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EXPERIENCE  
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JOURNAL**

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# Language Experience Forum Journal

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Language Experience Forum Journal is a refereed journal of the Language Experience Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association. The journal is aimed at teachers of literacy at all levels. It provides a forum for discussion of new ideas and issues related to the teaching of literacy to all groups of students.

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## **LESIG BUSINESS**

Membership Form

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## Message from the Editor

At the spring board meeting of LESIG at the IRA Convention, members approved a name change for our special interest group to *Language Experience: Literacy across the Disciplines*. This change reflects the broader interests and professional work of the members of our group in the areas of literacy research and pedagogy. In this issue readers will find examples of this vibrant research across disciplines with a wide range of learners.

We invite your submissions to the 2013 spring issue of the journal. We are looking for articles on any issue of language experience or literacy, working with students from preschool to college age and students at various levels of fluency. Many teachers are finding Language Experience especially useful when working with English Language Learners.

The deadline for spring submission is March 30, 2013. Manuscripts of 5-8 pages are preferred, but longer or shorter manuscripts will be considered. Submit manuscripts electronically, with a title page indicating your name, professional affiliation, address, telephone number, and email address. This information should not appear on the other pages of your manuscript. The first page of the manuscript should begin with the title. Follow APA format throughout the manuscript.

Submissions will be acknowledged and will be reviewed by the editor before being sent to the Editorial Board. The editor reserves the right to edit all manuscripts selected for publication.

# Guest Editorial: Education Reform

Chris Gilbert  
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Each year, my students ask me the same question: “How will I use this in the real world?”

These students want to know if I, their high-school English teacher, am giving them useful skills. Their inquiry translated: “How will this novel/poem/short story/discussion/essay help me get a job and make money?” This question troubles me, but I don’t blame them for asking it; their concern about the economic applicability of education is legitimate, and they are certainly not alone in assessing it by this measuring stick. President Obama is also interested in the connection between the classroom and the workplace, and he primarily describes education reform from an economic standpoint:

The President’s stance, as displayed on The White House’s website (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education>), reads: “To prepare Americans for the jobs of the future and help restore middle-class security, we have to out-educate the world and that starts with a strong school system.”

His remarks in the 2012 State of the Union Address: “We know a good teacher can increase the lifetime income of a classroom by over \$250,000...But to prepare for the jobs of tomorrow, our commitment to skills and education has to start earlier.”

Education reform is increasingly described using words such as

“competition,” “productivity,” “jobs,” “income,” etc., and while there is certainly a link between education and financial livelihood, the problem with fixating on this is twofold. First, such myopic reform is unlikely to produce an education system that addresses our economic ills; instead, it is likely to only create an institution that further reinforces consumerism. Americans are inclined to view life through a consumerist lens, and “success” is largely defined by economic achievement and material gain. Education reform that is primarily driven by these symbols of capitalistic success will create a system further promoting their importance.

Second, if such a narrow focus dominates reform, other educational purposes will be obscured. Education will become chiefly characterized by pedagogy, curriculum, and assessments that create students skilled for work but unskilled for truly living. The distinction between making a living and making a life is significant, as we currently prepare students for one and neglect the other; reform should instead create a system that does both.

Philosopher Martha Nussbaum’s “spirit of the humanities” serves as an outline of non-economic skills that education reform should promote. She describes this as “searching critical thought, daring imagination, [and] empathetic understanding of human experiences of many different kinds.” The first characteristic, “searching critical thought,” can be interpreted as

probing critique. Students must learn to cast a critical light upon those cultural institutions and traditions that familiarity has largely concealed; these include the influence of media, the impact of race, gender, and class on identity, social institutions, cultural norms, and other aspects of existence commonly encountered and largely unquestioned. In other words, students must learn how to “make the familiar strange.”

“[D]aring imagination” could refer to the ability to reflect and engage in creative acts that embrace risk despite the possibility of being “wrong”; such a focus, however, would require the removal of high-stakes testing, as these assessments do not encourage or reward intellectual risk taking. Emphasizing imagination, and encouraging students to look inward, is vital in a society increasingly outwardly focused.

“[E]mpathetic understanding” should be the most significant driver of reform, as it could shift society’s focus from the individual to the collective good. An empathetic curriculum would force students to inhabit the imagined reality of a person of another age, gender, race, social class, or nationality, and such an act could provoke a confrontation with bigotry, challenge inequality, and promote compassion. Instilling an empathetic capacity in students is imperative, as current income inequality is staggeringly high ([http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/17/business/economy/income-inequality-may-take-toll-on-growth.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/17/business/economy/income-inequality-may-take-toll-on-growth.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&)). Whether we describe others as the 47%, the 99%, or the 1%, our willingness to label reveals a tendency to abstractly categorize

and ignore our own interconnectedness. Reform that prioritizes empathy could address this by humanizing the individuals behind the percentages.

Despite pleas from concerned Americans, economically fixated reform will likely persist under President Obama’s watch. He has offered little discussion of meaningful reform, and he has also endorsed the controversial Common Core State Standards. Unfortunately, this reform is woefully inadequate. Theorist Paulo Freire once wrote that education can become, “the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.” We must demand an education model that reflects these words. I anticipate that my students will keep asking how my class is useful, and I will keep challenging them to expand their definition of “usefulness.” I hope that education reform will eventually do the same.

The original version of the article appeared in the Washington Post’s blog, The Answer Sheet and is published here with permission from the Post:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2012/11/06/the-problem-with-economically-fixated-reform/>

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# Marching Songs across the Curriculum

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Music is a central element in the lives of people from all cultures. It appeals to our emotions and contributes to our ability to learn and remember information (Brown & Brown, 1997, p. 349).

Walking past an elementary school one day, I noticed some children at recess were crawling on playground equipment, others were playing games like hopscotch, still others were chasing each other around the yard. One group of children was singing fluently, marching flawlessly, and doing both happily, dramatically, and almost effortlessly. Sharing this observation with James brought back fond memories for both of us. We remembered singing in elementary school, marching in Boy Scouts, and as members of a high school marching band, listening to popular marching songs like “The Ants Go Marching” and “When The Saints Go Marching In.” We recognize that music in the classroom is not a new idea, but we wondered: How can marching songs, so popular and enjoyable to children, be used to teach important content area material across the curriculum?

This question became the focus for the collaborative development of an instructional lesson that used marching songs to teach content area material across the curriculum. We implemented this lesson in a graduate course entitled Reading in the Content Areas, a required course taken by students pursuing a Masters degree in reading. Our aim was to provide graduate students an opportunity to create, and share

with others in the class, personally relevant, interdisciplinary curricular materials, and more specifically, write variations of popular marching songs to teach important content area material across the curriculum. Although we used this instructional lesson with graduate students, all of whom are practicing elementary (K-5) and middle grades (6-8) teachers, ultimately our hope was that these graduate students would later use these instructional materials to teach content area material across the curriculum to their own students. Simply put, our goal was to help teachers experience “activities like the ones their own students will someday experience” (Harste, 2004, para. 5). In this article we share results from implementing this lesson with our graduate students.

We begin with a brief history of marching songs and then discuss the use of marching songs in content area literacy. Next, we describe an instructional lesson that uses marching songs to teach content area material and share student samples that resulted. We end with lesson extensions.

## History of Marching Songs

Traditionally, a marching song is a piece of music with a strong regular rhythm.

Originally, it was purposely written for marching and frequently performed by a military band. Roman legions, for example, used cadence and melody during long marches to maintain continuity, rapport, and stave off fatigue (Johnson, 1994). Today, the marching song is a well-established and highly respected musical genre. Three famous marching songs include “Semper Fidelis” (official march of the United States Marine Corps), “Stars and Strips Forever” (National March of the United States) by the legendary composer and band leader, John Philip Sousa, and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" with lyrics penned by Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, an Irish-born composer and bandmaster.

### **Marching Songs in Content Area Literacy**

Recently, increasing numbers of teachers are recognizing the important role music and other arts play in education (Eisner, 2003; Dean & Gross, 1992). Smith (1998) stated:

“Humans might be considered to be ‘wired’ for music. We remember tunes when we can’t recall the words of songs (though the tune often helps to jog our memory). Sometimes we can’t get tunes out of our heads.’ Music, especially rhythm and meter, makes sense to us and can carry strings of words that otherwise would rapidly be forgotten” (37).

Music, rhythm, and rhyme are important learning tools. Among other things, music increases brain function, promotes complex thinking, and creates cognitive connections which help make it easier for individuals to remember information (Davies, 2000). Music also “aids memory because the beat, the melody, and the harmonies serve as carriers for the semantic content” (Jensen, 2001, p. 41). Similarly, rhythm supports pattern recognition, facilitates fluency, and increases student interest, attention, and engagement in learning (Gardner, 1983).

Together, music and rhythm function as instructional tools to promote student learning, enhance creativity, and deepen understanding of content area material (Hoyt, 1992).

In addition, music and marching songs are effective tools to teach content area material across the curriculum. Music adds excitement, energy, and emotion, as well as improves motivation and increases participation. It creates a sense of inclusion and collaboration among students and involves rich language, recognizable rhythms, and entertaining rhymes, all of which enable students to develop important listening skills and recognize patterns in verses and melodies. Music helps students, particularly those who struggle with reading and writing, recognize and use patterns to understand, synthesize, recall, and retain content area material (Jacobs, 1984).

Like music, singing songs entertains, builds community, and supports personal expression at the same time (Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burkey, Lenhart & McKeon, 2006), as well as promotes language growth and literacy development. Specifically, singing songs helps students learn phonics and builds phonemic awareness (Routman, 2002; Zarrillo, 2007); recognize patterned and predictable text, rhyme and rhythm; and build sight word vocabulary (Miller, 2002). In the primary grades singing is used with nursery rhymes and popular tunes to teach the alphabet, print conventions, rhythms, rhyming patterns, and beginning letter sounds (Smith, 2000). Fountas & Pinnell (1999) recommend that students “sing songs of such delight that the lyrics remain in the memory forever” (p. 92).

The marching song is a popular genre in the field of music. At sporting events, especially football games, marching bands entertain fans with choreographed and



synchronized marching routines. In schools, physical education teachers use songs to teach active movement and group coordination. In classrooms, teachers use marching songs in reading instruction with research-based strategies like choral reading and reader's theater (Rasinski, 2010). Performing marching songs invite multiple rehearsals and repeated readings which build confidence, competence and fluency, support vocabulary development, and enhance reading comprehension (Rasinski, 2008). In sum, music, singing, and songs have been used by teachers, especially elementary teachers, for many years now (Kassell, 1997). In fact, early McGuffey readers incorporated music into many of its instructional lessons. Here, we build on this rich history by using music in a different way and for a different purpose. Specifically, we use marching songs to teach important content area material across the curriculum.

### **Instructional Lesson**

We developed and implemented an instructional lesson that used marching songs to teach content area material. It involved three stages. First, we developed a text set on marching songs to build participating teachers' background knowledge in the genre of marching songs. A text set is a collection of texts that are connected in some way, e.g. theme, topic, genre, etc. (Short, Harste, and Burke, 1995).

**Table 1. Text Set on Marching Songs**

- Crisp, D. (2008). *The ants go marching!* Child's Play International.
- Dunn, S., & Thurman, M. (1994). *Gimme a break, rattlesnake!* Stoddart Publishing.
- Ouren, T. (2003). *When Johnnie comes marching home.* Picture Window Books.

Owen, A. (2006). *The ants go marching.* Picture Window Books.

Teachers use text sets in a variety of ways. For example, teachers read aloud one text in the set to introduce a new theme, generate student interest and curiosity about a new topic, and explore a new genre (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988). Students use text sets to read broadly and deeply about a theme or topic. While reading, they make intertextual connections across texts. They note similarities and dissimilarities between texts, as well as how different texts offer different perspectives on the theme or topic. These kinds of intertextual connections allow students to create deep, rather than surface, understandings of text.

Text sets have been used to support student learning of content area material across the curriculum (Bintz, 2011; Bintz and Batchelor, 2012, in press; Bintz, Moran, Berndt, Ritz, and Skilton, in press). Specifically, text sets have been used to teach mathematical concepts like measurement (Bintz, Moore, Wright, and Dempsey, 2011) earth science concepts like volcanoes and continental drift (Bintz, Wright, and Sheffer, 2011), and social science concepts like Japanese relocation camps in World War II (Bintz and Shelton, 2004).

Then, we invited teachers to browse the texts and identify those that were personally appealing and had potential to teach content area material, particularly a concept they have difficulty teaching and/or their students have difficulty learning. Lastly, they wrote and illustrated a marching song, performed it for the class, and wrote reflections on the experience.

### **Samples**

The following samples resulted from this lesson. We share these samples because they

represent different content areas (social studies, math, and science); include accurate, correct, and substantive content; spark and maintain interest; and are written in a style in which the words roll off the tongue to create a musical reading (Tunnell, Jacobs, Young, & Bryan, 2012).

**Math:** “Place Value” was written by a fifth grade teacher. Instead of textbooks and worksheets, she wanted this song to function as an “alternative entry point” to place value. She stated:

My students struggle with ordering decimals. They can’t remember place value to the right of the decimal point, and they often interpret a greater number of digits as an indication of greater value. I borrowed the phrase “Casper zero” from another fifth grade math teacher. These zeros are placeholders, and she draws them with dashed rather than solid lines to give students visual support. I wanted to reinforce her terminology and include place values out to thousandths so my students can sing that part of the song when they get stuck

**Figure 1. Place Value (sung to “The Battle Hymn of the Republic”)**

### **Place Value**

I was sitting in my math class  
Feeling totally bummed out  
‘Cause the decimals that greeted me  
Had left me filled with doubt  
How to put them all in order  
I just couldn’t figure out  
Until my teacher said:

Ordering decimals is simple  
When you’re following this principle:  
Compare by tacking on some zeros  
Place value is the key!

Then the light, it dawned upon me

And relieved me of my woes  
Decimal point, tenths, hundredths,  
Thousandths, that is how it goes  
So line ‘em up and make ‘em even  
With some “Casper zeros”  
That’s what my teacher said!

Ordering decimals is simple  
When you’re following this principle:  
Compare by tacking on some zeros  
Place value is the key!

So no longer will I wonder  
Whether 3.72  
Is greater than 3.8;  
I know just what to do:  
Simply add a Casper zero—  
Three-point-eight-oh, that’s my clue,  
It’s clear which one is first!

Ordering decimals is simple  
When you’re following this principle:  
Compare by tacking on some zeros  
Place value is the key!

So it’s not how many digits,  
It’s the place in which they fall  
1.298, when compared  
To 1.3, is small  
If you doubt me, check the tenths place,  
And you’ll see that after all,  
I’ve got these decimals down!

Ordering decimals is simple  
When you’re following this principle:  
Compare by tacking on some zeros  
Place value is the key!

This song provides an interesting entry into place value. It is an easily recognizable tune that states learning decimals is a problem. Fortunately, the chorus reinforces a solution: Casper Zeros. These zeros take their name from Casper the Friendly Ghost, a popular cartoon character. Mathematically, they function as placeholders, or ghost zeros, to help students

understand that, when ordering and comparing decimals, the location of each digit is more important than the total number of digits in a decimal, e.g. 1.298 has four digits but is a smaller number than 1.3 which only has two digits.

**Social Studies:** “Ohio” was written by a fourth grade teacher to help his students learn important information about the state of Ohio in an interesting, engaging, and enjoyable way. He selected “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” because of its historical connection to social studies and the adaptability of the song’s melody. He explained:

I think this song lends itself well to an expression of pride of all stripes. I chose to incorporate facts about the state of Ohio that might otherwise be passed over without fanfare in a 4th grade Social Studies curriculum. I hope my students will be inspired to write their own song about things that they find unique and particular to Ohio.

**Figure 2. “Ohio” (sung to “The Battle Hymn of the Republic”)**

### Ohio

Columbus is our capital  
Our state is O-hi-o,  
The name comes from the Iroquois  
Who called it Ohee-Yo.  
The Brothers Wright and human flight  
All came from our fair state  
Ohio, you are great!

Neil Armstrong and John Glenn  
Are famous astronauts from here.  
They helped our country win a race  
In a bold and new frontier.  
Neil stepped upon the moon--  
John flew around the earth--  
And Ohio was their place of birth! (Rah!  
Rah! Rah!)

(Chorus)  
Glory, glory to Ohio,  
Glory, glory to Ohio  
Glory, glory to Ohio,  
Ohio our great state!

We gave the country presidents!  
(Here they are; you do the math):  
Grant and Garfield, Harrison, Harding,  
Hayes, McKinley and Taft.  
That’s seven, (that’s right) and that’s *so far*.  
Who knows? There might be more!  
With Ohio, you can never be sure. (Rah!  
Rah! Rah!)

(Chorus)  
Glory, Glory to Ohio,  
Glory, Glory to Ohio,  
The Mother of seven presidents,  
The Father of men in space  
Ohio sets the pace!  
Here’s a fact about Ohio  
You can circulate:  
*Tri luh bite Is sot ah lus*  
Is the fossil of our state!  
Its a great big name for a little thing  
That lived so long ago  
When an ocean covered O-hi-o.

Glory, Glory to Ohio,  
Glory, Glory to Ohio.  
*Tri luh bite Is sot ah lus*  
(Don’t you just love that name?)  
It’s an arthropod’s claim to fame!

Our state bird is the cardinal,  
Black racer is our snake  
And white-tailed deer, forever here  
We never will forsake.  
Our insect is the ladybug  
Another of our friends  
With whom we all in ter depend.

(Chorus)  
Glory, Glory to Ohio

Glory, Glory to Ohio  
Glory, Glory to Ohio  
A love we wont outgrow.

Our love comes with a duty--  
Some things that we must do  
And as Ohio citizens, this means me and  
you  
So give a hoot, and don't pollute  
And show off what you know  
About the great state O-HI-O.

Glory, Glory to Ohio  
Glory, Glory to Ohio,  
And all things about our state  
That inspire us and motivate  
Our people to excel (Rah! Rah! Rah!)  
(repeat last chorus)

This song includes key facts about the state bird, animal, insect, snake, and capitol of Ohio. It begins with an interesting, but little known fact, that the state was originally known as O Hee Yo. It also includes references to historical figures like John Glenn and Neil Armstrong and their birth connections to the state. In addition, it identifies Ohio-born presidents and lists them in alphabetical order to stay consistent with the melody in the original song. Relatively obscure facts are also included like Trilobite Isotelus, the state fossil. Teachers can use obscure facts like these to raise interesting questions: Was Ohio at one time covered by a warm sea? Is Trilobite Isotelus an arthropod?

**Science:** "Planets" was written by an elementary school special education teacher to help students learn fundamental information about the solar system. It is a variation of the Duckworth Chant, otherwise known as the chant that begins "I don't know but I've been told..." It is attributed to a Private Duckworth, a soldier in World War II, who returning with his platoon from a

long tedious march began chanting to build up the spirits of his comrades.

In this chant the teacher wanted to merge music and motion with the exploration of outer space. In other words, he wanted a song in which students could move their bodies and learn science at the same time.

My students have a hard time sitting still so I wanted to write a song they could march to. I also wanted to add a call and response to it. I wanted the first two lines read by one person and the second by another. Then the verse with the Earth! Yes! and the repetitive verses could be sung in unison. I crafted the verses to give some facts about a planet, thinking that I'd inspire my students to pick a planet and use the melody to expand on the information and create their own song.

**Figure 3: "Planets" (sung to "The Duckworth Chant")**

### Planets

I don't know but I've been told  
Outer space is mighty cold  
Our closet star we call our sun.  
Our planets all go around that one.

Sound off  
Sound off  
One, two, three, four.  
One, two-  
Three, four!

The sun is what gives us our light  
But we can't see it when its night  
All our energy has come  
In some way from our friend the sun

Sound off  
Sound off  
One, two, three, four.  
One, two-

Three, four!

Everything you touch or see  
Came from solar energy.  
Earth's a planet and our home  
But in space we're not alone.

Sound off  
Sound off  
One, two, three, four.  
One, two-  
Three, four!

A solar system is its name  
To learn the planets is our aim.  
Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars,  
Are closet to our sun, the star.

Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, PLUS  
Neptune makes for eight of us.  
Sound off  
Sound off  
One, two, three, four.  
One, two-  
Three, four!

Mercury's tiny for what its worth  
While Venus is the size of earth.  
Earth is next, the third one out,  
Lets all stop and give a shout:

**EARTH! YES! EARTH GO!  
IT'S THE ONE WE LOVE AND KNOW!**

Sound off  
Sound off  
One, two, three, four.  
One, two-  
Three, four!

Mars, might've had waterfalls  
The Red Planet is what it's called.  
Remember:

Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars,  
Are closet to our sun, the star.

Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, PLUS  
Neptune makes for eight of us  
Sound off  
Sound off  
One, two, three, four.  
One, two-  
Three, four!

These last four are really vast  
Giant planets make of gas  
Jupiter's our biggest one  
Fifth planet out from the sun.

Sound off  
Sound off  
One, two, three, four.  
One, two-  
Three, four!

Saturn has a lot of things:  
Sixty-two moons and 9 big rings.  
Uranus—one of the biggest three  
But still its very hard to see.  
Neptune has some major storms  
So cold that liquid methane forms.

Sound off  
Sound off  
One, two, three, four.  
One, two-  
Three, four!

I don't know but I've been told  
Outer space is mighty cold  
Now lets show just what we know  
We'll name the planets  
Here we go:

Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars,  
Are closet to our sun, the star.  
Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, PLUS  
Neptune makes for eight of us.

Sound off  
Sound off

One, two, three, four.  
One, two-  
Three, four!

### Lesson Extensions

Participating teachers benefited from this experience in several ways. They were actively engaged in problem-posing and problem-solving, purposeful and meaningful inquiry, and personal reflection. They created curricular resources that were meaningful to them and responsive to their own student needs. They also performed and reflected on the integrated curriculum they created.

This lesson can be modified to include multiple perspectives. In social studies students can work in pairs, select a marching song, and write lyrics that reflect opposing sides of the Civil War, e.g. confederate versus union views on states rights. In science, students can write lyrics to the same song in which they take different stances on a controversial topic, e.g. Creationism and Darwinism. And in math, students can write lyrics in which they explain the advantages and disadvantages of different measurement systems, e.g. standard versus metric.

Moreover, this lesson can be modified to include multiple voices. Students can work in pairs and write marching songs for two voices (see Fleischman, 2004; 1989), two and three voices (see Pappas, 1993) and even four voices (Fleischman, 2008). Lastly, teachers can extend this lesson to support creative writing in similar musical genres. For example, students can experiment with writing variations of popular songs like nursery rhymes (“Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”), patriotic songs (“Yankee Doodle”), holiday songs (“She’s a Grand Old Flag”), folk songs (“Oh, Susanna”), gospel songs (“Michael, Row Your Boat Ashore”), Christmas songs (“Deck the Halls”), hand-clap songs (“Miss Mary Mack”), jump rope

rhymes (“Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Turn Around”), and hip-hop songs (“We Real Cool”). Ultimately, teachers can use this lesson and lesson extensions to promote creative writing in which students use their own songs, rhythms and rhymes and at the same time learn content area material across the curriculum.

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# Notes from the 2012 LESIG Roundtables: Teaching ELL Beginners with Picture Books on Social Studies Topics

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As every teacher knows, learning flows when there is synchronicity of teaching strategies, materials, and students. This flow is impaired when significant characteristics of students are glossed over. Such is the case when we teach beginner English Language Learners (ELLs) with books that were selected for teaching reading to English speakers. Ana Lado, professor of education at Marymount University, has put together a list of picture books for beginner ELLs based on foundational concepts in second language teaching, what she calls, tellability. These books are additionally matched to language teaching strategies. In fall of 2012, her book *Teaching ELL Beginners with Picture Books: Tellability* was published by Corwin Press.

Following are examples of picture books paired with Language Teaching Strategies.

**Retelling** is a teaching strategy compatible with books that have sequential content.

**Compare/Contrast** is easy to use with books with patterns in language or content.

**Reenactment** is a strategy to use with books that have active scenes and verbs.

**Graphics** is the strategy I use with books containing graphs, maps, or matrices.

**Recitation and Songs** are the teaching strategy I use with books with poetry or poetic elements that encourage fluency.

<i>The Arrival</i>	T. Shaun	2007	Wordless	Retelling
<i>The Children We Remember</i>	C.B. Abells	2002		Comparing/Contrasting; Retelling
<i>Children Just Like Me</i>	B. and A. Kindersley	1995		Comparing/Contrasting
<i>Grandfather's Journey</i>	A. Say	1993		Comparing/Contrasting; Retelling
<i>I Hate English!</i>	E. Levine	1989		Retelling
<i>I Am Rosa Parks</i>	R. Parks and J. Haskins	1997		Retelling; Reenactment
<i>I Want to beFree</i>	J. Slate	2009		Reenactment
<i>Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	D. Rappaport, 2001 Retelling	2001		Retelling

<i>Our Children Can Soar: A Celebration of Rosa, Barack, and the Pioneers of Change.</i>	M. Cook	2009	Beginner	Compare/Contrast; Reenactment
<i>Rosa</i>	N. Giovanni	2005		Retelling, Reenactment
<i>When I First Came to this Land</i>	H. Ziefert	2007		Recitation, Compare/Contrast
<i>A Cat and a Dog</i>	C. Masure	2003		Reenactment
<i>Eating</i> (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Urdu...)	G. Swain	1999	Other titles: <i>Celebrating, Smiling</i>	Compare/Contrast text; Graphics
<i>Families</i>	A. Morris	1989	Also <i>Hats, Hats, Hats: and Bread, Bread, Bread</i>	Compare/Contrast text; Recitation, Graphics
<i>Follow the Line around the World</i>	L. Ljungkvist	2008		Visualizing; Graphics
<i>I Have Heard of a Land</i>	J.C. Thomas and F. Cooper	1998		Recitation
<i>This Land Is Your Land</i>	A. Guthrie	2002		Songs
<i>Mirror</i>	J. Baker	2010	Wordless	Compare/Contrast
<i>My America</i>	J. Gilchrist	2007	Earliest Beginner English	Recitation
<i>My People</i>	Langston Hughes	2009		Recitation
<i>Amelia's Fantastic Flight</i>	R. Bursik	1992		Graphics
<i>A Little Peace</i>	B. Kerley	2006		Graphics; Compare/Contrast
<i>Underground: Finding the Light to Freedom</i>	S. Evans	2011		Reenactment

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# Attitudes of Pre-Service Teachers about Adolescent Reading

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Teens today read the same books in school that their parents and grandparents and probably great grandparents read. Multiple surveys of required texts in middle and high schools continue to show the prevalence of “classic” works of literature. Even though the popularity of young adult literature is at an all-time high for both teens and adults, school reading continues to be heavy on “standard” works. Although there are several factors that account for this practice (financial and curricular), part of this practice stems from the attitudes of teachers that only classic works of literature merit inclusion in the curriculum. Thus, despite research in reading development and motivation, teachers continue to teach classics, leaving many less capable and reluctant readers behind.

The language experience approach is based on the idea that when students reflect on “experiences” systematically, they develop new concepts which they can then test out in future situations. This study was designed to elicit the attitudes of pre-service teachers about what students should read and what they learned as a result of conducting an in-depth interview with one teenage- reader. The pre-service teachers were enrolled in a course on adolescent literature when they interviewed a teen reader and shared their insights. At the beginning of the course students were asked to describe their own reading histories by recollecting the texts they read while in middle and high school. These reading histories confirmed that they were avid

readers, for the most part, that they had read mostly “classic” works of literature in school, and that they generally believed that high school students should read books in the canon.

On the day the interviews were due, these students were asked to respond to a survey describing their attitudes before they conducted the interview and how their thinking had changed, or not, as a result of interviewing the teen reader. The survey also asked about ideas of what constitutes acceptable reading for adolescents and whether certain practices might actually discourage reading. The survey included the following open-ended questions:

1. What ideas did you have about what middle/high school students should be reading before the interview?
2. Now that you have interviewed your student, have your ideas changed or not about what students can and should read?
3. What have you discovered about practices in the schools that encourage/discourage reading?

## Analysis of Surveys

The majority of pre-service teachers held negative attitudes about the reading of their future students. They believed that most students do not read or only read what is required and assigned.

Following are some of their common responses:

- Students use Spark Notes like crazy (more than the actual books).
- Books have a stigma; they are considered academic, “homework.”
- Students are turned off by reading that is not connected to their lives.
- Students are not interested—worn out in elementary school.
- Most boys in middle and high school do not really read.
- Students would prefer fiction to nonfiction.

Several of the candidates did express positive preconceptions, mainly because of their own reading histories. They thought that their future students would want to read just as much as they did, including reading assigned books outside of the classroom. They thought teens would want to read popular or adult books because YAL was too unsophisticated and childish. In general, pre-service teachers expressed global attitudes, either positive or negative, about how their students would react to reading.

The next question asked them to consider if their ideas had changed about what students can and should read or any aspect of teen reading. Their responses showed an enhanced perception of the reading needs of teens. Their interviews had made them realize that the students they will encounter have very complex lives. They learned how busy students are and that English class isn't their first priority. For some this was a realization that their reading lives are quite different from the students they will teach. They discovered that teens often consider “School Books” or classics boring and that teaching the canon might not be as important as they once thought. Also they realized that students have been

affected by contemporary media culture and they are looking for books to entertain them. As a result of their interviews, they began to understand that there are multiple factors affecting students and whether they choose to read or not.

The biggest insight for these pre-service teachers was the realization that there are school practices that might actually discourage reading. As they talked with their teens, they learned that teens are “turned off” when they have no choice in what they read and little time in school to read. Teens asked for more time to respond to texts and to have frequent and open discussions. Here are a few of the common responses to the third survey question about practices in schools that discourage reading:

- No choice
- No SSR time—not enough in class reading
- No time for response—rush through texts
- Using “unrelatable” texts
- Not paying attention to students’ reading levels or stages of reading development
- Little time to discuss literature or all talk is teacher-centered/controlled
- Too many worksheet activities
- Getting bogged down when everyone is reading the same text

Realizing that their future students are having trouble engaging with the required reading in school and that they are “not English majors,” also led these candidates to express a responsibility to encourage reading and to suggest some remedies. One candidate said that “kids in school should be reading YAL.” Another candidate concluded that “students need to enjoy reading which means they should start out by reading accessible or popular books; this

should be encouraged—not discouraged—as so often happens.” In general the responses suggested a new insight into the power of choice and interest. Candidates responded that students need interesting and relevant literature and that it is important to gauge students’ interests and skill levels before selecting literature to read. These responses show that these pre-service teachers are no longer making global judgments about acceptable vs. unacceptable literature and that they are thinking more about the needs of readers.

These pre-service teachers suggested the following practices to encourage and promote reading:

- Use more YA fiction, more contemporary books, high interesting reading
- Promote more response so students can develop their reactions to literature and can begin to achieve a sense of efficacy in how they understand a text
- Use shorter and accessible texts
- Connect literature to students’ lives

and what they read

- Give students choice
- Conference with students about their reading; encourage SSR
- Be up-to-date with pop culture and bring student interests into the class—relevance is key
- Use technology to encourage interest in reading and responding
- Expand the idea of reading to include on line texts
- Model reading behaviors

Engaging in this language experience, interviewing teen readers and reflecting on what they learned, led these pre-service teachers to develop insights and new concepts about the role of YA fiction and the practices that might develop teen readers. The next step in this research is to survey these students next semester when they are in student teaching to determine if they will implement the concepts they learned. How will their attitudes continue to develop as they reflect on their experiences with teen readers?

**Table 1: School Practices that Promote or Discourage Reading Based on Pre-Service Teachers Perceptions**

<p>Practices in the schools that <b>discourage</b> reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use mainly classics for assigned reading</li> <li>• Do not take time for response—rush through texts</li> <li>• Take little time to discuss literature or all talk is teacher-centered/controlled</li> <li>• Use too many worksheet activities</li> <li>• Everyone reading the same text and getting bogged down in one text</li> <li>• Using “unrelatable” texts</li> <li>• Not giving choice</li> <li>• Not paying attention to students’ reading levels or stages of reading development</li> <li>• Not using SSR time—not enough in class reading</li> </ul>	<p>Practices that <b>promote</b> reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use more YA fiction, more contemporary books, high interesting reading</li> <li>• Promote more response so students can develop their reactions to literature; can begin to achieve a sense of efficacy in how they understand a text</li> <li>• Use technology to encourage interest in reading and responding</li> <li>• Use shorter and accessible texts</li> <li>• Connect literature to students’ lives and what they read</li> <li>• Be up-to-date with pop culture and bring student interests into the class—relevance is key</li> <li>• Give students choice</li> <li>• Expand the idea of reading to include on line texts</li> <li>• Conference with students about their reading; encourage SSR</li> <li>• Model reading behaviors</li> </ul>
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# SIG: Language Experience Approach to Literacy Across Content Areas

58th Annual Convention next year in San Antonio will be April 20-22, 2013, with the Institutes being held on April 19, 2013.

This session explores the use of the Language Experience Approach (LEA) in a variety of settings and across age groups with a particular emphasis on using this literacy strategy with ELLs, struggling readers, and across content areas. LEA provides support for readers because they are actively engaged in creating meaningful communications. This strategy is especially beneficial for reading across content areas and for struggling readers because it draws on students' experiences, thus providing meaningful and relevant texts which students can use to hone language skills. LEA can also be used effectively to support concept development.

## **Academic Language: Language that Helps Students with Reading Development**

Linda Burkey

## **Using Picture Books With Tellability as Prompts to Teach ELLs**

Ana Lado and Jennifer Tarr

## **Student Talk in the Classroom: Authentic Responses Charted and Categorized**

Jane Moore

## **Vocabulary and Visual Literacy Strategies for Struggling Middle Grade Students**

Elaine Traynelis-Yurek and Mary Strong

## **The Impact of Pre and Post Assessments on Elementary Preservice Teachers' Acquisition of Professional Reading Vocabulary**

Deborah Williams

## **The Power of Language Experience for Fluency Development: Poetry, Prose, and Performance to Enhance the Literacy Progress of Struggling Readers**

Belinda Zimmerman and Melanie Kidder-Brown

## **Experiencing Bullying through YA Fiction: Impact on PreService Teachers**

Jeanne M. McGlenn

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 Note: It is important that all LESIG members include their “official” IRA membership numbers. This is crucial if LESIG is to maintain an active role at the IRA conferences. We need to be certain that we have a minimum of 100 members. Please take a moment to document your IRA membership number . . . it counts a lot!