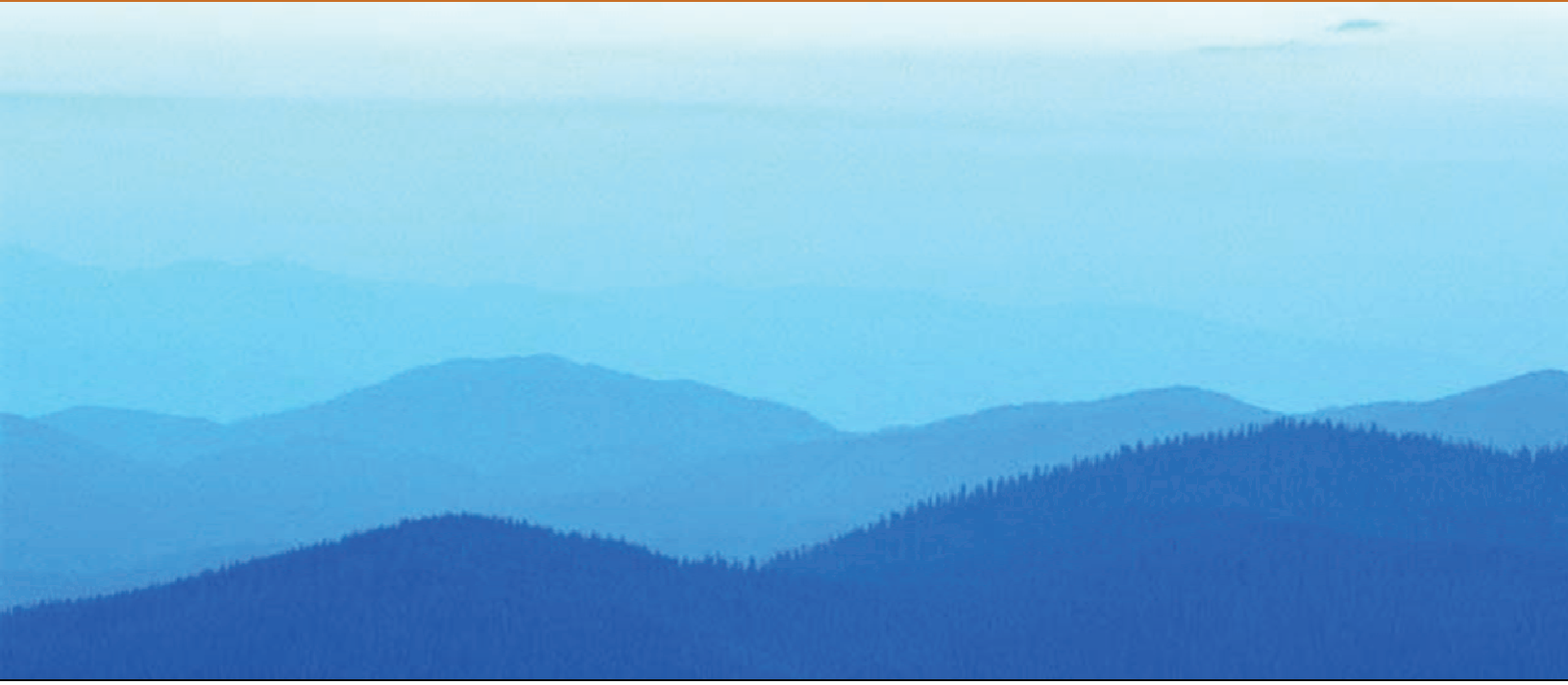

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE FORUM JOURNAL

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Language Experience Forum Journal

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 ideas and issues related to the teaching of literacy to all groups of students and across multiple disciplinary areas.

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Message from the Editor

The 2013 meeting of **Language Experience: Literacy across the Disciplines** Special Interest Group at (LESIG) at IRA in San Antonio was a resounding success. Presenters shared research on working with English Language Learners, struggling readers, and preservice teachers. A lively discussion followed the presentations, reflecting the broader interests and professional work of the members of our group in the areas of literacy research and pedagogy, interests you will find reflected in the articles in this issue of the journal.

We invite your articles on language experience or literacy, working with students from preschool to college age and students at various levels of fluency for the 2013 fall issue of the journal. You can check out previous issues of the Language Experience Forum Journal at http://eduweb.unca.edu/lefj

Jeanne McGlinn, Editor,
Professor of Education, UNC Asheville, jmcglinn@unca.edu

Manuscripts of 5-8 pages are preferred, but longer or shorter manuscripts will be considered. Submit manuscripts electronically to the editor, 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.

Employing LEA Tutoring and Case Studies in Reading Methodology Courses

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Introduction

Language experience learning is based on the following ideas: that the learner is an active user of language, learning is promoted through personal involvement, communication of meaning is the purpose of language learning, and that the learner's products are valued and valid materials to be utilized for literacy learning (Landis, Umolu & Mancha, 2010). The Language Experience Approach (LEA) has come to signify a methodology and the activities used in a LEA are ones that use print in conjunction with the content curriculum (Hall, 1999). Because it is grounded in students' own experiences, LEA naturally provides scaffolds for literacy achievement. The reading vocabulary, which is derived from students' oral vocabularies, allows for acquisition of sight words, as well as natural semantic and grammatical structures (Ward, 2005). In addition, Dorr (2006) explains that Language Experience Approach (LEA) identifies a students' cultural schema and allows connection of that knowledge base to new knowledge, making it a good method to use with ELL students..

Theoretical Background of the Language Experience Approach

The purpose of the Language Experience Approach advocated by Russell Stauffer (1980) is to take advantage of the linguistic, intellectual, social, and cultural wealth a student brings to school so that the transfer from oral language to written language can be made. Thus it is an important strategy to teach in methodology classes because it includes so many areas of literacy development. In the preface to his book, *The Language Experience Approach to the Teaching of Reading* (1980), Stauffer labels the Language Experience approach as "The Eclectic Approach to Reading Instruction" and suggests that essential to the Language Experience Approach are the relationships that exist among language, thought, writing, speaking, and listening.

Sampson (1997) found that students' comprehension improves when reading child-authored texts. Because the reading material is generated by the student, the teacher does not have to be concerned about whether the material being read is in the learner's background; whether the student will be interested in the topic; or whether the material is too juvenile for the older reader (Shanker & Ekwall, 1998).

Morrow (1997) contends that LEA is appropriate throughout early childhood and beyond because it can help children associate oral language with written language, teaching them specifically that what is said can be written down and read. Although, in many instances, it has been used as a program supplement, LEA does incorporate all of the sound principles in

nurturing reading. Dorr (2006) states that using LEA helps the student to facilitate the connection between the knowledge base in the schema to new knowledge that is being presented.

Lerner (1997) indicates that the language experience approach is well accepted as a method that builds on the student's knowledge and language base, linking the different forms of language, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To these ends, the Language Experience Approach is a total language arts approach that relies upon dictated stories, word banks, and creative writing. Thus LEA can be used to teach students who are learning to read, learning English, struggling with reading and learning disabled. The method has remained a viable approach to teaching all types of learners and is one worth presenting in reading courses.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide teacher candidates with a variation of LEA that can be taught to students and to show how a tutoring and case study approach using LEA can be successfully employed to enhance the reading ability of all students.

Two university professors in this study decided to teach different ways of using LEA in basic developmental reading courses, content reading courses, courses in diagnosis and remediation, and courses which treat teaching special education students. After being instructed in how to use LEA, teacher candidates in reading methods classes were assigned to use the LEA strategy to work with individual students. The teacher candidates used a case study approach to analyze and report the results.

Participants

The participants in this study were teacher candidates studying for certification in reading, special education, elementary or secondary education in two different universities in the East. These graduate students were enrolled in reading methods courses and were taught the basic principles of LEA and its various forms. The teacher candidates were first taught how to use LEA with the whole class, small groups of students, and then with one student. The teacher candidates were to choose a student who was struggling in reading to tutor for eight sessions. The student could be at any grade level, but most teacher candidates chose a primary student who was in a Title I program, ESL program or special education program

The teacher candidates recorded the progress of the student through the use of miscue analysis, testing word banks, and repeated readings. Then the candidates developed a case study based on their LEA tutoring. All case studies were then shared in class.

Procedure

Twenty five teacher candidates were instructed to use the following LEA procedure when working with the students during the tutoring session. This procedure was taught in one class session after the candidates were introduced to Stauffer's (1980) LEA method and examples were shown. Combination of LEA with other instructional methods such as repeated reading and using word banks was also discussed and demonstrated. Instructions given to teacher candidates to work with individual students on a one-to-one basis for the class assignment are as follows in Figure 1:

Figure 1 - LEA Procedure Used in the Study

Session One

An experience, a picture book, or text material is used as a prompt.
The student dictates a story or message to the instructor based on his/her experience, the picture book or the text.
The instructor reads the student created message or story.
The student and the teacher read the student created material together.
Then the student reads the material independently. Any word that the student read incorrectly is placed in a word bank.

Session Two

The student repeats to the instructor any words in the word bank from the first session.
The student reads the story or message from the first session two times.
If all of the words are mastered in the word bank, a new story or message is begun.

Sessions Three through Eight

Sessions three through eight are a repetition of the first two sessions.

Session Nine

Session nine is a testing session.
The total number of words in the word bank for all of the sessions are assessed.
The student is asked to orally read them to the instructor.
The percentage of words correctly pronounced is calculated.

Computer technology was used with the language experience approach. It was suggested to the teacher candidate that the font could be adjusted to a larger size and the bold, underline or italic features could be used to emphasize words that were miscued in the student produced text. It was also suggested that the generated story and word bank could be printed and sent home with the student to practice reading.

In addition, the teacher candidates were supplied with a chart and a checklist to record student data including words missed and retained, miscues, and number of words and sentences in the student created text. See Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Chart to Record Student Data and Summary Checklist

Grade Level/Age/Gender General Ed., ELL., Sp. Ed., Title I Other services	Type of school Public Private		Number of words in created story	Number of sentences in story
Session I (Date/Time)	Words Missed			
Session II (Date/Time)	Words Retained	Words Missed		
Session III (Date/Time)	Words Retained	Words Missed		
Session IV (Date/Time)	Words Retained	Words Missed		
Session V (Date/Time)	Words Retained	Words Missed		
Session VI (Date/Time)	Words Retained	Words Missed		
Session VII (Date /Time)	Words Retained	Words Missed		
Session VIII (Date /Time)	Words Retained	Words Missed		
Final Test (Date)	Percentage (%)	Percentage (%)	Total# Words	Total # of

	of Words Retained	of Words Missed		sentences

Summary Checklist for Each Session – Student /Date

1. How many words did the student read correctly?
2. What type and how many oral reading errors did the student make?
   Substitutions _____ Omissions _____ Mispronunciations _____ Additions _____
3. When reading the student created story, did the student skip any punctuation marks? How many and what kind?
4. How many words did the teacher have to pronounce for the student?
5. How many sentences were in the story that the student created?
6. How many words were in the story that the student created?
7. How many words were in the word list/bank from the story that the student created?

Results and Sample Case Study

Dictated experience stories. Dictated stories are the core of Stauffer's Language Experience Approach (1980). They provide students with the opportunity to learn to read as they learn to talk. They also provide a means of getting started with reading and for developing, refining, and extending reading skills. The teacher candidates had no difficulty prompting the students to dictate or to write stories. In the eight sessions, the 25 students produced at least three stories.

Word Banks. The word bank file is a personalized record of words a student has difficulty learning to read or recognize at sight. The file of words emanates from the dictated stories generated by the student. It includes only words that the student has not identified across successive days in oral reading. In the ninth session the word bank of the student was assessed. Tutored students' achievement on the word bank test ranged from 75% to 100%.

Creative Writing. Stauffer (1980) defines creative writing as "a composition that reflects a child's own choice of words, ideas, order, spelling, and pronunciation." The student's first encounter with writing is expected to occur with the writing of names and recognition of words. But creative word usage begins with the construction of sentences from words. Students' first creative writing experiences occur when they develop simple sentences. All of the students in the study increased the number of sentences that they wrote. In the eight sessions the sentence length doubled for approximately 75% of students.

Case Study Sample. Landis, Umolu, and Mancha (2010) successfully used LEA to support two languages in Nigeria, the local language and English. In the example provided below, the middle school student is also an English language learner. The teacher candidate case summary provided below is an example of the student generated text as part of the assignment. The case study format listed in Figure 3 only contains the text generated in the eighth session. A comparison of the data collected in the first session to the eighth session, as well as comments on student growth is also included in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Teacher Candidate Case Study with Sample ELL Student Data

ELL Student's LEA Sample Text on *Romania*

Romania is like going back in time. Boceik is my town. I wake up in the morning and I can feel the breeze in the air. I look out the window and I see my friends waiting for me. We went to the lake like we always do and we do our experiments. We find objects in the water and use them as an invitation, but my mom always tells me not to get wet.

The people have sheds as houses. There is a bathroom next to the bedroom. Some people have a bathroom outside. In the kitchen, they have a stove and they light logs in it with fire.

Every morning we go down to the lake and get water because water comes from a tube in the mountain. This is water you use to drink and cook with. There is different water to use to take a bath. The bathtub is way different. It's a big metal tub. You have to boil the water to take a bath.

If you need milk, you get it from a lady who lives two blocks away and she has four cows. You have to buy the milk. I like to eat the skim off the top.

Teacher Candidate's Data for the ELL Student Case Study

	Words in Generated Text	Number of Sentences	Words Missed	Words in Bank
First Session	167	13	3	3
Eighth Session	225	23	0	0

By session eight, the ELL student's LEA message had improved greatly. There was an increase in the number of words and sentences produced and in the last session the student missed no words. This student also made strides in fluency, decoding skill, and self-monitoring during the course of the sessions.

Results and Discussion

The teacher candidates saw marked improvements in word recognition and sight words after this short period of tutoring. The case study approach enabled them to see the connections between experience and sight vocabulary increase. The chart and checklist gave them a visual to use when writing the case study report. The teacher candidates could then see that the LEA builds upon the development of word banks and creative writing activities (Vacca, Vacca, Gove, McKeon, Burkey, & Lenhart, 2006).

The improvement in sight words that were measured on the word bank list test was at mastery level or above in this study. The students also showed an increase in the number of words and sentences produced from the first session to the last. In LEA, the words that children are asked to learn are more meaningful and based in reality than words found in commercially prepared texts (Packer, 1970). Additionally, Guzzetti (2002) believes that the words in the word bank allow students to focus on word study and use the words to build and refine concepts. This concept was reinforced in this study because there was an increase in the average of sight words learned and retained.

Conclusion

Teacher candidates need to be exposed to teaching various methods of increasing student vocabulary and see why LEA is important to improving achievement. In past years, Language Experience has been often viewed as only a supplement to regular programs, but Morrow (1997) states that LEA should be a central component in early literacy programs. Stahl and Miller (1989) found that the whole language approach and LEA, when compared to basal reading methods, were significantly better. When teachers incorporate LEA into their literacy program, the instruction becomes more relevant, meaningful and appropriate (Vaccca, et. al., 2006).

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Reading Achievement and Professional Learning Communities

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Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) had a profound impact on reading achievement in an urban school district in Texas after three years of weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The entire school district was organized into smaller learning communities (PLCs) so that teams of reading teachers could collaborate for the purposes of learning, joint lesson planning, and problem-solving (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 2009; NSDC, 2001; Sparks, 1983). In this study, repeated measures ANOVA and pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences in middle school achievement on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) (Williams, 2011). Middle school overall percent passing for reading increased from 71.4% to 83.3%. The eta squared showed a large effect size of .75%.

The schools in which this study was conducted were situated in an urban school district in Texas. At the secondary level, additional teachers were hired so that each teacher of a core subject was allotted two planning periods per day. One planning period was designed for teachers to maintain operational tasks such as grading papers and communicating with parents. The second planning period was designated as professional learning community time. During PLC sessions, teachers analyzed student data, planned lessons, read and discussed journal articles, dissected student work products, and/or participated in classroom learning walks (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Teacher feedback from audio-taped focus group interviews revealed that PLCs provided avenues for them to learn and change classroom practices with support. Boosting their knowledge, either by learning from colleagues or learning from other sources was one advantage of weekly participation in PLCs. Appreciation for opportunities to learn with their teams rather than in isolation was expressed repeatedly. Learning was further augmented when curriculum specialists, principals, and other experts participated in weekly PLCs. An example of one question was, “What are some reading skills you have talked about during your PLC sessions?” Terika, a reading teacher at McColly Middle School provided the following response, “Making inferences and context clues because these are the major problems students are having in reading.” Fluency, vocabulary building, analysis of characters, theme, tone, mood, and critical thinking strategies represent topics that were discussed during PLC sessions. In addition to discussions about specific reading skills, teachers shared other information that was pertinent to students’ ability to learn these skills. An illustration of

this valuable feedback can be found in Catherine's response. "At Gordon Middle School, reading teachers coordinate their projects with the social studies department. That kind of collaboration helps the kids."

School districts across the United States continue to engage in reform efforts and place strict accountability guidelines on professional development for teachers and other educators (USDE, 1998). Schools are expected to ensure that each student shows Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on state assessments or receive corrective action. Such rigorous standards force school districts to continuously explore research-based professional development strategies. Educators constantly credit the establishment of PLCs for documented gains in students' reading, writing, and spelling (Kennedy & Shiel, 2010). These findings and this study demonstrate that the PLC is a professional development strategy that facilitates dialogue among educators regarding classroom practices and student achievement and should be the foundation of professional development for educators (NSDC, 2001).

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Student Talk in the Classroom: Authentic Responses Recorded on Anchor Charts

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"Anchor Charts" are representational artifacts of classroom learning. By definition, an anchor is an object used to hold something firmly in place; a reliable or principal support. In sailing the anchor is thrown overboard to hold the boat firmly in a desired location. The purpose of an "Anchor Chart" is to hold student thinking. When posted in the classroom it is a source of visual reference that continues to support students after the initial learning. In classrooms rich with anchor support there is little doubt about the content of lessons or what a student has learned. The Anchor Chart offers a path of thinking, a symbol of the learning that has taken place.

Anchor Charts are often the co-constructed byproduct of a mini-lesson. The focus is on an important singular skill that will need to be practiced and used over time to ensure habitual practice that will assist in mastery. It becomes a reminder of "how-to" look at something. The topic needs to be relevant to the student and they need to be invested in constructing the chart so that they understand the language and importance of the topic. Schematically, they are easily navigated by the student, which requires that they be developmentally appropriate.

When initially constructed, they may be sloppy and need to be "re-constructed" after the group meeting. However, if this is done, it needs to reflect the original and only be minimally enhanced. We have found that when the teacher turns these charts into computerized lists with graphics the teacher thought relevant, student use goes down, suggesting the student does not connect with the new chart. So although finding space may be difficult, teachers who teach multiple groups the same topic need to have each group co-constructing their own charts.

Anchor Charts give students the opportunity to re-live the moment when the chart was made. Looking at the chart, they can recall what was said and how the visual connects. I recently heard one student exclaim, "Hey, who moved the chart. I like to use it to check my work!" Frankly, that is their main purpose. Teachers who use them and place them in an organized fashion around their room find that their students repeatedly refer to them. When the charts are removed or covered for testing purposes, it is not uncommon to see student's eyes gazing at the space where a chart once hung as if to re-visualize the contents.

A plethora of blogs, teacher web pages, and the popular website pinterest.com offer a wide range of topics and examples of Anchor Charts used in classrooms across the country. Surfing these sites will give teachers multiple examples on a variety of objectives. The caution here is to make sure that a chart is personalized for each class, for each group of students, with the authentic language of the students who create the chart. Merely copying another teacher's engaging, eye-catching chart will

not reap the same benefit in every classroom. Make it yours!

Debbie Miller sums up the use and purpose of Anchor Charts in her classroom:

> "In our anchor classroom, evidence of student thinking was everywhere; anchor charts, student responses, and quotes adorned the walls and boards making thinking public and permanent. The questions, quotes, ideas, and big understandings displayed throughout the room reflected the real voices of real kids" (Miller, 2008).

Characteristics of Authentic Anchor Charts:

1. Exhibit a singular focus
2. Make content relevant to the students
3. Are co-constructed WITH students usually during a mini-lesson
4. Records the developmental language of the students
5. Are visually appealing, usually with memorable relevant graphics
6. Are organized simply, similar to graphic organizer models
7. Are reminders of learning that needs to be re-applied over time

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2013 – 2014 Officers and Board of LESIG

The elected officers of the Language Experience Special Interest Group will be president, president-elect, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Additional Board members will be added to meet the needs of the organization. Any member in good standing who is also a member of the International Reading Association is eligible to be an officer or on the board of the special interest group. These officers constitute the Board of LESIG.

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Special Interest Group Meeting
International Reading Association 2014, New Orleans

If you are interested in presenting your research or classroom experiences using Language Experience and interdisciplinary literacy practices with K-16 students at a roundtable session at the 2014 IRA Conference, please complete this form and email to (**jmcglinn@unca.edu**) by Friday, June 14, 2013.
Please note: No one may appear more than once on the IRA program. This includes SIG presentations and institutes. The only exception is for those who present as part of official IRA duties (such as IRA officers, editors, or chairs of committees).

PART I

Title of Proposed Roundtable Presentation: _____

Name of Presenter #1: _____
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Complete Address at Institution: _____
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Please add any additional presenters and their contact information on a separate sheet of paper. Your proposal cannot be reviewed without complete contact information.

All presenters must be current IRA, as well as LESIG members. Please contact Jane Moore (**drjanemoore@gmail.com**) for information concerning how to join LESIG or to renew membership.

PART II

On a separate sheet of paper provide the following information (no more than one page, please):

A. Title of Presentation
B. Brief Overview of Roundtable Topic (in paragraph or outline form). This information will be shared with members of LESIG and appear in the convention program.

Note: Please do not put any identifying information on this second page. All proposals will be peer-reviewed.

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