literature.

### **Oral Histories**

Storytelling utilizes oral histories as part of ongoing practices to increase voice and build community for students in underserved communities (Mokuria & Wandix-White, 2021). Stemming from an asset-based perspective of students and families (Ladson-Billings, 1995; González, et al., 2005) oral histories are an avenue for amplifying family stories at home and at school by bringing to the forefront the cultural languages they have grown accustomed to using and exposing the diversity of assets found across families, communities, and histories. Flores (2019) built a family writing workshop around creating spaces for students and families to share stories in ways that highlight the collective and relational aspects of storytelling. Oral history as a pedagogical tool can serve to increase basic reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills along with critical thinking (Dere & Kalender, 2019). Oral history projects at the elementary level foster intergenerational connections and increase knowledge of and respect for one's own culture (Saglam & Sayimli, 2021). Storytelling is a component of oral histories with rich pedagogical implications for developing reading foundations. Leading students through gathering, writing, and performing family stories can create a powerful environment for students, families, and teachers to grow in their understanding of themselves, each other's lived experiences, and their communities (Cummins et al., 2011).

Oral histories and storytelling as classroom practices have some unique characteristics that separate them as pedagogical tools rather than just activities to do with children. Oral history work has roots in social studies and history education (Crocco, 1998) and focuses first on the students' families and communities. Instructors lead students through a series of activities meant to engage with parents and other caregivers to glean important family stories. The intergenerational nature of this work draws on familial collaboration and can help ensure a high level of cultural relevance to students' lives and those of their peers. Once students have gathered

a story (or several!) they are given opportunities to develop the story using more complex techniques to bring the full story to the front. Cummins et al., (2011) provide a comprehensive list of storytelling resources that provide key storytelling structures as a genre. Once students have gathered stories orally from family members, they learn the craft of storytelling which can extend to writing or performances of stories for a variety of audiences.

### **Dialogic Reading and Dialogic Buddy Reading**

Like oral histories and storytelling, DR has shown to improve language skills associated with genre. More than thirty years of research on DR point to the benefits of increased oral language and narrative skills for children in their formative years (birth to six years of age) (Lonigan, 2007; Whitehurst et al., 1988). DR is a structured way of reading with young children that facilitates conversations around the reading and rereading of favorite stories. The young child takes over the “rereading” of the story by retelling more of the story during each reading. These episodes are not necessarily in sequential settings but occur within a myriad of favorite titles chosen across time. The authentic use of the protocol to guide natural conversation is of utmost importance. Figure 1 is a transcript of an interaction between a teacher and child at a planned stopping point during a rereading of *Whistle for Willie*. Appendix A details two acronyms that capture the protocols used to facilitate the conversations: PEER and CROWD.

DR studies use a parent/caregiver, the child, and small group application in daycare centers and preschools. Mol et al. (2008) concluded that DR offers an effective way of enhancing storybook reading in homes of two-to-three-year-old children but recommends adjustments to extend successful outcomes when the child attends primary school. . Jimenez, Filippini, & Gerbe (2006) found that DR is effective in first-language acquisition in spite of varying education levels of parents and recommend research that examines the influence of consistent use of DR in

first-language on linguistic transfer of early reading concepts and skills in emergent multilinguals. Hargrave and Senechal (2000) conclude that DR is a successful technique for teachers to use with groups of up to eight children and that such a technique should be used over a long period of time in order to make a larger impact.

**Figure 1**

*PEER and CROWD with Whistle for Willie*

<p><i>Peggy [Teacher]:</i> "So instead he began to turn himself around—around and around he whirled... faster and faster..." (a) <b>What</b> was it like when he whirled? "He whirled...faster and faster..."</p> <p><i>Ralph [Child]:</i> <i>He falls.</i></p> <p><i>Ms. Peggy:</i> He falls? (b) Not totally, but almost! (c) So when he "whirled" <b>he went around and around in circles, right?</b></p> <p><i>Ralph:</i> <i>Fast, fast, fast!</i></p> <p><i>Ms. Peggy:</i> Fast, fast, fast. (d) When he whirled he went around and around in circles really fast.</p> <p><i>Ralph:</i> <i>Fast, went around in circles fast.</i></p> <p><i>Ms. Peggy:</i> Let's do it! (e) [Ms. Peggy and Ralph go around and around in circles] I'm whirling! I'm whirling! I'm whirling!</p> <p><i>Ralph:</i> I'm whirling! I'm whirling! (Burns et al., 2012)</p>	<div data-bbox="781 690 1349 785" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">(a) Stopping during reading to Prompt a child using a Wh- question</div> <div data-bbox="768 852 1349 982" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">(b) Evaluating the child's response for opportunities to extend vocabulary, language structures, or retellings</div> <div data-bbox="768 1026 1349 1150" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">(c) Enhancing the child's response by modeling the targeted vocabulary, language structures, or retellings and prompting with a recall question</div> <div data-bbox="768 1186 1333 1316" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">(d) and (e) Enhancing the child's response by modeling the targeted vocabulary, language structures, or retellings</div>
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Lonigan, Anthony, Bloomfield, Dyer, and Samwel (1999) compared the effects of DR and traditional shared reading. Results indicated that DR could increase oral language skills, promote emergent literacy skills, and have a small effect on phonological sensitivity. They

suggested that adding DR to the preschool curriculum would complement and extend the positive impact of shared reading. Table 1 outlines the techniques and their reported effects.

**Table 1**

*Reading Techniques and Related Outcomes*

Technique	Description	Potential Outcomes	Example Studies
Typical storybook reading/Shared reading	No interactive reading techniques used; adult reads and child listens	Positive effects on listening comprehension	Whitehurst et al. (1988); Mol et al. (2008); Lonigan et al. (1999)
Dialogic reading	Interactive techniques that adapt prompts and informative feedback to child needs	Positive effects on vocabulary, mean length utterance, narrative constructions	Whitehurst et al. (1988); Arnold et al. (1994);
Repeated reading	Same titles read multiple times in typical form or combined with interactive procedures	Positive effects on vocabulary and interpretive responses when combined with interactive techniques (i.e., DR)	Hargrave & Senechal (2000)

McIlwain (2013) studied the impact of DR being led by sixth grade students, therefore shifting DR to Dialogic Buddy Reading (DBR). The study demonstrated that adolescents reached suitable fidelity (McIlwain et al., 2016) and that fifteen minutes of DBR four times a week led to increased vocabulary trends (McIlwain, 2013; McIlwain et al., 2016). The following section illuminates how DBR sets the stage for systematic context-based service-learning project that brings adolescents and young children together in the culturally responsive and relationship-based empowerment of language and literacy.

There is a logical, yet unstudied, connection between the benefits of oral histories and dialogic reading (DR). The two pedagogical practices overlap in two significant ways. First, texts chosen for reading relate to family and community stories shared between the partners. Second,



the reading of texts reinforces and builds the background knowledge, vocabulary, and structures used by older and younger children when the two activities are combined in the service learning project, DBR&ST.

### **Service-Learning**

Terry and Bohnenberger (2004) draw on the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to define Service Learning (SL) as “a method by which students learn and develop through curriculum integration and active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that address actual needs in their community” (p. 17). SL can be school or community-based, and like oral histories and dialogic reading, is upheld by substantial research (Chandler et al., 2011; Carlisle, 2011; Farber & Bishop, 2018, Geller et al, 2013; Menchaca, 2013). Students involved with SL experience an increased sense of belonging (Carlisle, 2011). Additionally, as students are mentored in the spaces geared toward generating autonomy, SL heightens the metacognitive skills involved in decision-making (Geller et al., 2013). Given the sense of belonging and increased decision-making that fuels autonomy, it is not surprising that SL projects encourage academic achievement (Chandler et al., 2011). SL incorporates an experiential learning model that moves students through stages of experiencing, reflecting, drawing conclusions, and applying conclusions to new situations (Farber & Bishop, 2018). It follows that SL increases comprehension skills as well as sociopolitical action (Menchaca, 2013).

DBR aligns with the benefits mentioned above. First, adolescent readers engage in decision making as they prep for the upcoming DBR session. They self-assess their fluency to determine if they are ready to read it to the young child. They also plan the stopping points to engage in the PEER protocol using the options outlined by the CROWD menu. Second, during the DBR session, fidelity to the PEER protocol requires that the older child continues to make

decisions as the adolescent responds to enhance the younger child's response. Finally, the older student reflects on the DBR session to begin planning the next reading of the same story.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

CRP first conceptualized by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) is a theoretical framework that recognizes the diverse identities, cultures, and experiences of students with the goal of making learning meaningful to students. Teachers who work from this framework prioritize their students' backgrounds and cultures as they link to content curriculum, providing avenues of exploration that are meaningful and relevant to students, families, histories, communities, and cultures. Following the COVID pandemic, Ladson-Billings (2021) insisted that education should not strive to return to normal because doing so perpetuates the inequity in education. Rather, she reiterated three elements of CRP as a way to increase positive impacts on pedagogy:

- Student learning that celebrates continuous learning
- Social competence that leads to students' understanding of their own cultures and that of other students, teachers, and peers.
- Sociopolitical consciousness encompassing authentic purposes for learning to address real problems across geopolitical contexts (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

CRP and other asset-based theories were synthesized to create a conceptual framework for CRP (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The themes associated with the three elements were condensed and then categorized into five principles: identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching the whole child, and student-teacher relationships. These elements and principles create a space to analyze racism, experience cultural complexities, and develop relational trust between students and teachers (Howard, 2021). Using

this framework increased literacy achievement for 17 Black middle school males; and the authors suggest the same approach be used for other populations (Walker & Hutchison, 2021).

### **Summary of Literature Overlaying SoR through AVR**

AVR posits that active self-regulation, word recognition, bridging processes, and language comprehension act as a function of text, task, and sociocultural context (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). Oral histories and DR require careful text selection that bring the cultural background knowledge of the readers and connects home and school cultures that often have differing models for teaching and learning. Longitudinal and developmentally appropriate implementation of these activities promises to increase language comprehension, influence bridging processes, and indirectly impact word recognition. Designing an extended oral history using a DBR SL project creates a sociocultural context with an authentic task which enhances a sense of belonging, metacognitive skills associated with active self-regulation, and language and literacy achievement.

### **Method for Implementing DBR&ST**

Dialogic Buddy Reading (DBR) is a research-based pedagogy that holds text, task, and sociocultural context as central tenets. Implementation of DBR requires a more experienced reader and preparation time, training and fidelity checks, and 15 minutes of storybook reading multiple times a week. Storytelling, as used in this project, refers to the sharing of authored picture books and oral histories and is supported in research by the seminal work of Cummins, 2011).

This project synthesizes both robust strategies into a unique service-learning collaboration involving three components. First, teachers, teacher candidates, or trained volunteers tutoring emergent readers and writers (pre-kindergarten-first grade) work alongside the children to create

picture books (Williams, 2017). The picture books serve to document the children's lived experiences using words or illustrations a story that can be shared and gives young writers' voices. At the same time (and acting as the second component), teachers guide adolescent children (as early as fourth grade) through small group, explicit instruction to gain skills in the following areas:

- Implementing dialogic reading (DR) (Whitehurst et al., 1988) with younger partners with increasing fidelity to the research-based protocols.
- Exploring and presenting ongoing oral history projects stemming from family and community experiences.
- Engaging in culturally relevant and developmentally and age-appropriate, explicit, small group instruction in language and literacy based on the above bullets and Science of Reading Framework (SoR).

The third component is the actual time of service-learning as they engage in DBR&ST. The buddies meet to engage in dialogic reading based on their DBR preparation and storytelling based on picture books or oral histories. DBR&ST buzzes with the joy of validation and identity - forming personal stories. DBR&ST meets the following essential criteria for high-quality SL driven community engagement:

- Employs an authentic instructional method.
- Serves the community (Soslau & Yost, 2007).
- Calls for the students to experience, reflect, draw conclusions, and apply conclusions in new situations (Farber & Bishop, 2018).

Texts chosen for DBR and small group instruction and topics expanded upon during story book making and oral histories are culturally relevant and advance student learning, as well as

aid parents and teachers in instilling cultural competencies with children in classrooms. Finally, embedding the instruction and learning within SL provides an authentic reason for participating.

Figure 2 communicates the conceptual framework for the study.

**Figure 2**

*DBR&ST Conceptual Framework for Study*



**Preschool**

20 min. small group  
(explicit) story book  
making 2x/wk

1. narrative skills
2. emerging CAP skills
3. voice as writer



**DBR & ST Time**

20 min. before school daily  
(4x/wk)

1. oral language
2. narrative skills
3. service learning benefits  
(academic performance,  
motivation, responsibility)



**5th/6th Grades**

DBR Prep.--20 min. small  
group (explicit) instr.  
(2x/wk)

1. word study
  2. fluency
  3. comprehension
- Oral History Project--20  
min. small group (explicit)  
instr. (2x/wk)
1. expository composition
  2. increases voice
  3. builds community



*Note:* Small group explicit instruction for preschool and adolescent student intersects during DBR&ST creating authentic purposes.

**Discussion & Conclusion**

This project's social and relational aspects are a derivative of sociocultural and sociolinguistic theories and align DBR&ST to CRP when considering student learning, developing cultural competence in the home culture and one other, and developing socio-political consciousness.

The work connects with each of the major tenets of AVR—active self-regulation, language comprehension, bridging processes, and word recognition. Through intentional text selection based on student backgrounds and cultivating storytelling with family engagement around personal stories, DBR&ST sessions foreground CRP thereby potentially impacting student learning in language and literacy. Furthermore, DBR&ST validates and extends cultural knowledge and connects it to reading specific background knowledge associated with narrative and informative text structures. DBR&ST puts adolescents at the heart of bringing SoR to young children and, as a result, qualifies as an extended SL project that benefits both younger and older children. Further, as older students reflect on their DBR&ST sessions through guided coaching, they adjust their planning and conduct using the PEER protocol during subsequent sessions.

Implementing the reading sciences in culturally relevant ways is lacking, therefore there is an urgent need for applied research in classrooms across the country. Action research posits that those closest to the problem can find solutions (Lewin, 1946; Williams, 2017), paving the way for practitioner-generated knowledge (Schon, 1991).

As such, teams of practitioners play an important role in enhancing the research to classroom issues that make up this persistent and historic problem of practice. Authors involved in this project are poised to study the following questions using a convergent parallel mixed method design to collect data on the following questions:

1. What is the impact of DBR&ST on preschool children's oral language development, concepts about print development, and narrative and composition skills.
2. What is the impact of DBR&ST on adolescent children's word knowledge, fluency, comprehension, and composition skills?
3. What is the impact of DBR&ST on participants' sense of belonging?

The authors extend an invitation for school teams to adapt the conceptual framework of this proposed innovation to design a version of DBR&ST that works within their context. The SoR movement may move the needle a bit, but until the impact of the culturally relevant pedagogical application of SoR is more fully understood, the research-to-practice issue will continue to perpetuate the gaps, making this persistent problem of practice a never-ending pandemic that impacts the evolution of equity in our schools and communities.

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## Appendix A

## PEER &amp; CROWD Guides

## PEER

- FIRST:** Read the story in three sessions without using the peer and crowd guide.
- NEXT:** Plan the CROWD prompts you will use with the PEER guide.
- Step 1: Think about the child's understanding of the words noted inside the cover of the book. Choose 6 – 8 words.
- Step 2: Review the CROWD prompts for the vocabulary words you chose. Decide which prompts will work best for your buddy and place the stickies on the pages where the words are used.
- Step 3: Read with your buddy using the PEER guide for each sticky.
- LAST: Congratulate yourself and your classmates for a job well done!**

	C	R	O	W	D
<b>P = PROMPT</b>	...said the great, huge bear, in his great, <b>loud</b> voice.	Tell me what the great huge bear said when he saw his chair. <b>She is in my chair.</b>	Why is the great, huge bear's voice so <b>rough</b> ? <b>He is big.</b>	Who has a <b>rough</b> and gruff voice? <b>The bear.</b>	Tell me about a time when you used a <b>rough</b> and gruff voice. <b>I don't know.</b>
<b>E = EVALUATE</b>	It probably was loud and <b>rough</b> , too!	Goldilocks did sit in his chair!	Yes, he is big and he looks strong.	Yes, one of the bears has a <b>rough</b> and gruff voice.	I used one when my brother took my toy. I said..... I should have been nicer, but I was mad. What makes you mad? <b>When my friend takes my stuff.</b>
<b>E = ENHANCE</b>	A <b>rough</b> voice will sound scratchy like this.....How do you think the great, huge bear sounded?	He said, "Somebody has been sitting in my chair!" in a great, <b>rough</b> , gruff voice.	His voice isn't always <b>rough</b> , though. It's <b>rough</b> because he is big, strong and angry! Listen to my angry voice. Show me your angry voice.	The great, huge bear has a <b>rough</b> and gruff voice. He must have sounded like this....You try to sound <b>rough</b> like the great, huge bear.	I bet you made your voice sound <b>rough</b> when your friend took your stuff and didn't share.
<b>R = REPEAT</b>	The great, huge bear talks in a great, _____ voice.	What did the great, huge bear say when he saw his chair?	Why do you think the great, huge bear's voice is so <b>rough</b> ?	Who has a <b>rough</b> and gruff voice?	Tell me about a time when you used a <b>rough</b> and gruff voice.

## **CROWD Together With Goldilocks and the Three Bears**

**C = Complete**

**“Someone has been sitting in my chair!” said the great, huge bear, in his great, \_\_\_\_\_, gruff voice.**

**R = Recall (Retell)**



**Tell me what the great, huge bear said when he saw his chair.**

**O = Open-ended (Deep Questions)**



**Why is the great, huge bear’s voice so rough?**

**W = Wh- questions (Shallow Questions)**



**Who has a rough and gruff voice?**

**D = Distance (Connections)**

**Tell me about a time you used a rough voice?**

## The Secondary ELA Teachers of TikTok

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### Abstract

This paper describes a pilot study on popular TikTok video content generated by secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers and their potential influence. We examined the TikTok videos through the frameworks of Goffman's (1956) 'performances' and Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's (2010) 'promoter positions.' We collected the 20 most-liked videos on 50 secondary ELA teacher TikTok accounts via three approaches and reviewed them systematically. Our understanding was that re-enactment TikToks when teachers re-enacted specific exchanges and interactions related to education, were the most common category produced. We believe these TikToks can be utilized to support current and aspiring ELA teachers.

**Keywords:** TikTok, Secondary ELA Teacher, Performances, Re-enactment

The field of education retains an apprenticeship model, where aspiring teachers model their pedagogy and practices in response to the teachers they experience as students (Lortie, 1975). However, a social media platform has added to this tradition by allowing anyone to view and consider thousands of teacher voices, perspectives, classrooms, and scenarios. TikTok is an increasingly popular social media platform that gained prominence during the Covid-19 pandemic. Established by ByteDance as Douyin in 2016 (Tidy & Galer, 2020), the app's usage, now known as TikTok, proliferated in the following years (Lorenz, 2020). In March 2019, the application boasted 1 billion downloads and 500 million users (Herman, 2019; Tidy & Galer, 2020). In April 2020, the application's profile rose to 2 billion downloads (Tidy & Galer, 2020), helped by its algorithmic "For You" model and "addictive" quality (Herman, 2019; Lorenz, 2020). According to Lorenz (2020), the "For You" page provides an individualized viewing experience where an "algorithmically programmed feed serves you the content you are likely to find engaging" (Lorenz, 2020, para. 5). Consequently, numerous individuals utilizing the TikTok platform have "gone viral" or become famous because their video content is available to other profiles worldwide (Herman, 2019). Today, TikTok videos are recast and explored, and the number of users has increased to over 2,051 million users worldwide in 2024 (Gilpress, 2023).

For teachers who moved to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, TikTok was one way to stay connected with peers, students, and the larger education community. Today, the "Teacher Tok" community continues to thrive by posting videos that address various topics of interest, humor, and concern. Other researchers have examined TikTok and its impact on numerous members of society (Alvermann et al., 2024; Wright, 2021). For example, one study used critical inquiry to examine TikTok performances as they related to gender identity (Alvermann et al., 2024), while another study looked at TikTok trends by students as a way to

understand institutional discourses of schooling (Wright, 2021). Across the TikTok platform, the affordances and constraints of the current reality of education are accessible and nuanced. As teacher educators, we were intrigued when several teacher candidates (TCs) brought TikTok videos and topics into teacher education course discussions. As researchers, we conducted this pilot study to help us better understand the content dispersed to secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers on this social media platform. Thus, the question that guided this study asked: What information is being dispersed through TikTok specifically from secondary ELA teachers? To engage with this question, we examined 50 secondary ELA teacher TikTok profiles.

### **Framework**

When considering each TikTok, we drew from Goffman (1956). ‘Performance,’ in Goffman’s (1956) *The Presentation of Self*, refers to “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (p. 13). We used this lens while examining each TikTok video to view it as a performance by the individual with potential influence, exclusively those profiles with more than 10,000 followers. Goffman (1956) also discusses dramatic realizations within performances: “While in the presence of others, the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure” (p. 20). Often, this will involve “making invisible costs visible” (Goffman, 1956, p. 21) so that the true worth and value of something can be known. Thus, certain aspects can be highlighted in performances to reinforce an idea, truth, or belief. Additionally, Goffman (1956) refers to how performances can be idealized views of situations. Performances can be seen as reinforcing societal values or as reinforcing the need for



societal change. Regarding TikToks as performances, we considered how they could foster various impressions and bridge appearances of the teaching profession with reality.

Considering anyone watching these performances, we wanted to reflect on the connotation of each video and what a TikTok user may take away after watching. To evaluate how TikTok content can potentially influence a viewer, we utilized dialogical self-theory (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) to provide terminology and a lens for understanding how a TC's identity could be influenced while still under construction. Within our multiplicity of selves, various positions influence our actions and responses. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) assign the term "promoter position" (p. 228) to describe how a position can serve as an "innovator of the self" (p. 228). These promoter positions serve as influencers; an individual draws on promoter positions or influences when they must respond to a situation. In this way, we viewed the TikToks as positive or negative promoter positions with potential influence over TCs.

It is important to emphasize that we are not measuring how TCs are influenced by TikToks, nor are we looking at the actual level of influence a teacher has via their TikTok account. We are looking at the potential for influence in this pilot study. Teaching is a field predicated on a life-long apprenticeship model (Lortie, 1975). However, other forms of media have also offered numerous models within the last several decades. Media forms such as newspapers, television, and magazines have offered glimpses into classrooms that were not previously accessible. Karchmer (2001) described the impact of the internet on literacy and teachers and how it offered new ways of teaching at the turn of the century. TikTok is one of the newer forms of media that can provide ideas and methods to current and aspiring teachers. Rather than be regulated by the teachers TCs have had in the classroom, teachers on TikTok can

influence them as well. Thus, teacher TikTok performances could become promoter positions for the TC.

### **Methodology & Data Sources**

To examine the public data distributed through TikTok, we systematically reviewed 50 secondary ELA teacher TikTok profiles to determine if they met our criteria: (1) secondary teacher, (2) ELA teacher, and (3) at least 10,000 followers. We did not include profiles of individuals who: used TikTok to teach grammar, taught specifically for English Learners, left the field of teaching more than two years prior, or had a generic profile with no ELA evidence. We also regularly updated the data throughout the year 2023 since the data set is public and variable; however, we stopped updating the data set. All videos analyzed in this study were posted on or before December 31, 2023.

Our review methods included three approaches to sorting and organizing teacher profiles (see Appendix A). In the first approach, we used search terms related to secondary ELA teachers, searched under TikTok's "Users," then filtered based on number of followers; examples of approach one included English teacher, middle school English teacher, ELA teacher, literature teacher, and high school English teacher. Using these search terms, 12 profiles met our criteria. In the second approach, we sorted profiles using hashtags #teachersoftiktok, #secondaryelateacher, #englishteachersoftiktok, #teachertok, and #teacher. Using these hashtags, 23 profiles met our criteria. The third approach was a general search based on exploring profiles we might have missed in the systematic approaches. Using our "For You" pages that serve as the TikTok home screen and use an algorithm to show videos it thinks the user will enjoy, 15 profiles met our criteria. Together, approaches one and two provided the most profiles to

examine, but the third approach provided ones that may have been missed based on search terms and hashtags.

To begin the analysis phase, we sorted each profile by “Popular” videos based on a video’s like count. This organized every video on a profile in order from most-liked to least-liked. We sorted each profile’s top 20 most-liked videos into categories: re-enactments, trends, teacher tips, school-related health, responding to comments/audience, and non-teacher-related. While each category could have been unpacked further, we left the categories as general descriptions since we were specifically looking at the potential for influence in this pilot study. In a future study, we would unpack these categories for deeper analysis. The first category included videos that showed the teacher re-enacting specific exchanges and interactions within educational situations. For example, one teacher acted like he took a student’s toy away in class (Jackowski, 2022). Sometimes, students’ faces or voices were included in these videos to contribute to the re-enactment. Most teachers, however, chose to act as both the teacher and the student(s), presumably to avoid publicly displaying students on social media. The second category was teacher tips, which included any advice the teacher provided. These videos often involved tips for classroom décor or management. For example, one teacher provided numerous videos on “Things I do with my seniors that most people wouldn’t think of” (Hancock, 2021). These videos involved her talking to the camera and offering ideas for activities that engage 12th-grade English students. She described how she still gives them candy to answer questions, plays Simon Says when they feel sleepy, and draws hangman when they learn new vocabulary. The trend category encompassed videos that used a similar sound or subject matter within a specific period on TikTok. Usually, a trend involves using an extract from a popular song or other form of media superimposed with something the TikTok user was doing or seeing. For

example, one teacher used the “We Don’t Talk About Bruno” sound bite from the popular movie *Encanto* (Bush & Howard, 2021), to describe how students were feeling lost until she offered extra tutoring sessions (missenglishteacher, 2022). First, she acted like a student who was frustrated with school, as the music changed, she walked into the room as a confident teacher ready to help.

The next category, school-related health, included videos that addressed teachers' or students' physical or mental health. Often, videos in this category were related to COVID-19 regulations, mental health ramifications, or physical maturity. For example, one teacher described how she monitored and refilled bins of menstrual hygiene products in the school restrooms (Cheney, 2021). The responding to comments/audience category was used when the video directly responded to a comment or individual. Often, TikTok users would post or send questions to the teacher; sometimes, the teacher would respond with another video. For example, one user commented asking the teacher to give more details about a section of her classroom library. The teacher responded with another video detailing romance books she includes in her library and their importance in a middle school ELA classroom (Stanutz, 2023). The final category, non-teacher-related topics, included videos that had nothing to do with teachers, students, or education but were still in the top 20 most-liked videos. Organizing 50 ELA teacher profiles' top 20 most-liked videos resulted in a public data set of 1000 TikTok videos.

After coding and analyzing all profiles and videos, we wrote a biography of each teacher and the connotations presented across the profile considering how TikTok users might take up the information presented and might feel or be influenced by the information presented. These writings were bridled (Vagle, 2009) as we considered how our lived experiences may have influenced these understood biographies and connotations. Striving for objective reliability and

validity (Kirk & Miller, 1986) with a variable public data set, we each coded and analyzed half of the profiles. Upon completion, we each reviewed the other half to check for errors and ensure the researchers agreed upon the coding categories. Contradictions were discussed and resolved by the research team. For example, when one coded a video as a trend and the other coded it as a teacher tip, there was a discussion to see which category that video best exemplified. Thus, we systematically reviewed 50 secondary ELA teacher TikTok profiles to examine what information was being dispersed through TikTok and available for TCs.

### **Understandings and Discussion**

The re-enactment videos (re-enactments of exchanges related to education, such as conversations with students) were the most common category published by ELA teachers of TikTok, which directly responds to the research question: What information is being dispersed through TikTok specifically from secondary ELA teachers? Of the 1000 TikToks analyzed, 36.9% were coded as re-enactments, 17.7% were coded as teacher tips, 12.6% were coded as trends, 7.4% were coded as health, 11.2% were coded as responding to comments/audience, and 14.2% were coded as non-teacher-related topics (see Appendix B). As depictions of specific moments in secondary ELA classrooms, re-enactment videos often depicted humor but could also demonstrate frustration, sympathy, relief, or other emotions. In this way, the TikTok platform shows various perspectives of the teaching profession.

In one re-enactment example, emilygraceyancey's 11<sup>th</sup> most liked TikTok shows her walking into a classroom to substitute for a class filled with former students. The teacher walks in the door and you see her smiling and laughing with cheers and applause in the background. The video uses the caption: "Okay, it may not really be like this but it IS awesome to see my former students" (Yancey, 2021). In this re-enactment, the teacher highlights the positive impact

one can have on students. Considering Goffman's (1956) language on performances, emilygraceyancey (Yancey, 2021) dramatizes the secondary ELA teaching career by exemplifying the joys of students applauding and openly appreciating their former teacher. This is often an unseen aspect of the teaching career. A TC watching this video might assume many students will show similar appreciation. Emilygraceyancey strives to bridge these potential appearances and the reality of teaching by adding the caption that describes how "it may not really be like this..." (Yancey, 2021). Therefore, while the video may foster unrealistic expectations of students applauding and cheering for their former teachers, the caption bridges appearance and reality.

In another re-enactment example, honestteachervibes's ninth most liked TikTok shows her "performing" as both a teacher and an administrator (Richardson, 2022). The text on the screen says, "What if teachers only worked their contracted hours?" The video includes a conversation where the administration asks why the teacher has not submitted lesson plans. The teacher responds, "because I had to cover a class every day during my planning period, so I didn't have time" (Richardson, 2022). The conversation continued while the teacher attempted to explain that she did not have time and, therefore, did not complete the work. Considering how the first video could foster unrealistic expectations of positivity, honestteachervibes's (Richardson, 2022) video could foster unrealistic expectations of negativity. To presumably ensure viewers are not scared away from the profession or encouraged to comment their displeasure, honestteachervibes included a note on the video that says, "this is purely satire" (Richardson, 2022). In this way, the video serves to provide a "dramatic realization" (Goffman, 1956) of the teaching career that most teachers work more than their contracted hours. At the same time, the video represents an idealization that one could just work contracted hours,

reinforcing the notion that something needs to change with contract hours, expectations, or administration.

The examples from emilygraceyancey (Yancey, 2021) and honestteachervibes (Richardson, 2022) are just two of the 1000 TikToks analyzed and categorized within this study. They are two examples of videos coded as re-enactments, and they are performances sending messages to viewers. Within each performance, a connotation is derived for what a TikTok user could feel as they view the video and the information provided. In the first example, a positive connotation toward the secondary ELA teaching career may emerge after seeing the praise and applause provided in the video. In the second example, it is possible that a negative connotation towards the teaching career may emerge as a result of seeing a teacher not have enough planning time during work hours. Each example can potentially serve as a “promoter position” (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) for aspiring or current secondary ELA teachers. Thus, the videos, or performances, have potential power and influence over how one might perceive the secondary ELA teacher career.

## **Conclusion**

The Washington Post summarized an article on the surprising power and influence of TikTok in their 2022 October piece, “Once written off as a daily dance video fad, [Tik Tok] has become one of the most prominent discussed, distrusted, technically sophisticated and geopolitically juggernauts on the internet - a phenomenon that has secured an unrivaled grasp on culture and everyday life” (Harwell, 2022, para. 4) ELA teacher preparation programs must acknowledge the influence of the TikTok platform. We know that TCs are consuming TikTok content due to its popularity. Not only have our TCs brought teacher TikToks into our ELA education course discussions, but also, according to a study conducted by the PEW Research

group, two-thirds of adolescents use TikTok regularly (Alonso, 2023; Klein, 2023), and a reported one in six adolescents use the application “almost constantly” (Klein, 2023, para. 3). TCs pursuing careers in education could formulate their understanding of the profession by consuming secondary ELA TikTok content. Thus, positive and negative connotations of various classroom perceptions, policy views, and curriculum ideas could influence viewers. These videos, already familiar to many TCs, can be used to spark discussions and as a common text to engage with topics stemming from each video or performance.

The understanding of this pilot study was that re-enactments were the most common category of TikTok published and distributed by secondary ELA teachers. This directly responded to our research question: What information is dispersed through TikTok specifically from secondary ELA teachers? While this study used each profile's number of followers to consider influence, another study could further examine the direct influence on current TCs. Viewing these videos as performances that strive to foster impressions and bridge appearances and reality is the first step towards understanding the power and influence of the secondary ELA teachers of TikTok. However, further exploration is needed to explore the impact on TCs rather than just the potential for impact.

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📖❤️📚 #teachertok #romancebooks #teachertips #classroomlibrary. [Video]. TikTok.

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**Appendix A**  
**Search Terms and Approaches 1-3**

<b>Approach #1: Searched on TikTok (then looked under “Users”). Sorted by filters of &gt;100k followers and 10k-100k followers. Then clicked on each profile.</b> <i>Italics used for repeat accounts that came up under different searches.</i>		
<b>Search</b>	<b>&gt; 100k followers that meet criteria</b>	<b>10k-100k followers that meet criteria</b>
“English Teacher” → Users	1 / 43 -noellelovessloths	2 / 103 -havingagoodyear -yourfaveenglishteacher
“ELA Teacher” → Users	0 / 7	1 / 25 -that_ela_teacher_
“Literature Teacher” → Users	2 / 9 -amliterature -thecultureking	0 / 8
“High school English teacher” → Users	3 / 35 -noellelovessloths -notyourenglishteacher -educatorandrea	6 / 114 -havingagoodyear -yourfaveenglishteacher -mrs.taylormora -emilythe_
“Middle school English teacher” → Users	3 / 35 -noellelovessloths -thecrazycreativeteacher -notyourenglishteacher	6 / 109 -havingagoodyear -yourfaveenglishteacher -mrs.taylormora -ms.k.ela -emilythe_
<b>Approach #2: Hashtags examined for secondary English teachers. Then, scrolled down “TOP” searching for teachers and profiles that met our criteria.</b> <i>Italics used for repeat accounts that came up under Approach 1.</i>		
<b>Hashtag explored</b>	<b>&gt; 100k followers that meet criteria</b>	<b>10k-100k followers that meet criteria</b>
#englishteachersoftiktok		-mrs.collins13 -mrs.weaver -bald_english_teacher
#TeachersOfTikTok	-mrthomasenglish	-ms.windors

	-honestteachervibes -missenglishteacher -fishin4clout -myteacherface -jayciebrooke -educatorandrea -stevo.the.tinker	-lysstok0 -mamabeardteacher -queenbc84 -mrelateacher -matteicheldinger -talia_samara -mr_clence
#teachertok		-livingforthesummer -abbyramosstanutz
#teacher	-honestteachervibes -myteacherface -thecrazycreativeteacher -mrgteacher	-briannaa_mae
#secondaryelateacher		-simply.ana.p -livmjev
<b>Approach #3: Exploration on “For you” Pages</b>		
	<b>&gt; 100k followers that meet criteria</b>	<b>10k-100k followers that meet criteria</b>
FYP - For You Page	-amber.marie44 -punkrockteacher -mrs.rahlf -officeofburgess -teaching_mrsh	-msjohnsonsela -gibsonishere -hiphophoorayforela -neighborhoodmisshoney -stillateacher -teachreadrepeat -mr.carr.on.the.web -gebesh_ -randazzled -miss.kimber

**Appendix B  
Category Results**

<b>Profile (alphabetical)</b>	<b>Re-enactment</b>	<b>Teacher Tip</b>	<b>Trends</b>	<b>Health</b>	<b>Responding</b>	<b>Non-Teaching</b>	<b>Total #</b>
<a href="#">abbyramosstanutz</a>	0	14	1	2	3	0	20
<a href="#">amber.marie44</a>	11	1	8	0	0	0	20
<a href="#">amliterature</a>	15	0	5	0	0	0	20
<a href="#">bald_english_teacher</a>	1	0	1	0	0	18	20
<a href="#">briannaa.mae</a>	10	0	5	0	2	3	20
<a href="#">educatorandrea</a>	17	2	0	0	1	0	20
<a href="#">emilygraceyancey</a>	3	7	4	6	0	0	20
<a href="#">fishin4clout</a>	6	3	2	0	9	0	20
<a href="#">gebesh</a>	8	0	4	2	0	6	20
<a href="#">gibsonishere</a>	5	6	1	6	1	1	20
<a href="#">havingagoodyear</a>	1	10	1	1	7	0	20
<a href="#">hiphophoorayforela</a>	0	17	1	0	2	0	20
<a href="#">honestteachervibes</a>	3	2	0	1	0	14	20
<a href="#">jayciebrooke</a>	5	2	2	1	5	5	20
<a href="#">livingforthesummer</a>	5	1	1	5	1	7	20
<a href="#">livmjev</a>	15	0	2	1	0	2	20
<a href="#">lysstok0</a>	19	0	0	1	0	0	20
<a href="#">mamabeardteacher</a>	1	4	1	4	6	4	20
<a href="#">matteicheldinger</a>	12	2	0	1	2	3	20
<a href="#">miss.kimber</a>	12	4	0	0	3	1	20
<a href="#">missenglishteacher</a>	12	1	1	0	5	1	20
<a href="#">mr_clence</a>	8	0	8	1	0	3	20
<a href="#">mr.carr.on.the.web</a>	5	7	2	4	2	0	20
<a href="#">mrgteacher</a>	2	2	9	5	1	1	20
<a href="#">mrs.collins13</a>	1	9	1	2	1	6	20
<a href="#">mrs.rahlf</a>	10	1	7	0	0	2	20
<a href="#">mrs.taylormora</a>	6	9	2	3	0	0	20
<a href="#">mrs.weaver</a>	8	3	2	0	2	5	20

<a href="#">mrthomasenglish</a>	8	0	0	0	0	12	20
<a href="#">ms.k.ela</a>	10	1	0	1	1	7	20
<a href="#">ms.winders</a>	7	0	13	0	0	0	20
<a href="#">msjohnsonsela</a>	2	12	1	0	3	2	20
<a href="#">myteacherface</a>	13	0	2	1	0	4	20
<a href="#">neighborhoodmisshoney</a>	17	0	0	1	0	2	20
<a href="#">noellelovesslots</a>	9	0	0	5	4	2	20
<a href="#">notyourenglishteacher</a>	3	0	5	3	3	6	20
<a href="#">officeofburgess</a>	10	0	6	2	1	1	20
<a href="#">punkrockteacher</a>	16	1	0	1	1	1	20
<a href="#">queenbc84</a>	7	6	2	0	0	5	20
<a href="#">randazzled</a>	1	12	0	1	6	0	20
<a href="#">simply.ana.p</a>	3	10	1	3	0	3	20
<a href="#">stevo.the.tinker</a>	13	0	4	1	1	1	20
<a href="#">stillateacher</a>	1	13	0	1	5	0	20
<a href="#">taliam_samara</a>	2	0	9	0	4	5	20
<a href="#">teaching_mrsh</a>	2	5	3	5	3	2	20
<a href="#">teachreadrepeat</a>	4	3	4	0	4	5	20
<a href="#">that_ela_teacher</a>	13	2	3	0	2	0	20
<a href="#">thecrazycreativeteacher</a>	11	5	0	2	0	2	20
<a href="#">thecultureking</a>	16	0	1	1	2	0	20
<a href="#">yourfaveenglishteacher</a>	0	0	1	0	19	0	20
Total:	369	177	126	74	112	142	1000
Percentages:	36.9%	17.7%	12.6%	7.4%	11.2%	14.2%	100%

## **Bridging the Silos of Induction and Local Community: A Qualitative Study in a Rural**

### **Setting**

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### **Abstract**

One challenge rural schools face is hiring and retaining teaching staff. Induction has the potential to support teachers' retention in the profession. This qualitative study uses data generated from 12 interviews with employees who work in a rural school district in the southeastern United States with the goal of understanding how new teacher induction programs are attentive to the realities of community adjustment. Findings suggest that induction practices can ease newcomers into the profession by assisting them in navigating a variety of workplace and community contexts.

**Keywords:** Teacher Induction, New Teachers, Rural, New Teacher Mentoring, Teacher Retention



One challenge rural schools face is hiring and retaining teaching staff (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023). Furthermore, new teachers (within years 1-3) may experience a variety of challenges unique to the profession, which may influence their retention rates. These challenges may create a siloing effect on teachers or the larger school community where teachers may self-isolate and become reliant on their own abilities (Lortie, 1975) rather than looking to others within or outside of the school community for support. In our qualitative study, we examine how new teacher induction programs are attentive to the realities of community adjustment and what supports teachers are offered to navigate their rural context. To achieve this goal, we spoke to teachers, principals, and district administrators in an effort to generate a holistic understanding of new teacher induction in a rural school district.

## **Literature Review**

### **Rural Spaces and Teacher Challenges**

We define rurality through the following traits: low density of population (Eppley et al., 2018), strong sense of community (Love & Loh, 2020; Azano & Stewart, 2015), diversity (Eppley, 2010; Eppley et al., 2018), and connection to a global economy (Love & Loh, 2020; Azano & Biddle, 2019). Rural spaces, as varied as they are (Eppley, 2010; Eppley et al., 2018), face challenges that other spaces may face in teacher retention. Some of these challenges may relate to funding and teacher pay. While these challenges may appear in rural spaces, they are not unique to them ; rather, “when a ‘problem’ is seen as a rural one—then its solutions are limited by that same context” (Azano & Biddle, 2019, p. 5). However, it is important to be realistic about how rural spaces are supported (or not). For instance, Ingersoll and Tran (2023) found that high-poverty rural schools are presently facing the “most intense” teacher turnover, but they are not receiving as much attention as urban-located schools (p. 26). They cited factors of

“dissatisfaction-related turnover” in rural schools relating to discontent with administration, testing/accountability, and a lack of autonomy (p. 26). These factors, though, are not unique to rural schools (Fecho et al., 2021; Kutcy & Schulz, 2006), which is hopeful; in rural and non-rural schools alike, these challenges are being addressed in a variety of ways.

### **Induction**

New teacher induction can be defined as the process where new teachers are supported by others in transitioning from pre-service to in-service teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Induction can potentially support teachers’ retention in the profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). This is especially important considering the high attrition rates in the U.S., “hovering near 8% over the last decade” (Sutcher et al., 2016), para. 7). Kang and Berliner (2012) identified components that high-quality induction programs share: they are “highly structured, focused on professional learning, and collaboration” (p. 281). While Kang and Berliner (2012) noted the importance of structured formal induction, new teachers may also experience induction informally. We define informal induction as support new teachers independently seek out. Literature supports the role informal induction can play in the success of new teachers (Foote et al., 2011; McCann, 2013; McCann & Johannessen, 2004). Informal induction may also be helpful for new teachers when there are no available forms of formal induction or if the available forms of formal induction are inappropriate for new teachers’ needs. New teacher mentors do not always employ appropriate methods for mentees’ “professional learning and development,” and mentors are not always provided with mentoring training (Hobson & Malderez, 2013, p. 9). Induction may look a variety of ways (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). It is important to consider the areas of support new teachers are both receiving and seeking out.

### **Research Questions and Purpose**

This study aims to understand how new teacher induction programs are attentive to the realities of rural community adjustment. Our research questions are as follows: (1) What role, if any, does the local community play in induction in a rural school district in the southeastern U.S.? and (2) What are new teachers' experiences with induction in this setting?

### **Theoretical framework**

The purpose of our theoretical framework is to examine the potential ways local community and induction intersect and how feelings of belonging and conceptions of support may play a role at this intersection. We utilize "sense of community" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) to explore how individuals find community in these spaces. McMillan and Chavis (1986) explained a sense of community as a feeling individuals have of belonging to a space. They identified four components of one's sense of community: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. In rural settings, teachers "pay attention to what extent their values align with the community and how and if they are welcomed" (Wynhoff Olsen et al., 2022, p. 121). This idea relates to teachers' sense of community and helps illuminate how they conceive of community membership (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Membership implies that communities have boundaries; if one does not feel they are a member of the community, they may isolate themselves.

The second component of our theoretical framework utilizes "levels of support" (House, 1981) to identify how individuals within local and school communities support one another. The four domains of support include the following: emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal (House, 1981). Within the "emotional" category, one may find support through empathy, caring, and listening. "Instrumental support" can be provided through more practical avenues, including time and money. "Informational support" relates to support that provides

information— through advice, suggestions, and directives. Finally, “appraisal” relates to support through affirmation, feedback, social comparison, and self-evaluation. Pairing the theories from McMillan and Chavis (1986) and House (1981) can help us examine the support—or lack thereof—between the local community and new teacher induction. We can also use these theories to examine supports that are or are not provided to new teachers within the school community.

## **Methods**

### **Data Generation**

For our study, we recruited 12 district employees from a rural school district in the southeastern U.S. using snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) (see Table 1). Data generation involved semi-structured in-person interviews (Bailey, 2018), where interview questions were open-ended and primarily experiential (Patton, 2015).

### **Data Analysis**

Prior to data analysis, we transcribed each interview and sent the transcripts to participants for review. After transcription was completed, we produced a codebook to operationalize terms we found ourselves frequently transcribing—ensuring we had similar definitions of abstract terms (see Table 2). We began an initial reading of each interview transcript and open-coded (Bailey, 2018) their contents. After compiling the codes, we categorized them based on our pre-established definitions, theoretical framework, and research questions. We established interrater reliability through cross-checking codes (Creswell, 2014) and categorizing all codes as a team. We revisited and further pared down definitions in our codebook during the data analysis process. When this happened, we went back through our codes to appropriately recategorize. Our codebook provides definitions for nuances of the terms

“community” and “induction” as we conducted our study; these terms refer to the broadest level of category we identified. This study includes a visual of our data (see Figure 1), excluding individual codes but including categories where codes were placed during data analysis.

### **Findings**

The following section will be organized by findings related to each research question. All names are pseudonyms.

#### **Community-Induction Bridge**

We found that the local community plays a minimal role in new teacher induction within the school district. We developed one category related to the bridge between local community and induction.

#### ***Aspirational Bridging***

“Aspirational induction-community connection” was the category we identified as a part of the bridge between the local community and new teacher induction. However, these codes did not describe an already-existing bridge; rather, the term “aspirational” reflects the hope for the future existence of this bridge. Janet, a district administrator, explained the connection of induction to the broader local community: “The mentor program– we handle that within our confined space of education. And we haven’t really gone outside to support them. I see the need for it now. But we haven’t.” Janet described a lack of bridging between the local community and school-based induction. Her use of “confined space” indicates that new teacher induction comes from within the school district and is not influenced by the local community that seems to exist outside the school community. Janet acknowledged that while no current bridge exists to bring induction and the local community together in some way, this is a practice that should take place; she sees “the need for it now.”

Aspirational bridging was also evident in the responses provided from Hannah, a new teacher, who explained the tension she felt in the seemingly conflicting roles of new teachers and community members. She explained, “If I saw one of my students at the Mexican restaurant, and I had a margarita, you know? ...Those expectations are so high. And these kids look up to me, and I don’t want to disappoint them.” Hannah was challenged by the expectations placed on her as a teacher and the actions she desired to take as a community member. She questioned if she should purchase an alcoholic beverage while out in the community and if making this purchase would reflect negatively upon her as a teacher. Hannah seemed apprehensive about the inevitable clashing of her school and out-of-school persona and expressed a need for mentoring beyond the classroom. This example reflects the aspiration for bridging between induction and the local community—but no clear evidence of its existence.

### **Experiencing Induction**

From the interviews, we identified three major categories of induction experienced by new teachers. Further, we identified sub-categories related to supports (House, 1981) existing in or lacking in each form of induction.

#### ***Formal District Induction***

We defined “formal district induction” as support assigned by district administrators. Formal district induction consisted of both affordances and constraints for new teachers. Affordances included the support new teachers experience through this form of induction, including all of House’s (1981) levels: emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal. New teacher, Anna, provided an example of emotional support she received from her district-assigned mentor: “She’ll be like, ‘Hey, are you having a hard day?’ And we’ll talk it through, and she’ll give me some pointers.” This mentor identified that Anna was having a difficult time

and worked with her to move forward, emotionally. Instrumental and informational support were further ways new teachers felt supported through their district-assigned mentors. New teacher, Carla, described the ways her mentor helped her through “end-of-the-year portfolios”: “We just finished mine last week, and I had no idea how to do it, and she sat down, and she walked through everything with me.” This instance reflects the time, a form of instrumental support, that the mentor spent working with Carla. Although she was previously unaware of her expectations, she progressed to the point of turning in the project. This instance also reflects the informational support provided to Carla. She expressed a need, and her mentor met the need, providing information about the task at hand. Formal district induction may allow for support in a variety of areas that new teachers may experience.

There were components to the district’s formal district induction that created challenges for new teachers as well. One such constraint was related to the county’s size. Janet described the process of identifying mentors for new teachers: “Because we’re so spread out, and we’re not a large system, comparatively, we sometimes have to go outside [content area and building].” What this means for new teachers is that there is the potential that their district-assigned mentor would be in a different content area and/or different school from them. A second constraint associated with district-assigned induction relates to the lack of induction available. New-to-the-area teacher Larissa explained that she had not been assigned a mentor due to not being new to the profession. However, she recognized that having a mentor could be beneficial: “Having someone to run to when you have a question is key to your success.” A lack of mentors can create challenges for teachers as they transition into the profession and school.

### ***Formal In-School Induction (Buddy System)***

“Formal in-school induction” is defined by the official, district-mandated steps taken at the school level in regards to induction processes. In this rural district, the defining program of this category is each school’s “buddy system.” While the district office loosely mandates that each school have a “buddy system,” the implementation is left to building-level administrators. Most schools interviewed have used the “buddy system” as an opportunity to pair new teachers with veteran teachers.

One district administrator interviewed spoke to the buddy system’s potential to offer informational support (House, 1981). When asked about the program’s intent, she stated, “[Their buddy] shows them where the cafeteria is, where the mailboxes are—all the little day-to-day kind of things.” Here, this district administrator demonstrates that “buddy system” mentoring offers a potential solution to mitigate the stress that can arise as new teachers become oriented with their new surroundings.

Beyond mitigating minor stressors, interviews with principals suggested they viewed the program’s potential through a more holistic lens. One principal suggested she uses the “buddy system” for dual purposes: “[New teacher] has a mentor at [local elementary school]. I have given her a teacher in the building who has taught pre-K before here to try to help give her some help as far as what we do here in our school.” This quote demonstrates that this principal implements “buddy system” mentoring with the intended goals of providing new teachers with support in their content area, as well as learning the cultural mores of the building.

Further still, another principal interviewed suggested an even more wide-ranging interpretation of the “buddy system’s” intent. When asked about her implementation of the program, she stated,



I think a mentor is important because this person has had the same experience. The teacher that she is paired up with is in that classroom, and has had to work with the county and the community, and they live here, so they may be able to give a perspective that I cannot necessarily give.

Here, this principal demonstrated that the buddy system has the potential to assist new teachers as they navigate the challenges of community adjustment—taking the learning of cultural mores outside of the classroom and into navigating interactions with the local community.

When viewed together, these quotes illuminate how this rural school district has used a formal “buddy system” mentoring program to support their new teachers. By providing paired mentoring opportunities within each school, new teachers have guidance as they navigate their job's increasingly complex day-to-day rigors. This guidance helps ease the transition for new teachers by helping them with both simple and complex tasks. These conversations revealed the “buddy system’s” potential to support teachers in all four domains of support—informational, emotional, appraisal, instrumental—presented by House (1981).

### ***Informal Induction***

A final way new teachers in this rural district experienced induction was through “informal induction.” The way we differentiated this experience from the other identified induction experiences is in our specification that informal induction required new teachers to seek out their own support; this support was not formally assigned to them. We found that informal induction provides new teachers with informational and instrumental support related to their practical needs. Anna explained the importance of seeking out information because her district-assigned mentor was not in her content area: “[My mentor] is a pre-K teacher, but she’s not Special Ed. So, I have to kind of branch out and talk to some of the Special Ed folks.”

Because she had not been assigned an individual who would necessarily be a source of support for her varied needs, Anna had to take the initiative to seek out answers to the questions her mentor could not provide for her.

## **Discussion**

### **Induction Implications**

Induction in this rural school district took various forms, including informal induction, formal district induction, and formal in-school induction. At the district level, assigned mentors provided support to their new teacher mentees in all areas (House, 1981). Similarly, at the school level, assigned “buddies” for new teachers also provided support in all areas. Informal induction provided instrumental and informational support for new teachers.

Formal district induction, though important for meeting the needs of new teachers, also consisted of shortcomings. For instance, these formal mentor-mentee pairings were created only for teachers in their first year. This meant that teachers who were not new to the profession but new to the area were not provided with mentors. Those who fall into this designation may benefit from a formally assigned mentor, “buddy,” or even support at a “local guide” level (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Local guide mentors can be defined as those who “explained local policies and procedures, shared materials, answered questions, and gave advice. Willing to help with any problem, they often pulled back as soon as their novice seemed more confident” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 2032). Just because a teacher is not considered “new” to the profession does not mean that they have insight into the space and contexts they are entering. Such support, likely at a more informational level, would provide “new-to-a-space” teachers with an assigned individual who can provide them with insight that they might be lacking as they develop understandings of this new space. Larissa, who was new to the district but not the profession,

expressed the importance of having an assigned mentor while admitting that she did not have one for herself; instead, she took the initiative and sought out those who could answer her questions and address her needs. An assigned mentor or local guide could have provided Larissa with guidance instead of forcing her to determine and seek out her own needs.

### **Bridging Implications**

There was an apparent lack of bridging between the local community and new teacher induction in this district. However, we found that individuals in the local community had communicated to district and school leaders a desire to support their schools. Holly, a school principal, explained that the local community was willing to provide: “Whatever we ask for, they will give, and a lot of times, they come to us and say, ‘What do you need?’ which is amazing.” It seems that even though there is a lack of bridging between the local community and new teacher induction, there is the potential for a stronger bridge to be constructed. Such a bridging, however, would necessitate a flow of reciprocal communication from both sides. If those within the local community have expressed a desire to help the school community, the construction of a bridge between the community and new teacher induction would require the school community to share with the local community ways they can specifically support new teachers.

### **Limitations**

Our study was limited in a few areas. One important consideration was that our sample size was small and racially homogenous; our sample was not representative of a larger population. Additionally, our interviews with school employees focused on their roles in the local community and school, their sense of belonging, community support, and induction experiences/involvement. We did not include mention of rurality or rural sense of belonging within our interview protocol, and few participants discussed how being in a rural community

shaped their experiences. While a limitation, this is an important consideration for future research looking at the bridging of local and school communities—what role does rurality play in this bridging or lack of bridging?

### **Conclusion**

There are benefits to implementing a more systemic bridge between the local community and new teacher induction programs. Bridging can create opportunities for transactional learning between new teachers and the local community. Understanding the context of where one teaches is critical for connecting with those in a space: “You have to *know* a rural place to do good work in a rural place...*context matters*, and if you do not accurately understand the context of a community, you will be limited in your ability to successfully meet the true needs of that place” (Downey, 2021, p. 73, emphasis in original). New teachers should look to the local community to understand its needs and how they may address them. Similarly, new teachers can benefit from a sense of community within their new position. McMillan and Chavis (1986) explained that strong communities create positive opportunities for members to interact and share bonds with one another. If new teachers find a sense of community within and outside of the school they teach in, they may have stronger ties to retain them as teachers and as members of the larger local community. Creating a bridge between new teacher induction and the local community means that these two silos can be taken down.

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## Appendix

**Table 1**

*Study participants*

Role	Number of people interviewed
Veteran teacher with a mentee	2
New teacher with a mentor	3
New-to-district teacher without a mentor*	1
Principal	2
District administrator	2
Community liaison	2

\*One individual we interviewed was a veteran teacher who was new to this school district. This participant was the only teacher interviewed who was not previously connected to the local community, and they provided valuable insight into community adjustment from an outsider's perspective.

**Table 2**

*Coding categories: Coding dictionary*

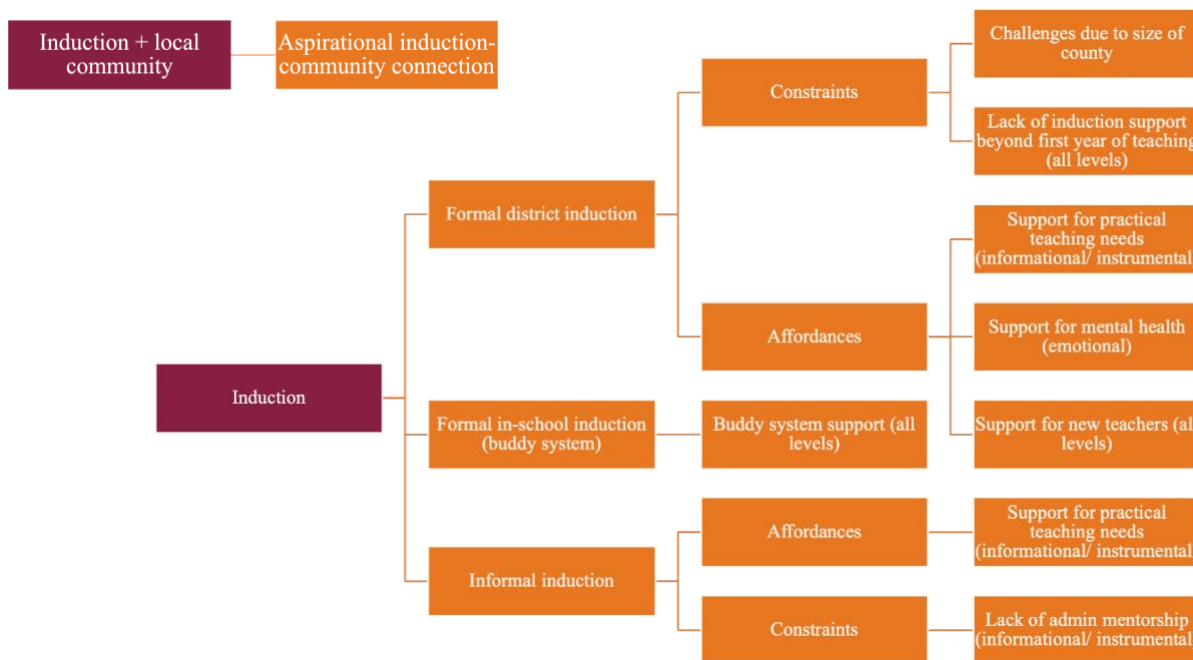
Term	Definition
New teacher induction	<p>Process by which new teachers are supported by others in the transition from pre-service teaching to in-service teaching (Ingersoll &amp; Smith, 2004)</p> <p><b>Informal induction:</b> New teachers seek out the support of others</p> <p><b>Formal in-school induction:</b> Formal support assigned by building administrators</p>



<b>Formal district induction:</b> Formal support assigned by district administrators	
Bridge between induction and local community	An overlap between induction (any category above) and local community
Local community	Rural space confined to local county but not inclusive of school community; parents and students are included in this designation
School community	Rural space confined to school district; teachers, district employees/staff, and administrators are included in this designation
Bridge between local and school communities	An overlap between local and school communities

**Figure 1**

*Findings: Coding categories*



*Note:* The maroon-colored labels indicate overarching coding categories (“Induction + local community” and “Induction”). The orange-colored lines indicate the coding flow, and the orange labels reflect smaller-level coding categories with the rightmost orange labels reflecting the smallest level of coding categories.