Journal of the Effective Schools Project 2015

Passion and Well-Being: Driving Change from the Heart
Journal of the Effective Schools Project

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# 2014-2015 Jim Boyd Effective Schools Project
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Editors’ Note
Journal of the Effective Schools Project
"Passion and Well-Being: Driving Change for the Heart"

Dear Readers,

As teachers, our most important work remains the well-being of our students. This is the very purpose motivating real teachers to serve students in our care. The articles in volume XXII of JESP are filled with research and stories that serve as reminders of our purpose and passion to seek the betterment and well-being of others.

JESP welcomes a new coeditor to the journal, Dr. Robin Pate. We, Dr. Gentry and Dr. Pate, are excited to serve ESP schools and work with our fellow teachers in gathering quality articles for our readers.

Dr. Pam Winn has served a year as our new ESP director. She has a letter to the ESP schools and readers of JESP concerning various projects and ideas to better serve ESP schools. She reviews the ESP year and provides ideas for us to consider as ESP continues to grow.

Following our letter, Dr. Jordan Barkley, Dean of the College of Education at Tarleton, has a few words regarding his first year at Tarleton State University. He has joined our family and has an interest in continuing Tarleton’s partnership with ESP schools.

We have three Tarleton Stars recognized in this volume of JESP. We are proud of them. Look for Mrs. Jennifer Harrist, Mr. Victor Sauceda and Ms. Olivia Woods in the Tarleton Stars section. They are Tarleton teachers who are the finest examples of the science and art of teaching. Read their accomplishments and contributions to our profession.

We added a new section to the journal in 2014 entitled Student Research. We have changed the name to Student Service and Research to reflect the importance placed on service by ESP schools. This will continue to illustrate the importance of action research and service. We have one article in this area from a Tarleton graduate student, Elizabeth B. Christensen, who served with the Tarleton Equine Assisted Therapeutic Riding (TREAT Riding) program during the 2014 summer. Her article narrates her experiences and describes this humanitarian service at Tarleton State University by caring individuals. Please visit the TREAT website and learn more about their work: http://www.tarleton.edu/treat/.

The Book Shelf by Dr. Miller-Levy continues to be a favorite. Please visit her review of books concerning our theme for the 2015 journal—Passion and Well-Being: Driving Change from the Heart.

The Journal of the Effective Schools Project (JESP) is also online. Readers are able to view all past articles (1992 to present) at JESP’s website http://www.tarleton.edu/esp/Journal/index.html. Once there, please click on the link—“View Copies of the Journal of the Effective Schools Project”. Also, we included a new way for authors to submit manuscripts and organize reviewers’ work. Please visit our new website site for authors and reviewers at http://thejesp.org.

The articles included in this volume (XXII—Passion and Well-Being: Driving Change from the Heart) provide a glimpse of how passion and placing the well-being of others is the heart of all ESP teachers. These educators work endlessly with students seeking one thing—the WELL-BEING of students. We toil and work without recognition, yet we still toil in our fields with the hope our work will bear fruit. The articles provide more ideas and experiences to add to our toolbox as we go back to our fields yet again to do the GOOD WORK of TEACHING.

Sincerely,

James E. Gentry, Ed.D., Coeditor
Robin Pate, Ph.D., Coeditor
Journal of the Effective Schools Project
Tarleton State University
A Note from the Dean

Dear Readers,

Few deans find themselves fortunate enough to serve a college with such an organized and focused partnership with P-12 educators as Tarleton’s Effective Schools Project. While my campus interview was filled with the standard questions one would expect to be asked for such a position, I noticed a theme by the conclusion of day one: This faculty is truly dedicated to the importance of university and P-12 partnerships. When asked if I would be willing to continue supporting the work of ESP from the dean’s office, I offered the following reply, “Why would anyone come to Tarleton and discontinue ESP?” As I complete my first year as dean, I still ask myself that very question! All across the United States, colleges of education put together advisory committees and working groups to strategize ways to do what Tarleton’s College of Education has already done: Seamlessly connect a teacher preparation program to students, teachers, and administrators.

This year’s journal theme, Passion and Well-Being: Driving Change from the Heart, embodies the philosophy that serves as the foundation of our education programs. We aim to educate the “whole” student, and in doing so, we hope that we instill this desire in our graduates, resulting in the changing of P-12 landscapes. Until we ensure that every teacher understands that there’s more to teaching than being a subject matter specialist or an effective classroom manager, we cannot say that we have succeeded. Reaching every student, as diverse as they may be, is our charge and must be accepted. As Sharon Draper said, “No, there’s no such thing as ‘just a teacher.’ Teachers save lives on so many different levels. But we can’t teach them unless we reach them.”

We have made it our mission to use the ESP journal as a means to share teaching strategies, philosophies, and techniques from a myriad of teachers and classrooms. I hope that as you read through this year’s journal, you find something that sparks your interests; causes you to reflect on a student you’ve had or have now; or prompts you to delve further into changing your classroom environment. We shoulder an enormous responsibility, but none of us arrived, or will persist, in a classroom by ignoring responsibilities. We are the true change agents when we choose to be. So, here’s to another year of changing lives!

Best,

Jordan M. Barkley, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education
A Note from the Director

Dear Readers:

In taking a moment to mentally review the 2014-2015 year of ESP events, I feel we achieved our goal to help inspire passion and learning as defined in this year’s theme: Passion and Well-Being: Driving Change from the Heart. I smile remembering being inspired by Kim Bearden to bring creativity to the classroom, challenged by Gigi Antoni to help students connect to content using the fine arts, and called to service by Jamie Volmer to share the success story of public education. In addition, a trip to the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta, Georgia was the icing on the cake and a life-changing experience. It is my hope that every child would get to experience an educational setting as innovative and inspiring as the Ron Clark Academy.

We wrapped up our ESP year with the annual ESP Planning retreat. Not only did we have a great time with Dr. Gentry’s imaginative games, but I was truly moved by the dedication and passion for education and learning as evidenced in the time spent by each campus in thoughtful planning at the retreat. Moreover, I was in awe of the creative ideas and strategies shared among campuses. In my opinion, the collaboration at the retreat is always one of the greatest benefits.

It is a great honor to work with so many passionate educators in a collaborative learning community, such as ESP, where it is our goal to inspire all educators to engage their confidence and competence to provide better education for all students. This year’s journal is focused on the success stories of many educators who are driving change from the heart. Enjoy!

I look forward to the continuing excellence of ESP.

Sincerely,

Pam Winn, Ed.D., Director
Jim Boyd Effective Schools Project
An Introduction and Interview with Dr. James McSwain

Dr. Don M. Beach and Dr. James McSwain

I first met James McSwain nearly 40 years ago when he was an undergraduate student at the University of Texas at Arlington and I was a young assistant professor. He later came to Stephenville as a teacher and debate coach and had my oldest daughter on his debate team. He earned his master’s degree from Tarleton and I once again had him as a student. I also had the pleasure of serving on his doctoral committee at Texas Tech University. Dr. McSwain has served as principal for the Cooperative Alternative Placement High School out of Coleman, Texas, Colorado City High School, Texas High School in Texarkana, and for almost 20 years as Principal of Lamar High School in the Houston ISD. While in each of those positions he has participated in the Tarleton Effective Schools Project. Tarleton faculty have worked with the Lamar High School administrative team for several years and during that time we have gotten to know his passion for advocating for mentally healthy schools because of how it has personally affected his family.

In preparation for the theme of the ESP Journal and the article on Mentally Healthy Schools, I asked James to reflect on his own experiences as an administrator and parent who has had to confront mental health issues. His responses to my questions provide insight from his personal journey to be an advocate for mentally healthy schools.

Don: As a parent and school administrator, what has been your experience in dealing with mental health issues?

James: In the early years of my experience, I made every mistake and committed every wrong that I have criticized in our society. When my oldest son Phillip began to exhibit symptoms of Paranoid Schizophrenia at the age of seventeen (and probably a couple of years earlier), I did not recognize it. At that time, I held an earned doctorate with a minor in Counseling and I had years of experience in education. I had a lot of advantages and training that others did not have and, yet, I did not see what was in my own home. My reaction was very stereotypical. This was bad behavior, so I applied “normal” behavioral management strategies that included sending him to the military to “straighten him out.” After years of a severe downward spiral that included long periods of disappearance and homelessness, I was contacted by a volunteer doctor in a downtown homeless shelter. She called and told me that she had my son in her office and that he was very sick and that I needed to come there immediately.

On the drive downtown I was angry. I still thought it was bad behavior and that he must have contracted some communicable disease. When I arrived, I learned that she was a psychiatrist and she had diagnosed my son with Paranoid Schizophrenia. That changed my entire family and my approach to my son. I went into full battle mode determined to find the doctor and treatment that would cure my son’s disease. I soon found that I was fighting not only a battle against a deadly and incurable illness, but I was also fighting a culture that considered my son’s disease to be a personal weakness. In other words, society saw him as I had initially seen him; he was exhibiting bad behavior and good discipline would cure him. We would see friends and family quietly withdraw because they were afraid of strange things my son said.

Don: As a parent and school administrator, what has been your experience in dealing with mental health issues?

James: For one thing, I learned how to visit my son in jail. If you have ever been associated with the penal system you know how difficult that can be. I also found out that my health insurance would not pay for the extent of treatment and therapy he needed, so the costs of providing treatment drained my financial resources. In spite of spending all of my financial resources, I was never able to afford or get the only therapy currently known to be successful with his disease. It was available in a cutting edge Houston based research hospital. He needed six months to a year of hospitalization and ongoing therapy for the rest of his life. For hospitalization, they charged $1,000 per day before any usual medical procedures like blood tests and medications. It was private pay only and required a $60,000 cash deposit – simply unattainable for most families.
At one point, while experiencing a delusional episode in public, my son was arrested for disturbing the peace. Since we could not afford long term hospitalization, our attorney did everything possible to actually keep him in the Harris County Jail. The Harris County Jail has a very good mental health hospital inside that treats more mentally ill people than all other State of Texas mental hospitals combined. We were fortunate to keep him there for sixty days. The symptoms of Paranoid Schizophrenia are similar in some ways to Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of advanced age dementia. My father suffered from dementia. His health insurance and retirement resources paid for the best doctors and care. I have often wondered what would happen if we had to take our parents and grandparents down to the county jail and checked them in for care. I suspect there would be change, because children and grandchildren would demand better treatment of their loved ones. The mentally ill do not have that advocacy. Their parents are their advocates and they age and pass away. Soon we may find that we have filled our prisons and our street corners with the mentally ill children left behind.

**Don:** How did your son’s mental health issues impact you as a school administrator?

**James:** One day while contemplating my own situation and frustrated from trying to deal with the bureaucracy and difficulty of finding help for my son, I walked into the front doors of my school during a passing period and stood among the mass of young humanity – my students. I had been complaining to myself about the scattered nature of mental health services. No one was able to explain to me all the services that were available or how to access them. I understood that the public health workers I had met were good people, but they worked in an underfunded system with little means of coordinating with other agencies. Suddenly, I was struck by the magnitude of my own ignorance. I asked the question of myself – what am I doing to help kids and families in my school? Where in my school would a student or family go for help? We were a good school and we did prioritize the academic needs of our kids. We had school counselors. They were nice people and students could make an appointment to see one of them by going to the secretary in an office full of other students and telling her why you needed to see the counselor. Then, next week, you could go in to tell the counselor of your issue and they would listen and tell you how much they cared about you and supposedly your problem would then be solved. So, working with my staff, we created the Student Service Center. We knew we could not solve all problems, but we could bring the connections of all the available services into one place. We could do a much better job of coordinating the resources that were available to help kids get needed assistance.

**Don:** What is your son’s legacy with regard to mental health issues?

**James:** My son Phillip died in 2009. I regret spending so many years being ignorant. I am determined to consistently challenge my own ignorance as a school leader. I am determined that students in my school will have access to all the services we can possibly bring to them in the hope that early access to care may help them not only be successful in school, but in the rest of their lives as well. There are numerous issues in education, but we cannot lose sight of our purpose. We shape young lives. There will never be enough time, money, or resources to accomplish all that is expected – but how can we use what we have in the most efficient manner to realize that mission? As a legacy to my son, I serve as an advocate for other school leaders to examine their practices and embrace a similar approach.
Mentally Healthy Schools

Dr. Don Beach and Dr. James McSwain

Headlines proclaiming school tragedies of Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado in 1999 and more recently at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, have elevated the concerns for the safety as well as the emotional and mental well-being of students. As a result of those and other similar tragedies, the treatment and prevention of mental illness has taken on added importance in our schools. Communities as far away as New Zealand and elsewhere have documented the high levels of psychosocial distress, depression, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behavior (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2003; Waters et. al., 2001). As a result, educators have been searching for answers and ways to address the mental health needs of students. For Dickinson, Neilson, and Agee (2004), developing mentally healthy schools “requires innovation, partnerships, collaboration, and, above all, passion and commitment to the healthy development of young people” (p. 34).

The purpose of this paper is to describe what one Texas high school has done to address the needs of students from varied backgrounds and needs. An important part of having healthy schools is having mentally healthy schools. In promoting the mental wellness of the nation’s young people, Murphy and colleagues (2014) have said, “The distinction between physical and mental health is both artificial and harmful” (p. 3).

A mentally healthy school starts with a philosophical shift in thinking that results in a real change in actions. Schools must embrace the idea that we influence young people through education, because in reality, we don’t simply teach academic subjects. This issue is much like the phrase quoted by almost every educator today, “All children can learn.” In some version, that phrase is found in the mission statement of almost every school system in the United States. If we truly believe that statement, then why doesn’t it happen? As a society, most fundamentally agree with that idea, but there are two primary and related issues that prevent widespread implementation. First, we hold competing values. For example, on one hand we value an orderly and respectful culture and if a person chooses to break the rules of society they must accept the consequences. If we uphold our value of discipline and order in a strictly punitive manner, however, the result is oftentimes the over use of in and out of school suspension and expulsion as disciplinary tools. On the other hand, we must protect all students from harm and provide for safety and security. A mentally healthy school must work to accomplish both. Schools often have a tendency to expect subordinates, i.e. students, to demonstrate great respect to adults without adults modeling that same behavior and we regularly fail to implement concrete changes in systems to support our philosophy. So when we say that “all children can learn”, our actions frequently reflect the idea that “Most students who sit quietly and passively engage in class activities, can learn.”

So, while most students can do a pretty good job of following the rules of schools and society and learn from “normal” consequences, what should or could we do differently with those who do not or cannot respond to our established systems? When students cannot or do not respond in an expected manner, schools frequently impose a simple response and repeat the imposition of the same consequences. A vicious downward spiral is the result. Albert Einstein is noted for saying, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over again, but expecting different results.”

A mentally healthy school embraces and values the uniqueness of each student and willingly accepts the responsibility to help students become successful adults. Simply put, if the systems of teaching and behavior management do not work with a particular student, then educators must search for ways that will effect change with that student. Such thinking represents a major philosophical shift for many schools and it is the foundation of a mentally healthy environment. A mentally healthy school sees young people as people. Adults model the behavior expected and seek to implement concrete actions to support those who cannot respond to generally accepted behavior management techniques.

Mental Health Issues in Schools

When it comes to addressing mental health issues in schools, our actions suggest that we attach a negative stigma to mental illness. It may actually be in a similar
place as ethnic and gender equity issues of fifty years earlier. Today, we correctly equate the use of racial or gender slurs with ignorance and bigotry and our society in general views such statements negatively – yet we commonly disparage the mentally ill without the realization that demeaning statements translate into devastating consequences for real people. Words like “crazy”, “schizo”, and “psycho” are used without thought in our general vocabulary. Even spell check recognizes the word “psycho.” Horror movies feature a “psychotic” killers and the public accepts it as entertainment. Would the public be as willing to accept a movie portraying an ethnic or gender group in the same light? In order to address mental health issues in schools, it is important to understand this reality and ask ourselves, “Are we perpetuating such negative stereotypes relative to the mental health of our students? A campus administrator may only see only a fraction of the mental health issues students deal with on a regular basis because they are hidden. Many students and families, for good reason, are hesitant talk with anyone about their struggles for fear of being labeled and ostracized. This fear of labels is important to understand. When children are young, we more readily identify and accommodate for cognitive disabilities, but major mental illnesses are not the same. They often do not manifest symptoms until the teenage years at the earliest. As seemingly healthy students enter that often difficult period of puberty, they begin to act differently. Some of those differences can be attributed to mental illnesses that progress slowly, with symptoms that are often masked as simple behavior issues and therefore go untreated. Experience has shown that, the most common illnesses identified have been: depression, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, eating disorders, oppositional defiant behavior disorder, and the spectrum of schizophrenia. Experience has also shown that when a school creates a mentally healthy environment, more students and families than first expected will come forward seeking help.

Supports for Students
One high school in Texas has embraced the philosophical position of a mentally healthy school. Frequent conversations with staff members over an extended period of time have helped build an environment where student needs are the first priority. The school has been careful to select new staff members who embrace this idea and then invest significant resources into training that supports student centered education. With that foundation, concrete actions and protocols have been implemented that support students and their individual needs. The campus has adopted a three tier model suggested by the Center for Mental Health in Schools (2014) that emphasizes prevention, early intervention and treatment when needed. In keeping with this model, the campus has arranged a pyramid of services that range from broad based concern and care for students in daily interactions to specific and individualized intervention and support. In general:

- The campus is student centered and recognizes that student needs are of primary concern.
- Positive mental health messages are frequently broadcast and distributed through the school’s Media Department.
- Student leadership organizations strongly promote the value of service to others.
- Student groups and faculty leaders promote the celebration of differences and acclaim diversity as a matter of school pride and strength.
- Academic achievement and behavior management are separate issues. Academic penalties are prohibited as a behavior management tool.
- Extra-curricular clubs and activities are recommended and encouraged for all students. Support for this initiative requires a commitment from all staff members. As a condition for selection, all new faculty members promise to sponsor a student group. Experience has shown that students involved in such activities are significantly less likely to become involved in negative behaviors.
- Faculty members mentor students identified with more serious needs. Community mentors are recruited for some students.
- An academic grade of zero, is not actually an academic measure. It is a behavior and should be treated as such. Consequently, behavioral management techniques are used with students who do not complete assigned work. Those techniques include academic tutoring and support; but refusal to do work is not an option and cannot be ignored.
- Academic support is supported with extended tutorial hours in an effort to keep student learning on track. Students who experience academic success are more likely to be emotionally healthy.
- Long terms of suspension and in school suspension are prohibit-
ed. Parents are enlisted to support interventions and are used for after school and Saturday detention as a primary consequence for day to day behavior management. Students who continue to exhibit behavior issues after these methods are used are referred to our Student Service Center for more extensive help.

- A Student Service Center has been created to provide a wide variety of student services and includes a number of common functions such as Free/Reduced lunch applications, bus token assistance, and mentoring. Students enter one door and see one person privately to talk about their needs. This process is designed to reduce any stigma associated with the services provided. Care is taken to avoid sign-age and references to psychological services or drug/alcohol intervention. No one knows if students go into the SSC to get a bus token or to tell someone they are struggling emotionally. Students speak to the SSC Director in confidence and are then connected with specific help. Students may self-refer, or be referred by teachers, other students, and by administration when regular behavior management techniques are not effective.

The uniqueness of the SSC can be seen in the services provided which include:

- A 45 – 90 successful day drug and alcohol intervention program that includes daily group therapy with a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor, Positive Peer Group participation, random drug testing, and family counseling.

- A 15 successful day behavioral intervention program for students that have not responded well to previous disciplinary efforts, including daily individual behavioral therapy with a Licensed Professional Counselor and an evaluation to determine if more extensive services are needed.

- A connection point to all community based services in the county in addition to an extensive network of private mental health and drug and alcohol intervention service providers.

- Regularly scheduled support groups that focus on issues of depression, suicide, grief, mental illness management, and drug and alcohol intervention.

- Intensive case management by Licensed Social Workers with a purpose of teaching students how to manage and advocate for their own needs. This includes case management services offered to any student in need for at least two years after graduation to continue the effort to help them become their own advocate.

**Improving Mental Health of Schools**

If educators are serious about improving the mental health of schools, school leaders must seek out and have a private and confidential conversation with a real family of an individual suffering from a severe mental illness. The local branch of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, NAMI, would be good place to start. School leaders need to imagine that their child or loved one has a mental illness. With that understanding, educators should stand in the middle of the school cafeteria during a normal lunch time and, while watching the students they serve, understand that some of them currently suffer from or will suffer from a mental disorder. Finally, with all of those experiences, educators need to examine their school – its culture and practices. If their own child suffered from the mental illness of the family they have visited, would the school they are in charge of be a good place for such a student? It has to be that personal. A mentally healthy school embraces the fact that students are wonderfully unique and accepts the responsibility to help them grow to be healthy, educated, and responsible adults. The school must be willing to differentiate for that individuality and embrace systems that attempt to shape rather than break.

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A Model of Influence: Teaching Affective Skills to All Students

Dr. Patty Kohler-Evans and Dr. Candice Dowd Barnes

In today’s complex educational system, much attention is given to teaching all students academic content and focusing on rigorous content standards. While this is important, the authors contend that it is equally important to ensure that all students receive instruction in affective skills, and that the marriage of both areas takes careful, purposeful attention. The authors have developed a model of influence, based on a hierarchy of affective development crafted by Krathwohl in 1964, that suggests teaching affective skills effectively involves a four level sequence: developing consciousness, acknowledging beliefs and affirming perspectives, realizing benefits to self and others, and taking action and embracing influence. The authors present this model and provide examples to be used in teaching all students skills needed to communicate with others in a diverse world.

A Model of Influence: Teaching Affective Skills to All Students

It takes very little attention to today’s headlines to understand that in many respects, we are a nation at war with itself. Recent events in Ferguson, Missouri that have led to chaos and days of continuous rioting, make us all pause and take notice. When our children are angry, when our families are grieving, and when our leaders are pointing fingers at one another, it is time for us to take stock of who we are and who we want to be. We must ask ourselves, what legacy do we want to leave for our children? How do we want our world to look in ten, twenty, or thirty years? What messages do we want to send to those whose lives are affected by the decisions we make and the actions we take today? These questions swirl through the heads of educators everywhere who want to make a positive difference in the lives of those whom we are called to serve.

Just as there are catastrophic events in the news fueled by angry words and a lack of compassion, so there are stories of tremendous courage and caring, often in the face of danger. Take the Sandy Hook case. Children were murdered by a ruthless killer, yet teachers sacrificed their lives to save young students, and a community as well as a nation embraced those who had suffered such tremendous loss. Other examples abound. Passersby have stopped to rescue total strangers from natural as well as man-made disasters, often with no regard for their personal safety. What is it that we as educators can do to positively impact our students so that they communicate respectfully and kindly with one another? How do we create classrooms that ensure that the nation is filled with promise instead of despair? The purpose of this article is to provide a theoretical framework, based on the work of Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964) that will assist schools meet the needs of all students by investing in their affective needs as well as cognitive and academic needs. Suggestions for implementation will also be shared.

Theory of Affective Development

Within this context, the authors have developed a model, based on Krathwohl’s affective hierarchy, created in 1964, as a framework for developing and teaching value-oriented concepts to children. Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964) proposed a theory of affective development that characterizes how one moves along a continuum of internalizing various schemes, constructs, ideas and experiences (Krathwohl, et al, 1964). It is often represented in hierarchical stages that include attending, responding, valuing, organizing, and characterizing or internalizing. In the context of promoting and teaching critical skills such as caring, compassion, kindness, and civility, at each stage, the student becomes increasingly invested in the learning. For instance, there are three characteristics of attending — awareness, willingness to receive, and acceptance. Krathwohl is right to suggest that a student’s learning is compromised when he fails to receive or attend to the teaching, but in order for a student to maximize the learning, he must go much deeper in his understanding. Consequently, the teacher must ensure that this understanding takes place.

The second stage of Krathwohl’s hierarchy involves responding. Compliance represents the lowest level of responding followed by two additional levels — a willingness to consider new perspectives and an emotional response to the new information. A student may accept information while in the first stage of the hierarchy. However, such acceptance may represent no more than simply accepting that the information exists. On the other hand, the higher stage of
responding involves the student’s propensity to not only know the facts, but also to experience the facts taught.

As the student begins to experience the facts outlined, a third stage of Krathwohl’s hierarchy emerges – valuing. In the beginning of this stage, the student considers the information as a new idea or perspective without any great commitment to the idea or perspective. The student moves from this lukewarm view of the information taught to a view that represents a higher level of understanding and even a commitment to such understanding as a belief. Commitment entails an enormous amount of conviction. The student might have a deeper level of confidence that his new perspective, ideas, knowledge, or phenomena is true. At this level the student also recognizes that there may be various instances where this new idea is relevant. Therefore, the student has to organize these new values, which is the beginning of a value system.

The fourth stage of Krathwohl’s hierarchy involves the organization of a value system. In this case, the student sees how the values relate to those they hold or ones that they are coming to hold. It is not until the student begins to develop this value system that he reaches the peak of this internalization hierarchy called characterization. This final and highest level in Krathwohl’s hierarchy is characterized by the students’ actions which are solely based on the value system they have internalized. The students’ beliefs, ideas, perspectives, and attitudes now greatly influence their lives and how they engage with others. As we delve into promoting positive attributes in the classroom, we offer this hierarchy as a foundational framework to move students from simple awareness of, to an internalization of how these attributes affect their lives as well as their learning.

**Model of Influence**

Using Kathwohl’s hierarchy as a foundation, the authors have revised the model (figure 1) to define four levels of promoting and teaching value concepts. This revision has been named a Model of Influence (Kohler-Evans & Barnes, 2015). The authors propose that the first step in the model is to build a consciousness for a concept in order to promote learning of the concept. The next step is to foster acceptance of the new idea and awareness that various perspectives exist. The third step is recognizing the importance of the benefit to oneself and to others. As the level of understanding the benefit deepens, one moves on to influence and action. This represents the highest level on the hierarchy because one is called into action. It is at this level of influence and action that the value system is manifested into behaviors that exemplify positive attributes.

It is imperative to note that this Model of Influence (MOI) should not be viewed as an add-on to a school’s curriculum. It is the authors’ belief that the MOI should be used as a framework to be integrated into the curriculum as well as across content areas. This model can be used to teach numerous attributes such as gratitude, taking initiative, empathy, and compassion.

**Level One: Develop Consciousness**

We propose that the first level to consider in the Model of Influence is to develop consciousness for a concept in order to promote learning of the concept. This requires one to move beyond the act of passive learning to active learning. It also means that both the student and teacher must embrace their

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*Figure 1. Model of Influence (MOI)*
roles as learner-follower and learning-leader in the classroom. It is at
this level that the concept becomes real and meaningful for all learn-
ers. This is the level that builds upon an individual’s curiosity and
interest to learn more. It might also be the level at which one begins to
grapple with his or her own cogni-
tive dissonance about certain top-
ics, ideas or perspectives. In a K-
12 setting, both the teacher and the
student need to experience this
level so that both find meaning and
relevance in the topic.

Level Two: Acknowledge Per-
spectives and Affirm Beliefs
The second level is to foster ac-
cceptance of the new idea and
awareness that various perspec-
tives exist—acknowledging per-
spectives and affirming beliefs.
When building upon the challeng-
es which compromise one’s cur-
cent thinking, one begins to
acknowledge other perspectives
have relevancy and meaning. This
might occur even if those ideals,
principles, or beliefs are in oppo-
sition to one’s own value system.
Accepting that differences exist to
be further examined can often af-
firm, extend, challenge, or even,
change one’s thinking. It is im-
portant to note that we are not pro-
posing that the purpose is to
change how another person thinks.
We are, however, proposing to
offer them other ideas to consider
or engage in perspective taking to
deepen their knowledge of how
other’s may interpret, analyze and
reflect on various concepts,
thoughts, statements, and ideas.

Level Three: Realize Benefit to
Self and Others
The third level is realizing the ben-
etit to oneself and to others. As
with the last level the idea is to
build upon the knowledge gained
and insight discovered and shared.
It is often times far easier for hu-
mans to identify how something
will benefit self. What has some-
times become difficult is for us to
recognize the relevance of our
lives to others. In other words,
how are each of our lives connect-
ed to others’ lives, and how can we
use our lives to be productive,
compassionate, caring members of
mankind? How can we use our
talents, knowledge, skills and lives
to support and serve others? When
we take the time to examine the
perspectives of others, witness
their struggles and successes, it
can empower one to see beyond
self and find ways to advocate and
help others. It also affords oppor-
tunities to enter the last level—
taking action and embracing influ-
ence we have to make a difference.
The idea of this third level is to
engage in discourse, discussion,
reflection, and yes, explicit, au-
thentic teaching.

Level Four: Take Action and
Embrace Influence
Taking action and embracing in-
fluence represents the highest level
of the framework because it re-
quires one to take some coura-
geous steps to initiate necessary
change—steps that might seem
daunting, challenging, foolish, or
daring. Each previous level re-
quires one to “do something”—
that doing something might be
study more, ask more questions,
engage in more discussion, do
more research. This level of action
and embracing influence encour-
gages one to develop and seek a
sustainable response to an issue,
problem or concern. It might be
also difficult because many indi-
viduals may not necessarily see
themselves and difference makers,
nor might they recognize the gifts
and talents they have to offer.

This level requires one to retreat
from the fear that stifles creativity,
flexibility, organization, and
productivity, and move toward
embracing those attributes to gal-
vanize movements, initiatives, ser-
vice-mindedness and action. It is at
this level of influence and action
that the value system is manifested
into behaviors that exemplify posi-
tive attributes such as honesty and
compassion. In the next section,
some ideas for teaching at each of
the four levels will be shared. It is
believed that the character attrib-
utes can be taught at all grade lev-
els although levels one and two
might be the focus more at the ear-
ly grades than in grades six
through twelve. What is most im-
portant is that attention is given to
these at all grade levels. As we
contemplate the state of emergency
in our educational system, it is vi-
tal that we seek every opportunity
to support our students and help
them develop the skills, dispositions
and social-emotional competen-
cies with vigor and determination.

Application of the Model of In-
fluence
Applying the Model of Influence
takes conscious effort on the part of
educators and school practition-
ers. Researchers from California
State University-Fresno examined
the link between high achieving
schools and character education
programs, revealing that schools
which were characterized by both
shared common indicators, such as
a clean and secure environment,
adults acting as models of values
and virtues, student engagement in
school-community projects, and
the promotion of positive relationships. In this section, the authors offer suggestions for utilizing the model with students.

**Step One: Take Responsibility for Teaching both Affective and Academic Concepts**

In order to implement a model such as the *Model of Influence*, it is imperative that educators begin to appreciate their role as instructional leaders who also seek to develop students’ character and social and emotional competencies. There is emerging evidence that both are equally important. One is reminded that, as the old saying goes, some teach subjects while others teach kids. When educators contemplate teaching “kids”, there is a strong reminder that kids are complex beings who have a variety of facets; these include their health, safety, emotional well-being, as well as their knowledge of content and standards. Taking responsibility for both roles, academics and affective skills, in today’s schools, is the first step in applying the model.

**Step Two: Accept the Role of Influencer**

Without a doubt, teachers have the power to influence others, especially those they teach. Each one who has ever been a student remembers the challenging teacher who expected his or her students to demonstrate their understanding of seemingly impossible content, yet taught with passion as well as compassion and understanding. At the same time, there are those teachers whose behaviors demonstrate a total lack of respect for those whom they are charged to educate. These teachers use language that demeans and criticizes. Although these two kinds of teachers exhibit polar opposites in behavior, they share one common trait: they are influencers. Whether a teacher is deeply committed and connected with students or totally disengaged, the role of influencer is a powerful role shared by both. By embracing one’s influence, a teacher might positively change the world through attention to developing kind, grateful, courageous, and compassionate students.

**Step Three: Plan to Integrate Curriculum**

Roger Weissburg, Chief Knowledge Officer for the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), noted that behaviors such as drug use, violence, bullying and dropping out, can be prevented with integrated strategies used to develop social and emotional skills (Weissburg, 2014). When teachers plan and deliver instruction on character traits through content standards, the overall school environment improves. Such instruction might begin with identifying a trait such as kindness, defining it, demonstrating how it looks in action, and connecting the trait to real-world situations while at the same time teaching content. For instance, one might ask, how does kindness apply to our cooperative group work as we explore different ways to provide shelter? Or, what part does civility play in making your beliefs understood through debate? Another example: how can we communicate and demonstrate compassion as we use our technology to Skype with students in Kenya about water sources? Such thoughts can guide planning and lead to meaningful instruction, the final step.

**Step Four: Utilize the Model of Influence to Guide Teaching**

This final step may seem obvious, but it takes purposeful action. In order to infuse one’s teaching in an integrated way for both affective and academic skills, a commitment must be made to pay conscious attention to the ways we teach. In the *Model of Influence*, a suggestion is made to work on developing consciousness. Here is an example using courage, the character trait, to develop consciousness: In the context of studying Rosa Parks, ask, what does courage mean? What does it look like, sound like, feel like? What are other examples of individuals displaying courage? When have you displayed courage?

The second level of the model involves acknowledging perspectives and affirming beliefs. Having students journal about their experiences regarding kindness, love, gratitude and their responses to others’ as well as their own feelings and beliefs is an easy way to help them explore their own and others’ perspectives. This exploration can easily be linked to content standards, for example, examining various voices represented in literature or even in world events.

Realizing benefit to self and others can also be examined through a variety of means; some include school-community projects, discussing the benefits of collaboration, keeping data on outcomes of projects that benefit others, incorporating new understandings into written position statements etc. Finally, the last level involves taking action and embracing influence. What better way to do this than to revisit acts of kindness witnessed or experienced. Teachers
might challenge students to develop action plans for taking small steps, setting goals, then reflecting with students as they work to raise their hands when they don’t understand (an act of courage) or offer to help an elderly neighbor walk her dog (an act of giving) or thank their siblings or classmates for assisting them (an act of gratitude).

Final Thoughts
Given the state of today’s world, one is reminded again that the hope of the future lies in the children and students who will one day inherit the planet. As educators, one of the most important responsibilities is seeking to positively influence the diversity that characterizes the world by infusing social emotional learning and character education into the content standards that pervade today’s educational system. The authors propose a hierarchical Model of Influence to guide educators as they contemplate systematically and purposefully teaching all students in ways that help them become tomorrow’s leaders who communicate in ways that seek to promote and preserve the dignity and respect of all.

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Comparison of Process Student Expectations Across Content Area STAAR Examinations

Dr. Terry W. Fowler, Dr. Karen Sue Bradley, Dr. Jack Bradley and Dr. Kellie Cude

Driving change from the heart involves both teachers and students becoming increasingly aware of internal cognitive processes and how these processes impact learning and performance. As teachers strive to look for ways to improve student performance on state-mandated tests, metacognitive awareness of process skills offers an inviting approach. This study investigated the process skills required to successfully answer assessment items from the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in math, science, and social studies and presents an invitation to teach metacognitive awareness of these skills as an innovative way to increase advanced performance.

Texas State Assessment Testing, TABS to STAAR

With the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2002 came an era of more stringent standards for annual testing of students. The emphasis of NCLB has been on testing accountability, school improvement and reporting adequate yearly progress (AYP). Hanushek and Raymond (2005) report that an annual analysis of the state accountability systems that were in place before NCLB indicate that accountability for outcomes led to faster growth in achievement for the states that introduced such systems. However, state testing in Texas has been criticized as being vehicles for driving schools toward mediocrity. Secondary students, according to teachers were passing the state assessment tests in reading, yet were unable to function in their classes (McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001). Because of continued criticism, state assessment has shifted through the years from TABS, TEAMS, TAAS, TAKS, and now STAAR. Texas Education Agency representative, Debbie Ratcliffe reports that, “Because STAAR is a much more significant shift in the test design than the shifts in the past—it looks like it is taking teachers longer to make the shift to instructional strategies that teach students to employ critical analysis, make persuasive arguments, and apply concepts to solve problems or answer questions” (Weiss, 2014). In 2013, the Texas Education Commissioner stated, “While we would have hoped to see an across the board increase in performance, the difficulty of the tests, coupled with the uncertainty of the testing program’s future, likely influenced performance this year. We may find that with STAAR, our performance increases gradually rather than in large bursts” (Texas Education Agency News, June 10, 2013). The latest report from TEA regarding the End of Course (EOC) exams required for graduation indicate that students are continuing to struggle on the English exams (English I = 62% passing; English II = 66% passing). However, passing rates are better on the Biology (93% passing), Algebra (86% passing) and U.S. History (92% passing) tests. The Texas STAAR/EOC has now been implemented for three years and has shown little improvement, based on the recommended phased in standards.

A Metacognitive Approach to Data Analysis

Performance on high-stakes testing persists as a dominant focus for school administrators, teachers and students. Dual-coded items and the literacy skills embedded in them, impact student proficiency levels on STAAR content area exams. Literacy skills contribute to the complexity of assessment items and add additional thought steps in problem solving. This study investigated the impact of comprehension skills on student performance on STAAR exams in math, science, and social studies. A content analysis was conducted on 616 assessment items from the 2013 STAAR released tests for grades three through eight and End-of-Course exams to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the literacy skills embedded in the STAAR math, science and social studies exams?

2) How do process expectations compare across grade levels and content areas?

Data were analyzed using predetermined categories defined by the seven comprehension skills consisting of visualization, making connections, predicting, drawing conclusions, making inferences, summarizing, and monitoring. Data analysis required researchers to function at the metacognitive level to determine which skills were required to successfully answer test questions. Inter-rater reliability on the metacognitive processes was established at 76%. Coding was directed by the following operational definitions of the seven comprehension skills: (1)
Visualize (V)-make the question concrete by constructing mental pictures or by using sensory information or inner speech; (2) Connections (C)-connect the topic or information to what is already known about self, about other texts, or about the world; (3) Predict (P)-project what should happen next or construct a possible solution; (4) Draw Conclusions (DC)-use information from the text to make a decision; (5) Make Inferences (MI)-merge text clues with prior knowledge and determine answers to questions that lead to conclusions about underlying ideas; (6) Summarize (S)-determine what is important and put it into their own words; and (7) Monitor (M)-become aware of what is known or not known, determine relevant and irrelevant information, or use fix-up strategies. A sample coding is provided below in figure 1.

I make connections to what I know about the measurement of weight. I summarize the information in the chart and determine the pattern. I apply the pattern to the answer choices to identify and eliminate incorrect information. I draw a conclusion to select the correct answer choice.

The STAAR Test and Embedded Literacy Skills

Results Mathematics
Tests requiring the highest percentages of visualization skills included the Algebra I EOC and grades three and seven grade level exams. Predicting was required at the highest percentages on the Algebra I EOC and grades six and seven STAAR exams. Tests requiring students to draw conclusions were grades three, eight and the Algebra I EOC. Assessment items in grades six, seven, and eight required students to make inferences. Summarization was applied at the highest levels in grades five, four, and eight. Tests requiring the highest percentages of monitoring skills were grades eight, seven, and five. Connections were required on all assessment items.

The Algebra I EOC required the highest percentage of visualization, predictions, and drawing conclusions. Middle school grades required students to make inferences and monitor. Elementary tests required students to summarize.

Results Science
Visualization was required at the highest percentages on the Biology EOC, followed by the grade five exam. The lowest levels of visualization were applied at the grade eight exam. The test requiring the highest percentage of predictions was grade eight, followed by grade five, with the lowest requirements on the Biology EOC. Drawing conclusions was required the most in grade five, then grade eight and Biology. Making inferences was required predominantly on the Biology EOC, followed by the fifth grade exam with the lowest percentages required in grade eight. The test requiring students to summarize the most was grade five, Biology, and then grade eight. Monitoring was required the most on the fifth grade exam, then the Biology EOC, and lastly on the eighth grade examination. Connections were required at all levels.

The Biology EOC required the highest percentage of visualization and inferences. Grade eight required students to predict and grade five required students to draw conclusions, summarize and monitor.

Results Social Studies
The U.S. History EOC required the highest percentage of visualization, followed by grade eight. The test requiring the highest percentage of predictions was the U.S. History EOC followed by the grade eight exam. Drawing conclusions was required the most on the grade eight examination and then the U.S. History EOC. The test requiring students to make inferences was the U.S. History EOC followed by the grade eight exam. The test requiring students to summarize the most was grade eight.

Figure 1. Sample Coding

A weightlifter is adding plates of equal weight to a bar. The table below shows the total weight, including the bar, that he will lift depending on the total number of plates on the bar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Plates</th>
<th>Total Weight (lb)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on this information, which statement is true?
A. The bar weighs 35 lb without any plates.
B. The bar weighs 70 lb without any plates.
C. The bar weighs 45 lb without any plates.
D. The bar weighs 25 lb without any plates.
The test requiring the highest percentage of monitoring skills was the U.S. History EOC followed by grade eight. Making connections was important on all test questions.

The U.S. History EOC required the highest percentage of visualization, predictions, inferences, and monitoring. Grade eight required students to draw conclusions and summarize.

Conclusions and Recommendations
The knowledge of literacy skills required for success on content exams changes the way teachers and students prepare for high-stakes testing. As teachers deconstruct released test items for cognitive levels, it is important to include comprehension skills in test deconstructions. Test takers can be taught ways to visualize using sensory information to enhance making connections and inferences. Monitoring skills are required for questions asking test takers to select the “best” or “closest” answer and should be taught in the context of subject content. It is important to train test takers to articulate an intentional summary of interpretations and patterns before selecting an answer choice on questions that include charts, graphs, or visuals. It is critical for students to be metacognitively aware of comprehension skills required to answer test questions. Making this awareness an integral part of classroom instruction can enhance thinking and higher performance on standardized tests.

Further Research
Suggestions for further research on metacognitive awareness of literacy skills applied in content area assessment items include a content analysis of the 2014 STAAR released tests. An ex post facto study investigating the application of comprehension skills between high performing and low performing test takers can provide descriptions of the ways awareness of literacy skills impacts performance. An experimental study comparing the performance of students receiving instruction on applying comprehension skills to a control group can offer information about the levels of impact on student performance. The process of decon-

### Table 1: Mathematics Results

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structing test questions and teaching students metacognitive awareness of the application of comprehension skills can be applied to all tests. An analysis of tests from other states can provide specific applications to assessments of the common core curriculum.

References


About the Authors:

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Defining Dyslexia: Knowledge and Perceptions of Early Childhood Educators

Dr. Brittany L. Hott, Dr. Susanne Thomas, Dr. Harvetta R. Henry, Dr. William G. Masten, Dr. Lois A. Hogan and Dr. Beth Jones

Defining Dyslexia
State and federal education codes, along with professional organizations such as the International Dyslexia Association and the Learning Disabilities Association, have offered differing definitions of dyslexia. Most generally accepted definitions include a statement of neurobiological origin with characteristics that include difficulties with letter-sound correspondence, accurate and fluent word recognition, poor spelling and limited decoding abilities. As a result of labored reading efforts, students with dyslexia often struggle with comprehension (Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003; Ness & Southall, 2010).

Early and intensive intervention is the best prevention of later reading failure (Fedora, 2014). Dyslexia, while potentially disabling, does not need to disable a child (Kauffman, McGee, & Brigham, 2009), but guidance and informed early identification and remediation is necessary (Fedora, 2014; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

Purpose of the Present Study
Although previous studies revealed teacher knowledge of effective instruction elusive and underscored the importance of early identification, rural educators have been routinely neglected from these studies (Williams, 2003). The paucity of research targeting rural education led the present authors to inquire about this neglected aspect of dyslexia knowledge. The present pilot investigation, therefore, aimed to gain insight into the knowledge and perceptions of dyslexia among practicing teachers in rural school districts. The following research questions were addressed (a) How do rural early childhood educators define dyslexia?, and (b) How do rural early childhood educators determine if a child is at risk for dyslexia?

Method
A brief cross-sectional survey was collaboratively designed by the first and second author to assess the knowledge and perceptions of early childhood teachers serving kindergarten, first, and second grade students in rural Northeast Texas schools. The survey was reviewed by an expert panel, including general and special education faculty, a dyslexia specialist, and general education teachers knowledgeable of typical reading development, specific learning disabilities, and/or dyslexia. The survey was then refined to ensure that questions were appropriate to gain insight into teacher knowledge and perceptions.

The survey contained four demographic questions and eight open-ended questions related to (a) students experiencing reading difficulty, (b) definition of dyslexia, (c) traits of students with dyslexia, (d) curriculum, and (e) instructional methods.

Sampling Procedure and Response Rate
After obtaining Internal Review Board approval and participant consent, a hard copy of the survey was provided to kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers prior to a regional staff development session. Participants included 71 early childhood teachers responsible for literacy instruction in rural Northeast Texas public schools who volunteered to attend trainings on dyslexia. Seventy partici-
pants were female and one participant was male. The mean number of years teaching was 6 years. Participants were asked to honestly answer questions and were provided with a half hour to complete the survey. The survey response rate was 100%, with only two participants electing not to answer questions related to curriculum.

Data Analysis
Basic qualitative methods were used to analyze open-ended survey questions (Merriam, 2014). First, data were reviewed using an open coding procedure that involved reviewing responses for general patterns in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Next, axial coding was completed to make connections between participants and develop subcategories within the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2009; Maxwell, 2012). Then, selective coding procedures were employed to connect categories (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Finally, researchers developed an overarching theory about the dataset and compared the theory to prominent definitions of dyslexia.

Results
The researchers developed three overarching themes (a) varying definitions of dyslexia, (b) difficulty determining students at-risk for dyslexia, and (c) training needs. Each of the themes and representative quotes are summarized below.

Definitions of Dyslexia
Most teachers were unable to provide a definition that was consistent with those adopted by the Texas Education Code, International Dyslexia Association, Learning Disabilities Association, or the Scottish Rite Hospital. Interestingly, almost half of the respondents noted that dyslexia is a learning disability or disorder somewhat aligning with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Some respondents noted that students who have dyslexia experience difficulty with spelling, writing, and reading while seven respondents wrote, “I don’t know.” Some prominent quotes follow.

I am not a dyslexia teacher. So, I think a student having trouble with letters, sounds, or reading has dyslexia.

Dyslexia is a learning disability that causes a student to learn differently.

Dyslexia is a broad "umbrella" term that has been applied to a variety of reading difficulties. Dyslexic students are often bright but they process information differently than the traditional classroom typically provides instruction. It often includes "backwards" writing and inversion of letters or numbers, [and] difficulties with handwriting.

Dyslexia is a learning disorder that affects reading. Students have problems with writing and need to see a reading specialist.

Determining Students At-Risk for Dyslexia
Teachers reported that many students have trouble with reading and need interventions. Further, many teachers noted that they “know who is having difficulty” but feel ill-equipped to provide interventions or support. Areas of concern included reading, writing, and general low performance. None of the participants identified research-based practices related to assessment, evidenced-based interventions, or collaborating with trained personnel. Some teachers noted that the dyslexia specialist, and/or special education teacher, is responsible for supporting students who have reading difficulties. Some pertinent quotes are shared below.

I love my job but we need more support and information, testing, people (speech therapist, dyslexia people). Not everything is [a] behavior problem or learning disability. Not everything is about a "language barrier". As a school we have dyslexics, special education, and slow learning students just no way of determining who needs what.

I need HELP! I teach first grade and our children aren't even tested until the end of the 1st grade and to get services until 2nd grade.

I don't know. Help!

Need for Additional Training
Many teachers noted that they were somewhat uncomfortable identifying and working with students at-risk for dyslexia. The majority of teachers reported that they need help and support to meet student needs. While districts provided some standard materials, teachers noted that they often attempt to make their own materials or adapt district materials. Teachers reported using small group instruction and hands-on activities, but noted that the strategies were largely ineffective with students who have trouble reading. The most common theme was a desire to know more and for students to receive the services and supports needed. A few representative quotes are below.

I am somewhat comfortable teaching reading but could use
more training in learning to identify these students and knowing what materials and/or strategies are most beneficial.

I would like more training on how to give my struggling students a better phonics foundation.

I would be comfortable with dyslexic students with the appropriate training and support from others.

No, I am not comfortable. I am worried. I feel like I still have a lot to learn. I would like to learn more strategies to better help these students.

Post-Survey Intervention
Following the survey, training sessions were conducted by Texas A&M University-Commerce. All teachers attended at least one training session. The sessions emphasized practical, experiential, hands-on activities. The importance of simulation activities cannot be overstressed as these type activities proved to not only contribute toward recognition of dyslexia characteristics, but also increase teacher awareness and comfort level. Several teachers reported on how valuable they found the simulations and reported increased empathy for students who “live with it all the time.” While many teachers would be reluctant to give up a series of Saturdays for professional development, our teachers continually “asked for more,” particularly if the training included relevant and practical ideas usable to their individual situations.

Recommendations and Implications for Practice
As the participants in the study reported feeling unprepared to meet the instructional needs of their students with dyslexia, they would benefit from additional training to better serve those at risk for experiencing reading difficulties. Examples of training needs are outlined.

Definitions of Dyslexia
Findings indicate that participants possess misunderstandings regarding the definition of dyslexia and reinforce the need for additional education. It is critical that teachers learn to circumvent lack of clarity that results from having multiple definitions of the condition (Tillotson, 2011). If teachers fail to understand the complexities of dyslexia, their ability to provide effective early intervention is compromised. Like previous research, many participants reported that they did not feel knowledgeable in identifying dyslexia or emergent literacy problems. The state handbook on dyslexia, should provide initial support for increased teacher understanding (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Nonetheless, support for early childhood teachers’ ability to identify issues with emergent literacy, including dyslexia, and to understand how nuances of the various definitions guide intervention choices should be emphasized.

Determining Students At-Risk for Dyslexia
As a teacher, when you say to yourself “This kid can’t read,” not being able to read can “mean a range of things” (Beers, 2003, p. 24). Our participants appeared caring and concerned. Yet, many reported that they knew they had children that were behind in reading but were unable to articulate how to determine “what the problem was.” Without a solid understanding of characteristics and descriptors of dyslexia, teachers are challenged when they are called upon to differentiate between emergent literacy issues and typical child differential development. Assessment must be based on the theoretical and scientific underpinnings of literacy (Brady & Moats, 1997) coupled with age-appropriate curriculum-based assessment focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Therefore, it is recommended that efforts be focused on enabling underserved rural early childhood educators to better identify children at risk. Many teachers stated their district policy prevented the identification of children with dyslexia in early grades. They felt, these policies precluded their efforts to intervene. Resources should be available to these early grade teachers to support emergent literacy, whatever the child’s age or label.

Evidence-Based Practices
Teachers need information on the application of evidence-based interventions to address the needs of individual students. Only with knowledge of empirically-validated practices, can teachers provide effective intervention. Participants exhibited a lack of knowledge of generally accepted multisensory teaching strategies proven successful with young students with dyslexia. It was concerning that participants reverted to making their own materials or adapting instructional materials without understanding appropriate uses and strategies for students with dyslexia.

Professional development efforts on evidence-based practices can be
broadened to include information on electronic resources. Fortunately, the availability of devices such as tablet computers can bring resources to the fingertips of both urban and rural teachers, although information on how to select resources remains elusive. Additionally, focus should include how to infuse technology use into an instructional program balanced with face-to-face instructional efforts.

**Progress Monitoring**
Using a frequent progress monitoring approach to measure progress on specific areas of reading development is crucial. Teachers in our study reported some background in progress monitoring, but demonstrated a lack of precision in making data-based decisions.

**Collaboration**
Like previous research findings, our participants reported a lack of collaboration with trained personnel. Ness and Southall (2010) found participants in their study would first consult a close friend or family member before consulting a colleague, listing their last line of support as a textbook or online resource (Ness & Southall, 2010). In rural school settings, teachers may have fewer trained peers or reading specialists to lean on. Training on collaboration, multi-district connections, and suggestions for on-line support (e.g., organizational websites, blogs, or tele-consultation) can be used to support their efforts.

**Conclusion**
Results indicate that in-service teachers continue to have training needs; therefore, administrators must proactively seek out multiple forms of training and resources. Resources may include professional development, videos, and professional conferences (Tillotson, 2011).

Both new and veteran teachers need guidance on how to meet the challenges posed by students in today’s diverse classrooms. Further investigation is necessary to determine if the needs we found would generalize to all rural early childhood educators. Nonetheless, it is the ethical responsibility of each teacher to have the knowledge and skills to act in the best interest of each student, including students with dyslexia.

**Figure 1. Supporting Students with Dyslexia: Needs of Rural Northeast Texas Teachers**

References


and Classic Readings in Education, 328.


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Helping Teachers Discover Students’ Cultural Needs through Parent Communication

Dr. Kashunda L. Williams, Dr. Beth A. Jones and Dr. Stacy A. S. Williams

It is crucial for teachers to possess cultural diversity awareness and understanding. The authors’ view is that teacher education about culture should be individualized by student and should partially come from parents. The paper provides readers with information about the need for culture-specific teacher communications with parents and to propose that parents’ perceptions of their children’s cultural needs can aid in the development of teacher cultural awareness. The authors examine three assertions: (a) how parents’ ideas of their child’s cultural needs are developed as a function of parents’ cultural efficacy, (b) the relationship between parental characteristics and the cultural information parents want teachers to be aware of, and (c) that there is a possible relationship between school-home communication and the development of teacher cultural awareness. The cultural contexts of educating culturally diverse students and the factors which create variation in those contexts are addressed.

The U.S. Department of Education - National Center for Education (2010) reports that approximately 45% of children in U.S. public schools are from culturally diverse backgrounds. Yet, the percentage of non-White K-12 teachers is approximately 10% (Colombo, 2005). Given the discrepancies between student and teacher race and ethnicity, one could suggest that there is a need for teachers to understand and connect with their students culturally. Cultural awareness involves developing sensitivity and understanding of another ethnic group. Specifically, Tomlinson (2001) argues that cultural awareness is comprised of a gradually developing inner sense of the equality of cultures, an increased understanding of your own and other people’s cultures, and an interest in the similarities and differences in cultures (cited in Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 3). Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004) assert that increased cultural awareness helps broaden minds, increases tolerance, and results in greater cultural empathy and sensitivity.

Traditionally, cultural awareness development is facilitated during teacher education program training and post-graduation trainings (i.e., professional development opportunities such as district trainings, campus trainings, workshops, conferences, continuing education experiences, etc.). However, the cultural information shared via the above mentioned training opportunities is often very global in nature. Additionally, literature indicates that teachers’ cultural awareness remains low even after the completion of their teacher preparation programs (Brown, 2000; Grant and Secada, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995; McDiarmid and Price, 1993; Sleeter, 2001). A review of the literature suggests that increased cultural awareness in teachers increases teacher efficacy and can lead to improved minority student outcomes (Ediger, 2003; Thompson & Smith, 2005; Tidwell & Thompson, 2008; Tucker et al., 2005). It is the authors’ view that in addition to a global understanding about cultures obtained from coursework and professional trainings, teacher education about culture should be individualized by student and should partially come from parents.

Effective home-school communication requires advance preparation by all parties, charges teachers with the goal of receiving as much information as they provide, and centers around positive communications that utilize a conversational approach (Minke & Anderson, 2003). Anderson & Minke (2007) found that parent perceptions of their involvement in their child’s education were impacted directly by being specifically invited to participate by school personnel. Further, Patrikakou and Weissberg (2000) found that teacher outreach to parents is a better indicator of parental involvement than socio-demographic variables and that student success is linked to the quality of parent-teacher interactions rather than the quantity.

Because the goal of the present authors is to promote multicultural competence in educators, the purpose of this paper is to raise awareness regarding the need for cultural specific teacher communications with parents, to suggest that parents’ perceptions of their children’s cultural needs can be useful, and to propose that parents’ perceptions of their children’s cultural needs can aid in the development of teacher cultural awareness. Building upon, and exposing gaps in, the existing literature, the authors assert three positions based on these topics: (a) parents’ ideas of their children’s cultural needs are developed as a function of their
parental cultural efficacy, (b) that there is a possible relationship between parental cultural efficacy and the cultural information parents want teachers to be aware of when educating their children, and (c) that there is a possible relationship between school-home communication and the development of teacher cultural awareness (see Figure 1). Each of these positions is addressed, respectively, in the following three sections. Table 1 is intended to facilitate the reader’s understanding of key terminology pertinent to this discussion.

### Parental Cultural Efficacy and Children’s Cultural Needs: Parent Perceptions of What Students Need

While working within/with schools, many of us have heard the saying, “No two students are exactly alike.” That same saying is also applicable to parents’ ideas of their children’s cultural needs. That is, all parents from the same ethnic/racial background do not identify the exact same desired cultural needs for their children. For the purposes of this discussion, cultural needs are defined as elements of an individual's culture that are perceived as essential and that they strive to attain. Although they may be members of the same ethnic group, parents have individualized notions of what is best culturally for their children. Furthermore, these individual differences exist among sets of parents that reside within the same community and/or are members of the same family.

So, how are these individualized parental expectations of cultural needs for children developed? While not based on empirical findings, it is logical to presume that parents’ perceived cultural needs for their children stem from each parents’ cultural efficacy and that the level of parental cultural efficacy shapes the cultural messages parents share with teachers. This argument is explained in more detail below.

As we move beyond viewing groups as a static entity to viewing minority groups as an evolving organism influenced by, but not limited to, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and religion, it becomes paramount for us to understand the minority parent and their efficacy (i.e., belief in their ability) related to transmitting cultural knowledge to their children. Few studies have researched the effects of parental efficacy as it relates to academic achievement in urban youths (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Morris, Taylor, Nunnery, Burr-McNeal & Knight, 1995), however fewer studies have examined African American parents’ cultural efficacy (Alliman-Brissett, Turner, & Skovholt, 2004).

According to Bandura (1997), perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one’s own abilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given
results. Ardelt and Eccles further define parental efficacy as “the parents’ beliefs in his or her ability to influence the child and his or her environment to foster the child’s development and success (p. 945).” Hence, parental cultural efficacy can be further defined as the parent of color’s beliefs in his or her “cultural” ability (i.e., knowledge of cultural capital) and the ability to foster and develop cultural awareness in their children.

Moreover, we assert that parental cultural efficacy in parents influence opinions of their children’s cultural needs. For example, it is possible that a parent categorized as having a high level of parental cultural efficacy (i.e., believe they have much cultural knowledge and the ability to share that knowledge) would judge their child’s cultural needs as high (i.e., they require or want much acknowledgement of their child’s culture). In contrast, it is possible that a parent categorized as having a low level of parental cultural efficacy (i.e., believe they have little cultural knowledge and the ability to share that knowledge) would judge their child’s cultural needs as low (i.e., they require or want little acknowledgement of their child’s culture).

The true relationship and direction of the influence of parental cultural efficacy on perceived cultural needs for their child has yet to be studied. It is the authors’ opinions that this relationship warrants more research because it heavily influences the cultural messages parents share with teachers. A better understanding of the relationship between parental cultural efficacy and their child’s perceived cultural needs could lead to more accurate predictions about the cultural message parents send to teachers.

**Parental Cultural Efficacy and Cultural Transmission: What Parents Want To Share**

Cultural transmission is the process of transferring cultural information from one generation to the next or from one group to another, which carries with it significant implications for the adaptation and persistence of a culture (Schönpflug, 2009) and for family relationship dynamics (Dennis, Basanez & Farahmand, 2010; Padilla, 2006). We propose that the type of cultural transmission (i.e., cultural messages communicated to teachers) will depend on parental cultural efficacy. Additionally, the authors believe that there is a possible relationship between the cultural messages parents share with their children and the cultural messages that parents share with teachers. However, a search of the literature exploring the connection between parent cultural efficacy and cultural transmission proved unsuccessful. Contrastingly, a search for the transmission of cultural knowledge (i.e., the cultural messages parents communicate to their children) yielded abundant results in the socialization literature (Lesane, 2002). The following paragraphs examine the cultural messages parents communicate to their children.

Racial socialization (Peters, 1985) is often defined as “the task and responsibilities that parents have of raising physically and emotionally healthy children...in a society in which being [a minority] has negative connotations (as cited in Caughy, O’Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002, p. 1611). Caughy et al. (2002) interviewed 200 African American families from economically diverse communities who had children between the ages of 3 and 4.5 years. They demonstrated that the racial socialization messages to preschoolers were relatively high, with parents 90% of the time transmitting knowledge about racial pride, and 64% of parents incorporating messages related to mistrust of whites.

In 2006, Caughy, O’Campo, Nettes, and Lohrfink explored the racial socialization of first graders living in communities defined by high social capital and low social capital. Communities high in social capital have a sense of connectedness and the willingness of community members to intervene in community problems. These are communities with a lot of support and/or resources. Communities low in social capital are communities that are characterized by disorder and/or chaos. Caughy et al. (2006) found that as the negative climate of the community increased, the messages transmitted to children had more to do with preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust. In essence, racial socialization emphasizing racism and discrimination increased in communities low in social capital.

Coard, Wallace, Stevenson Jr., & Brotman (2004) explored the prevalence of racial socializing messages among 15 low income mothers of children 5 and 6 years old. In particular, parents stressed racial pride 93% of the time, racial equality 86% of the time, messages of bias 73% of the time, and messages related to racial achievement 67% of the time. Hughes and Chen (1997) explored racial socialization of African-American families and children ages 4 to 14 years old.
Hughes and Chen noted that messages about cultural history and heritage were more common than messages about racial bias and discrimination. Additionally, they found that parents reported more racial socialization of older children than younger children.

Based on this review of the racial socialization literature, as it relates to cultural messages sent from parent to child, we cannot say exactly what parents want teachers to know about their children’s cultural needs. That is, we cannot predict what cultural messages parents will share with teachers. However, a review of this literature does imply that there is variance among the messages that parents convey to their children, and that these messages are influenced by parental characteristics such as socioeconomic status, community in which they live, and the age of their child. We infer that messages from parents to teachers disseminating cultural information will have similar influences and that in combination these influences relate to parental cultural efficacy. We believe that the high degree of variance in cultural messages further supports the need for teachers to conduct an individualized assessment of students’ cultural needs.

Much research is needed to examine the cultural messages parents share with teachers and to determine if there are possible relationships between parental cultural efficacy and the content of the messages shared with teachers. Additionally, research should be done to examine the changes in the content of the cultural messages parents transmit to those (e.g., teachers) outside their family, race, and/or culture. A better understanding of the cultural messages that parents share with their child’s teachers could have several implications for all involved; parent, student, and teacher. Specifically, the authors believe that parent-to-teacher cultural messages can foster cultural awareness for teachers.

**Parental Communication and the Development of Teacher Cultural Awareness: What Teachers Learn by Talking to Parents about Culture**

Existing research has proven that when parents and teachers work together, everyone benefits; students tend to earn higher grades, perform better on tests, attend school more regularly, have better behavior, and show more positive attitudes toward themselves and toward school (Canter, 2004). Based on a review of 66 studies, reviews, reports, and books, Henderson and Berla (1994) concluded that parents can make critical contributions to student achievement, from preschool through high school. They also concluded that efforts to improve children’s outcomes are much more effective if they include a family element.

Parental communication directed to teachers about student cultural needs could have many potential benefits. Namely, communications could increase teacher knowledge and cultural competence. According to Ye He (2013), teacher cultural competence is defined as teachers’ “abilities to recognize their own world views, to understand and embrace the cultural diversity of their students, and to confront their potential biases and assumptions in their interactions with diverse students and their families” (p. 56). Other potential benefits of parent-teacher communication about students’ cultural needs are more appropriate teacher-student interactions and improved student achievement (Keengwe, 2010). It is also possible that parent communication about students’ cultural needs could impact teachers’ beliefs about how students learn and the expectations that they have for them, thus influencing their lessons (Sadker, Sadker, & Zittleman, 2008). Additionally, when teachers become culturally competent, they model the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of culturally competent professionals and students’ cultural competence is enhanced (Keengwe, 2010).

If communication between parents and teachers can yield the development of cultural awareness in teachers (and all the student benefits that result), then efforts should be made to initiate teacher/parent discussions about culture—especially when teacher cultural efficacy about cultural awareness is low. Teachers should be assured that they have additional options in developing their cultural competence and that they can take an active role in developing and strengthening their cultural awareness, specifically for the students and families with whom they work most closely.

**Conclusion**

The goal of the authors is to promote multicultural competence in educators. The authors theorize that there is a relationship between parental involvement (i.e., via home-school communication) and the development of cultural awareness in school professionals. When purposing to involve parents, we argue that educators must be cognizant of the possible relationship between the levels of parents’ cul-
tural development and the manner parents’ desire educators to view and interact with their children. Furthermore, the authors’ propose that the type of cultural transmission will depend on parents’ cultural efficacy. An increased understanding of these concepts among educators may result in more effective home-school communication and improved student outcomes.

References


Figure 1. Parental Influence on Teacher Cultural Competence. Diagram illustrates the proposed rationale of how parental factors can lead to teacher cultural awareness and competence.


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Perceptions of Pre Service Teachers Concerns on Incorporating Technology in the 21st Century

Dr. Laura Isbell and Dr. Tami Morton

Knowing the importance of the incorporation of technology in Texas classrooms, the researchers looked into their pre-service teachers’ perception of this need in the 21st century classroom. This paper describes the results of the quantitative study examining two groups of pre-service teachers’ perceptions of using technology for instructional purposes in the classroom. The researchers used the Stages of Concern-Questionnaire (SoC-Q) from the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) to examine their concerns. The researchers found that the pre-service teachers were at a justifiable level of concern in each district and that additional training would be beneficial with future residents at this stage in their student teaching.

In education, change is constant. Teachers are continually implementing newly adopted innovations to accommodate their students, their classrooms, or themselves. However, with innovation, resistance to change is inevitable. Teachers may show some signs of resistance because a new method of teaching and learning is forced upon them. In most efforts to change, some people will seem to resist the change, and some may even actively sabotage efforts for change (Hall & Hord, 2006). The success of any change process depends on how participants interpret and perceive the innovation. Teachers may experience change in different ways. Their perceptions about the innovation may influence the effectiveness. It may be that teachers’ willingness or unwillingness to change is the single determining factor in whether or not an innovation is adopted successfully (Brown, Pryzwansky, & Schulte, 2001). As a result, successfully adopting any innovation depends on understanding and managing people’s concerns.

In 2006, the Texas State Board of Education presented to the legislature a new plan called the Long-Range Plan for Technology, 2006-2020. This comprehensive plan describes in detail how teachers, parents, and students must open their minds from the traditional ways of learning, to those that incorporate digital resources. All professional educators must have proficiency with technology, which is currently mandated for all beginning teachers.

In order to fulfill this plan, all learners must have access to ample digital tools and resources. While this plan is ambitious, school districts throughout Texas have made technology a focus. Teachers are provided with professional development to support their learning. Those beginning teachers who have experience with using digital tools and resources will be valued by new schools and the principals who are hiring.

As teacher educators, we understand that many of our current students have been exposed to technology through the use of computers, smartphones, and tablets. Nevertheless, not all of our pre-service teachers have looked at this technology as tools used for providing instruction. Understanding the importance of technology in the education in the state of Texas, we explored the concern of using technology for instructional purposes in the classroom.

Methodology
This study employed a quantitative method approach using a questionnaire and demographic survey. The target population for this study included 40 pre-service teachers during their last semester of field-based teacher education. The pre-service teachers are residents who are currently enrolled in the field-based program at a four-year university in East Texas. The study was based on data from pre-service teachers who participated in completing the SoC-Q. The data source for this study included a demographic questionnaire and the Stages of Concern-Questionnaire (SoC-Q). Scores from the SoC-Q were used to identify pre-service teachers’ concerns about new technologies.

Description of Instrument
Stages of Concern Questionnaire
SoC-Q is a 35-item, self-administered questionnaire that was designed to measure concerns associated with implementation of new technologies Respondents were asked to read and consider the degree to which each statement reflected their levels of concern regarding new technologies. Then, respondents circled a number on a 7-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (This statement is irrelevant to me) to 7 (Very true of me at this time). There are five items for each of the seven stages of concern. An example of an item representing Stage 2-Personal is the following: “I would like to know
how my role will change when I am using the innovation” (George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2006, p. 27). The seven stages of concern are Stage 0–Unconcerned, Stage 1 – Informational, Stage 2 – Personal, Stage 3 – Mechanical, Stage 4 – Consequence, Stage 5 – Collaboration, and Stage 6 – Refocusing (see Table 1). Panew technologiesticipants’ responses to the items on the SoC-Q indicate their current concerns with new technologies as an innovation or how they feel about their involvement with new technologies as an innovation.

According to Hall and Hord (2006), the SoC-Q has “test/retest reliabilities range [of the SoC-Q] from .65 to .86” (p. 147). Hall and Hord (2006) also found that the SoC-Q has “α-coefficients [that] range from .64 to .83” (p. 147). Therefore, Hall and Hord (2006) concluded that the SoC-Q has “strong reliability estimates and internal consistency” (p. 147). See Table 1 for the expressions of concern and how they correspond to a phase and a stage of concern.

Pre-service teachers documented their concerns about new technologies with SoC-Q, their responses to SoC-Q were categorized in one of the seven stages of concern. A score based on responses to SoC-Q was calculated for each participant by summing the participant’s ratings of the five statements under each proposed phase and stage of concern (Unrelated–Unconcerned, Self–Informational, Self–Personal, Task–Mechanical, Impact – Consequence, Impact – Collaboration, Impact – Refocusing; Appendix A). The score for each phase and stage category of concern ranged from 0–35. The higher a pre-service teacher’s summed score was in a category, the more intense were the concerns of the pre-service teacher at that stage; the lower a pre-service teacher’s summed score was in a category, the less intense were the concerns of pre-service teacher at that stage. For purposes of this study, SoC-Q was also used to construct one cohort profile profiles for individual or group concerns by taking the summed score for each category and converting it into a percentile following the guidelines outlined in Quick Scoring Device, which provides both scoring and interpreting information for the SoC-Q (Hall et al., 1979; Hall & Hord, 2001). For this study, the researchers used one cohort score to illustrate pre-service teachers concerns about new technologies.

School District Information

The pre-service teachers that participated in this study represented two districts that are located in

Table 1 Expressions of Phases and Stages of Concern About Innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 Phases of Concern</th>
<th>7 Stages of Concern</th>
<th>Expressions of Concern</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td>6–Refocusing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5–Collaboration</td>
<td>4–Consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>3–Mechanical</td>
<td>2–Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>1–Informational</td>
<td>0–Unconcerned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unrelated</td>
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</table>

communities north of Dallas, Texas. The two school districts are about fifteen miles apart. They will be identified as District 1 and District 2.

**District 1**
District 1 has 3 elementary schools that our pre service teachers provide instruction. In this district, most schools have a Smart Board for each teacher to use to provide instruction, at least one iPad, and just recently many staff computers were upgraded to 2012 Apple Mac Minies. It is a goal of this district that all of the students will become masters of technology.

**District 2**
District 2 has 2 elementary schools that our pre service teachers provide instruction. This district promotes the use of state-of-the-art technology in their schools. All classrooms have document camera, projector, and laptop.

**Procedure**
Before participating in this study, the researchers informed the pre-service teachers about the study and requested their voluntary participation in this study. At the informational meeting, the two researchers outlined, informed, and described the study to the pre-service teachers. The researchers informed the pre-service teachers that three e-mails would be sent to request their participation. The first email was sent February 7, the second email sent February 9, and the third email sent February 14. The participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- Participants must a resident in the teacher education program.
- Participants must be a university-based student who has successfully completed the intern semester and is in his/her final semester toward teacher certification.

After sending out three notification emails for participation in the SoC-Q, 29 out of 40 pre-service teachers completed the questionnaire. The response rate for this questionnaire was 72.5%. To maintain confidentiality the researchers assigned a cohort label to the participants who completed the questionnaire. The cohort information will be kept in the SEDL database. The cohort title, titled Residents, holds no value or meaning but was a simple method to code and track participants anonymously.

**Results**

The Soc-Q was used to measure participants’ intensities of concerns about new technologies. Data obtained from Soc-Q were scored using the Stages of Concerns Quick Scoring Device from SEDL (Hall et al., 1979). To score the data from Soc-Q, totals of participants’ responses to individual statements from Soc-Q were recorded to establish each participant’s mean relative intensity score for each stage of concern. The mean relative intensity scores were then used to create a line graph to show pre-service teachers’ concerns about using new technologies at a snapshot in time. We used a table and a line graph to represent the teachers’ percentile scores for stages of concern because according to Hall et al. (1979), graphic representations of percentile scores, such as the mean relative intensity score, can assist researchers in interpreting data from Soc-Q. A figure representing the data collected with the Soc-Q is illustrated below to show pre-service teachers’ concerns about new technologies at a snapshot in time.

As figure 1 illustrates, participants’ responses to the items on the Soc-Q indicated their current concerns with new technologies. The findings indicated that overall, participants’ concerns were highest in the self phase and lowest in the impact phase. Participants indicated that their concerns focused primarily on how new technologies affected

**Figure 1.** Line graph of changes in participants’ mean relative intensity scores in the stages of concern.
High scores in Stage 2 indicates that the participants were more concerned about status, rewards, and the effects that new technologies would have on them. Similar to District 1, the residents in District 2 were also following a gradual decline with the lowest point at Stage 4 (Consequence).

**Discussion**
The researchers found that the pre-service teachers from District 1 had their highest score in Stage 0. This shows that these residents were not concerned about the innovation. The SEDL manual cautions researchers that if this score is high relative to the other scores, the other stage scores may have little significance (George, Hall, & Steigelbauer, 2006). District 1 has technology readily available in each classroom. This reality has attributed to the non-interest these students possess.

The pre-service teachers in District 2 had their highest concerns scores in Stages 1 and 2 demonstrating that they want more information about new technologies, and they have personal concerns about new technologies and its consequences for them. Our pre-service teachers from both Districts attend a seminar twice a month. It is during these sessions that residents from District 2 are exposed to various new technologies. It is evident with the high concerns score in Stages 1 and 2, that these students would benefit from an opportunity to learn more about new technologies.

These figures illustrated teachers’ mean relative intensity scores on the SoC-Q at one snapshot in time. Pre-service teachers’ concerns were highest in the self phase and lowest in the impact phase at one snapshot in time. The self phase is associated with teachers’ focusing on how new technologies is affecting them personally. The impact phase is associated with teachers’ collaborating with other educators and focusing on their concerns about how new technologies is affecting students.

**Recommendations**
Further research is needed to substantiate this study’s findings about the new technologies currently used and implemented in the classroom. Specifically, monitoring and tracking this same group for three to five years to measure progress or regression using new technologies. Research about appropriate instructional materials should be systematic and ongoing (Wiener & Soodak, 2008). Researchers also need to explore qualitative methods of measuring new technologies used and implementations using interviews and observations based on the CBAM model. Interviews and observations based on the CBAM model may provide clarification of teach-
ers’ actual concerns about new technologies. Additionally, during observations, researchers could monitor and document teachers’ behaviors and comfort using new technologies during instructional time with students.

After reviewing and analyzing the data collected in this study, we recommend that future researchers administer the SoC-Q at least twice throughout the school-year. The purpose for administering the SC-Q at least twice during a school-year is to track progress or regression with the use of new technologies, or any innovation, under analysis. As the results of this study revealed, pre-service teachers were highest in the self-phase and lowest in the impact-phase. It would be interesting to see if pre-service teachers’ concerns would increase or decrease at two different snapshots in time.

We also recommend instructional changes for our resident seminar. Future instruction with pre-service teachers should emphasize the value and importance of new technologies in the classroom. We, as teacher educators, will use this information to incorporate new technologies in our instruction to pre-service teachers. As a result, we will suggest that our residents implement new technologies in the classrooms they are assigned. Additional collaboration with mentor teachers and administrators is recommended to ensure new technologies are being introduced and implemented appropriately.

Conclusion

Pre-service teachers expressed concerns about the use and implementation of new technologies. The primary goal of future research should be to assist and guide pre-service teachers through the change process of implementing new technologies and to give them the supports, resources, and assistance they need to increase their comfort and familiarity with new technologies as innovations. Although this study has provided some insights into pre-service teachers’ concerns about new technologies it has only begun to reveal the importance and value of teachers’ participation and knowledge of new technologies to facilitate the change process successfully to impact student learning.

References


**About the Authors:**

Dr. Laura Isbell is an Assistant Professor at Texas A&M-Commerce University. She is an advisor in the Curriculum & Instruction Master’s program, and she works with the pre-service teachers during their internship and residency semesters.

Dr. Tami Morton is an Assistant Professor at Texas A&M-Commerce. She is a Reading instructor in all areas: Undergraduate, Master’s, and Doctoral. In addition, she works with pre-service teachers during their internship and residency semesters.
Appendix A

STAGES OF CONCERN QUESTIONNAIRE

Stage 0 Awareness Concern
3 I don’t even know what new technologies are
12 I am not concerned about new technologies.
21 I am completely occupied with other things.
23 Although I don’t know about new technologies, I am concerned about things in the area.
30 At this time, I am not interested in learning about new technologies.

Stage 1 Informational Concern
6 I have very limited knowledge about new technologies.
14 I would like to discuss the possibility of using new technologies.
15 I would like to know what resources are available if we decide to adopt new technologies.
26 I would like to know what the use of new technologies will require in the immediate future.
35 I would like to know how new technologies is better than what we have now.

Stage 2 Personal Concern
7 I would like to know how the effect of reorganization on my professional status.
13 I would like to know who will make the decisions in the new system.
17 I would like to know how my teaching or administration is supposed to change.
28 I would like to have more information on time and energy commitments required by new technologies.
33 I would like to know how my role will change when I am using new technologies.

Stage 3 Conflict Management Concern
4 I am concerned about not having enough time to organize myself each day.
8 I am concerned about conflict between my interests and responsibilities.
16 I am concerned about my inability to manage all of what new technologies requires.
25 I am concerned about the time spent working with nonacademic problems related to new technologies.
34 Coordination of tasks and people is taking too much of my time.

Stage 4 Consequence Concern
1 I am concerned about student’s attitudes toward new technologies.
11 I am concerned about how new technologies affects my students.
19 I am concerned about evaluating my impact on students.
24 I would like to excited my students about their part in this approach.
32 I would like to use feedback from students to change the program.

Stage 5 Collaboration Concern
5 I would like to help other faculty in their use of new technologies.
10 I would like to develop working relationships with both our faculty and outside faculty using new technologies.
18 I would like to familiarize other departments or persons with the progress of this new approach.
27 I would like to coordinate my effort with others to maximize new technologies effects.
29 I would like to know what other faculty are doing in this area.

Refocusing Concern
2 I now know of some other approaches that might work better.
9 I am concerned about revising my use of new technologies.
20 I would like to revise new technologies instructional approach.
22 I would like to modify our use of new technologies based on the experiences of our students.
31 I would like to determine how to supplement, enhance, or replace new technologies.
Praise: A School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support Tool

Ms. Janeen R. Gardner and Dr. Brittany L. Hott

Praise is a free, highly effective, practice that has the potential to increase both academic and behavioral progress (Hott, Isbell, & Walker, 2015; Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000). This article presents a case study from a general education Biology classroom that incorporated “shout-out cards” as a component of the school-wide positive behavioral support plan. Use of formal praise increased student work completion, academic progress, and positive behaviors. Suggestions and forms are included as exemplars for practitioners.

Meet Pablo

* Pablo is a student who recently returned to high school upon release from a juvenile detention center. He has a troubled past that has led him to a felony attached to his record by the age of sixteen. He returned to his zone high school weighed down with familial instability, the experience of consequences due to poor decisions, and a thirst for positive recognition. Pablo spends his first days back to school seemingly asleep resting his head on his desk, ignoring the demands of his teachers to pick up his head and complete his assignments. If pushed to his limit, he responds by using profane language and/or walking out. He is indifferent to discipline, threats, or the demands of authority figures.

One day the science teacher, who had Pablo for the second year in a row, acknowledges Pablo completing his warm-up for the first time in class through a ‘Skeeter Shout-out’ card. Pablo had completed the warm-up and then proceeded to carry out his usual routine of pretending to be asleep. His science teacher noted the seemingly insignificant behavior and decided to send Pablo a note acknowledging the accomplishment by noting the progress and great potential he has as a student. After receiving the ‘Skeeter Shout-out’ card, Pablo returned to his science teacher, nearly at a loss for words, but acknowledging and thanking his teacher for her words of encouragement. It was as if he hadn’t ever received a compliment or at least hadn’t received one in a very long time. In addition to returning to class the following days, ready to learn and complete his work, he had a new respect and admiration for his science teacher.

Praise and Inclusive Classrooms

Today’s classrooms encompass a wide range of learners. These learners come from a multitude of backgrounds, from troubled to distinguished. They vary in their style of learning as well as level of learning. These various backgrounds and styles intermingle to create a diverse classroom community. Therefore, classrooms are designed to be an inclusive setting (Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & McCulley, 2012). However, teachers are challenged to meet the needs of the different learners in a structured systematic way so that students are comfortably challenged and walk away having gained knowledge in an environment that is safe for both social and emotional development (Sutherland, 2000).

Though diversity is the reigning commonality among classrooms, equally, students who feel supported in a positive environment perform at a higher standard (Hott, Walker, & Brigham, 2014). Many times, teachers find it difficult to notice the positive because there is a lot going on at any given moment (Hott & Walker, 2012). If a student is hindering the learning process, it is easiest to call attention to and extinguish that behavior. In a planned, structured environment, disruptive behaviors are most apparent. Often, misbehaviors can be avoided by being proactive in acknowledging the positive no matter how small and seemingly insignificant (Vo, Sutherland, & Conroy, 2000). Intra-school correspondence from teacher to student, such as the ‘Skeeter Shout-out’ card, is one school’s way of communicating positive feedback.

The ‘Skeeter Shout-out’ card can in a way be classified as a form of positive recognition that is both tangible and intangible. Tangible in that students are extrinsically motivated by receiving a note sometime during the school day sent from one of their teachers, acknowledging a positive behavior that was recognized. It is a source of encouragement and praise that a student can look back on for as long he or she chooses. As an intangible reward, praise and recognition is important to the growth and development of all students (Vo et al., 2000). It contributes to their health and well-being as well as helps develop self-esteem and a positive outlook. ‘Skeeter Shout-out’ cards need not take the place
of frequent positive feedback within the classroom. It is a form of recognition that says to a student that they are seen and that they are important as an individual. Sometimes that simple recognition is all it takes to get a student on track to success.

Shout-Out Cards
A “shout-out card” is a card created for use school-wide that allows a teacher to recognize a student. The design of the card can take on the characteristics of the campus. Teachers can set aside a few moments of time to create a thoughtful response recognizing a positive behavior in a student. A teacher can set up a weekly quota goal of his or her choosing to, over time, recognize each student, or can use the card regularly for a student to encourage growth and improvement. The card is placed in the box of one who handles distribution and is sent out via student office aides to the classrooms of the students whose names are written on the cards. It is similar to receiving a postcard in the mail. Many times it is the highlight of a student’s day to receive a ‘shout-out’ card from one of their teachers. Teachers can use this as a measure for noting improvement both academically and behaviorally. A sample shout-out card from Mesquite High School is seen in Figure 1.

Individual students can make progress toward academic and behavior goals through the support of their teachers in each of their classes. Teachers can come together and identify common goals that an individual student can work toward. With each teacher periodically noting the student’s progress through the use of the correspondence system, the student can experience a supportive environment that encourages academic and behavioral improvement.

Common goals among teachers used for an individual student is one method by which ‘Shout-out’ cards can be used to measure improvement. Another method is by individual teachers establishing a set of goals for one or multiple students. Figure 2 displays a sample goals chart.

After sending out the card, the teacher takes note of the student’s behavior in class in the following days and determines whether there was a positive change, negative change, or no change at all in behavior as it pertains to the set of goals established for the student. The teacher may choose to chart progress towards student goals. A simple recording chart is provided in Figure 3.

Progress toward each goal can be denoted with a (+) or (-) in the space corresponding with each established goal. One can also track the general improvement of students, as cards are sent out weekly to the given set of students for that particular week. Place an ‘X’ or check mark on the day that you sent out the card and denote the progress made by each student.

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*Figure 1. Shout-out Card*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mesquite High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 E. Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesquite, Texas 75149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Mesquite High School Logo" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honor Learning</td>
</tr>
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<td>Shared Responsibility</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skeeter Shout Out!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Respect, Honor Learning, Shared Responsibility…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You represent the Skeeter Family!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Mesquite High School Logo" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 2. Sample Student Goals Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Goal #1</th>
<th>Goal #2</th>
<th>Goal #3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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**Figure 3. Sample Student Goals Progress Chart**

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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<td>T</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
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</table>

(+) improvement toward goal behavior  (-) behavior negatively affected  (blank) no change
Extrinsic motivation for making progress toward academic and behavioral goals moves to intrinsic motivation through the use of self-monitoring. Self-monitoring allows a student to actively take personal responsibility for academic and behavior choices. In this way, the student can monitor his goal behavior that can be easily observed and recorded. Once the student achieves successful implementation of the academic and/or behavioral goal, self-monitoring gradually fades. The desired behavior should ultimately be maintained by the student independently.

Teachers monitoring specific students for behavioral and/or academic progress can begin by sending four cards, one each week for a month. Progress, whether positive, negative, or no progress at all can be noted and a quick reassessment of the student’s goals can be made.

There are three avenues that a teacher can choose upon noting progress toward the student’s goals. A teacher can continue to monitor the same goals, change the goals monitored, or move toward self-monitoring.

When a student has successfully made progress toward the established academic or behavioral goal, teacher-monitoring can transition to student self-monitoring of goals, or newly established goals (Hott, Walker, & Brigham, 2014). Rapport has been established with the student. Therefore, the student feels supported and recognized by his teacher. Students who feel supported by their teachers, experience a more positive classroom environment (Hott & Limberg, 2014). ‘Shout-out’ cards provide students with an opportunity to be recognized. Academic and behavioral progress toward established goals can be monitored as well.

Extrinsic motivation for making progress toward academic and behavioral goals moves to intrinsic motivation through the use of self-monitoring. Self-monitoring allows a student to actively take personal responsibility for academic and behavior choices. In this way, the student can monitor his goal behavior that can be easily observed and recorded. Once the student achieves successful implementation of the academic and/or behavioral goal, self-monitoring gradually fades. The desired behavior should ultimately be maintained by the student independently.

Pablo’s Progress
The Biology teacher reports that Pablo continues to excel in her class making progress towards state Biology standards. Pablo is

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**Figure 4. Sample Weekly Student Tracking Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shout-out card sent</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Shout-out card sent</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Student Name)</td>
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scheduled to participate in end of course assessments and is expected to pass. After the success in the Biology course, Pablo’s other teachers increased the use of praise and began formally collecting data to monitor Pablo’s behavioral progress. Pablo is currently passing all of his classes. Further, according to the Assistant Principal who handles shout-out cards for the school, Pablo has received significantly fewer disciplinary referrals and his grades are improving. Pablo is increasingly productive and making steady progress.

* Note: Student name and some identifying characteristics were changed to maintain confidentiality.

** The authors wish to acknowledge Mesquite High School Assistant Principal Renee Sena who provided valuable feedback and support for this project.

References


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Procuring Passion-driven Partnerships through Effective School Social Networking: A Case Study

Dr. Sarah Maben, Ms. Brianna Henneke Hodges and Ms. Karley Goen

Through three case studies of Effective Schools social networking sites, investigators address how institutions use publicly accessible social networking sites (SNS) for communication with stakeholders, and the type of communication most used: one-way or two-way communication. The schools’ Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites showed mostly one-way communication with reminders about upcoming events, congratulatory and celebratory messages, and photographs of students and teachers. The content did not inspire much in the way of retweets, comments or shared messages. Authors offer recommendations for ways districts can encourage two-way communication to create conversations and extend the professional passion of education through SNS.

In world driven and connected by social media, school curriculum is shifting to include lessons on digital citizenship, online safety and information literacy. Teachers are finding ways to use social networking sites as pedagogical tools for diverse subject areas and creative ways to connect students and content. Moreover, companies are building upon the social media model by creating internal social networking products geared for schools, students and parents. All of these extend the classroom past its physical space and its traditional timeframe. Social networking sites (SNS) become an extension of the classroom, and take educators’ professional passion to a much larger audience. The purpose of this article is to look at how schools are using open social networking sites to communicate with students and parents, as well as the broader audience of the public and other stakeholders. Is professional passion shared through school social media accounts? Is it possible to procure passion-driven partnerships and develop a community of elevated educational stakeholders through school social media accounts?

Social networking sites, or web-based and mobile applications that allow individuals and organizations to create, engage, and share new user-generated or existing content, in digital environments through multi-way communication (Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & González Canché, 2012), have changed communication, giving consumers the power to produce and share content with audiences. In the past a school might have had a newsletter, website, and TV programs to spread its messages to stakeholders. Now, stakeholders, like students, parents, teachers, volunteers, alumni, community leaders, supporters, and the general public, can easily join the conversation through social media. The shift is from one-way communication to two-way or multi-way communication (Williamson & Johnston, 2012).

Communication Models and Social Networking

Grunig and Hunt identified four ways of communication between organizations and their audiences: press agentry model (one-way), public information model (one-way), two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical model (Gordon, 2011). Of the four, the two-way symmetrical is most desired because it incorporates stakeholder feedback and creates dialogue. The communication builds toward a relationships that is mutually beneficial. “The new digital media have dialogical, interactive, relational, and global properties that make them perfectly suited for a strategic management paradigm of public relations” (Grunig, 2009, p. 6).

In a study of nonprofits, including educational organizations and their Facebook pages, Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) found that more one-way communication was used, as opposed to leveraging the inherent interactivity available in social networking. The attempts at “interactivity” in Facebook were simply providing an email address the audience could contact. This is still one-way communication.

Nonprofits using Twitter for stakeholder communication fell into three communication functions in a 2012 study. Almost 60 percent of the tweets delivered information, about 25 percent were categorized as community building and the remaining ones were classified as action, asking followers to do something (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). While some dialogue occurred (in the community building function), publishing information, or one-way communication, dominated. Fortune 500 companies are not faring any better in using the power of SNS for dialogic com-
munication, according to a 2014 study. Most of the companies evaluated did not use two-way symmetrical communication in social media, especially on Facebook (Lee, Gil de Zúñiga, Coleman, & Johnson, 2014).

In social networking, multi-way communication is possible. For example, on Twitter, a tweet is like a text message to a large audience where others can reply or retweet (forward the message to his or her followers). This multi-way forum allows stakeholders to communicate with each other and the organization. Stakeholders can tag information to categorize and reference ideas and content, further expanding conversation and initiating true discourse. For school districts, this means parents, volunteers, students, teachers, and community leaders are part of a large, and hopefully, dynamic dialogue. Two-way and multi-way communication provide dialogue. Briones, Kucha, Liua, and Jinh (2011) interviewed 40 American Red Cross employees for insight on the organization’s social networking. They found that two-way communication benefits the organization through faster service, more media coverage and useful feedback from stakeholders.

If the two-way model is the process, then the product is dialogue; dialogic communication focuses on interaction when a relationship exists (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Kent and Taylor offered five principles for creating dialogue through the World Wide Web: the dialogic loop, useful information, encouraging return visits, ease of the interface, and conservation of visitors. Social networking sites have made a few of these principles favorite designation by stakeholders.

Social Networking in Education
Schools use open social networking sites and closed internal proprietary networks like My Big Campus and Edmodo to create “Facebook-like” interfaces for students and parents. Teachers deliver content and continue class discussions outside of the traditional schoolhouse. Much of the literature looks at how instructors are incorporating open social networking components into traditional face-to-face classes with articles about increased student engagement (Bull et al., 2008; Sturgeon & Walker, 2009), social learning (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009), connections to faculty (Hanson, Drumheller, Mallard, McKee, & Schlegel, 2011), and privacy issues for both teachers and students (Lin, Hoffman, & Borengasser, 2013). Research has looked at superintendents and principals use of SNS for their organizations (Cox & McLeod, 2014a; 2014b). Findings suggested that social media offered principals and superintendents greater interaction and stronger connections with stakeholders. Principals interviewed said they saw a move from one-way communication to two-way communication, and provided “deeper, richer exchanges” (Cox & McLeod, 2014a, p. 13). They engaged stakeholders in discussions, solicited opinions, and listened to conversations not available to them through newsletters and former communication tools.

Stakeholders in education are numerous, but the student and parent are paramount. The greatest impact on a child's learning is the extent of parental engagement in the child's education (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Technology has transformed that three-way relationship between parents, schools and learners. School websites explaining the modern math curriculum, or direct tweets to parents showing classroom work activities, can provide vital information for parents, allowing them to start a conversation with their child about their learning that goes beyond the traditional end-of-the-day grunt. A child, in turn, can direct parents to artwork on a Facebook photo gallery, for example, with the public nature of the work providing extra motivation (Ward, 2014).

Given the opportunities and power social networking sites have to share professional passion about education and our schools, this article poses the following research questions:

R1. How are institutions in the Effective Schools Project using social networking sites for communication with stakeholders?
R2. Do schools in the Effective Schools Project employ more one-way or two-way communication through their social networking sites?

Method
Through three case studies, researchers examine how three districts in the Effective Schools Project are using social networking sites to share their professional passion for education. The three districts were selected to give distinctive cases, with different locations (urban vs. rural), sizes, and types of schools. One month’s worth of content (mid-November to mid-December) was analyzed for all SNSs touted on the districts’ website, and the districts’ schools
that are part of the Effective Schools Project. Researchers used an open coding (Schram, 2006) methodology, looking for themes and trends, as well as viewing the content through the lens of one-way and two-way communication. Examples of one-way communication would be sharing news releases or photos from events—“pushing” information to the stakeholders. Two-way communication would be displayed through asking questions on their SNS to gather feedback, responding to questions posed to the school, hosting real-time chats online, or seeking engagement from stakeholders.

**Case 1**

On its website, this independent school district in north central Texas promotes its Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Edmodo and RSS feed. An unused blog function is buried on the communication page of the district site. The district’s Facebook page showcases photos, videos and links to district news releases. About two to three posts are made each week. Sometimes, multiple posts are made in the same day. Content alerts followers to news and updates, along with posts thanking various school partners and highlighting student accolades. In one instance during the month reviewed, a stakeholder asked a question and the district promptly responded with a Facebook comment. This was one of a few instances of dialogic communication. Asking people to tag photos was another instance of engaging feedback, but it is not as engaging as the platforms will allow.

Stakeholders use the “like” function (a one-click response) more than the comment feature. One news release and photograph garnered 171 likes, from the more than 2,500 people connected to the page. One post gathered 24 comments, but that was atypical. Most received no comments and others had two to four comments. Comments were overwhelmingly positive and used ample exclamation points to show excitement. Fans of this page who are commenting are engaged supporters, on Facebook at least.

The district’s Twitter feed has the same posts as the Facebook page, with a few hashtags added. The Twitter presence has about half of the following of the Facebook page. In the past two months, only two messages were ones the district retweeted from others to its followers. The Twitter feed is a news feed primarily, operating with a one-way model of communication. Individual tweets are receiving only one or two retweets or earning a p and down, occur on this site. It is likely YouTube is used more as a storage platform to be able to share videos on other SNS.

The YouTube page for the district features a handful of videos, with one receiving more than a thousand views, but others fewer than 10 views. Very little interaction, like comments or thumbs up and down, occur on this site. It is likely YouTube is used more as a storage platform to be able to share videos on other SNS.

The YouTube page for the district contains a mission statement outlining two-way communication as the goal. While this may occur in other communication methods, the one month’s worth of content analyzed in this study was mostly one-way communication. Individual campuses also used more one-way communication in their content. The high school showed some community-building type messages, congratulating sports teams, band and extracurricular activities. They were celebratory in nature. Other messages were announcements about college night and activities. Posting happens in bursts, with a flurry of activity and then a hiatus. Posts also tended to fall into a stagnant formula. Likes are moderate, with very few comments. Comments are short and positive, with a “way to go” theme.

One elementary school excelled at curating content. While still one-way communication, the Facebook posts encouraged reading programs with persuasive graphics and tips from other sources. In an example of two-way communication, one post simply asked, “Are you reading?” and received three responses. Another asked followers to “vote” and garnered 15 comments and 60 likes. Other messages issued thank you and kudos to students and teachers. This page also used the share feature in Facebook to promote the district Facebook page’s posts. Photography was a major component of nearly every post.

Other elementary schools in the district used Facebook to disseminate reminders to parents and pictures of students engaged in learning activities. One used the Facebook page as a way to digitally distribute fliers. One-way communication serves its purpose, the distribution of information to stakeholders. Social networking provides a powerful outlet for two
-way and multi-way communication that this district could better leverage for sharing professional passion about their students, teachers and other stakeholders.

Case 2

As one of the fastest growing school districts in Texas, this independent school district recognizes the need to encourage, enhance, and emphasize communication with its stakeholders. In fact, its yearly improvement plan yielded two key communication points centering on the use of technology and social media to allow for a collaborative approach to foster productive partnerships: 1) increase community engagement, awareness, and knowledge of the district’s education process, and 2) create and facilitate opportunities to enhance the home-school connection, shoring familial and educational relationships to promote student success.

To meet the goals, the district and its individual campuses use established social media as well as independent and proprietary sites to engage the community. While the end-products may be the same—increased sense of community and support, transparent and collaborative communication, and improved awareness and celebration of educational successes—the manners in which these goals are achieved vary from district to campus level.

For the district, public awareness, celebration of success, and transparency are the critical components of stakeholder engagement. Pairing commonly used social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook with internally maintained outlets such as a video archival site and superintendent-hosted podcasts, the district is able to connect its built-in vested audience of parents and community partners through technology-based platforms to carefully crafted messaging to elevate support. Using a variety of messaging vehicles allows the district to cater content delivery based on audience preference. That is, some prefer Facebook and website announcements, while others may prefer Twitter and podcasts to keep up with the latest happenings in the district.

This variation in taste is illustrated by an informal audit of the district’s social media presence. This district subscribes to two major SNS, Twitter and Facebook. Both outlets boast a fairly impressive following with more than 10,000 followers and more than 2,700 tweets, and about 8,000 likes and 600 visits, respectively. Activity for the current month revealed 65 tweets, most of which feature links to the district’s webpages for press releases. Several posts are retweeted, but mostly by district campuses rolling out announcements. The Facebook page offers similar information, indicating that the district is providing the same information just on a different channel. This is a direct reflection of the goal to utilize technology-based communication opportunities to increase the community’s knowledge of and engagement with the district’s initiatives and efforts. Nonetheless, while these efforts utilize SNS as vehicles for information, they remain one-way in the practical application of information; providing a link to a press release with little to no engagement persists as a one-sided distribution of information despite the community-based, interactive forum.

This particular district seems to have encouraged campus-level use of social media but doesn’t appear to have provided a templated use of it. That said, some of the campuses were more frequent, fluent, and successful in their adoptions than others. For the purposes of this audit, the five campuses that were evaluated each utilized Facebook and Twitter, with one exception, which added Instagram to its communication strategy. As can be expected, the campuses that updated their pages regularly attained a larger following; relationships are forged on interaction and comfort (Rimm-Kaufman, 2014). Further, those that customized the content to reflect student population and personalization garnered the greatest benefit and achieved a more successful implementation of the district’s goal to “enable families to become an integral part of the learning environment through connectivity to school learning and information resources.” Generally, the campus level social networking showcased one-way communication, some simply retweeting the district’s messages.

The bio post for the one school with an Instagram feed announced its intentions to “use social media to engage our community.” More than 450 posts have been made, primarily featuring student accolades, presentations, and learning in action. While the pictures are often cross-posted on Facebook and Twitter, the Instagram account includes a much deeper and richer representation of student life at this campus, as it goes far beyond the posed pictures by featuring examples of student classwork and exemplar learning. The pattern of engagement remains the same as
with the other social media outlets (likes with few comments).

Case 3
This school district’s motto is that education is a team effort. The ISD’s pledge is to help each student achieve his or her academic potential and stressed the importance of continuous educational improvement for students. This continuous improvement includes creating a culture of student-centered learning, which strengthens relationships with students, parents, and the community. The ISD’s student enrollment is 500. The elementary school has a Twitter account, while the high school has various Twitter accounts. These accounts can be accessed through the “parent” portal on ISD’s homepage, and the Twitter handles are labeled by student graduation years (i.e. 2016 and 2017), and by the various extracurricular activities at the high school campus.

The elementary improvement plan, which promoted continuous improvement with evaluation measures, was focused on communication with parents through the district web site, parent portal, and social media accounts. These communicative mediums need to be utilized on a monthly basis according to the plan, for parents to access school resources, news, and student information. The secondary improvement plan, which promoted continuous communication between students, parents, and stakeholders, stressed the importance of using the district website and social media accounts to increase the attendance at both academic and community events, while decreasing the number of parent phone calls that deal with routine questions about athletic schedules and time changes. Both improvement plans, stressed the importance of educating the educator on areas of tech integration, and how to bring out supplemental activities using classroom technologies to create a user-friendly experience for both the teacher and the student.

Ten Twitter accounts were analyzed. The elementary school had 122 followers; the second most active account was the graduating Class of 2017 with 68 followers, followed by a high school science organization with 20 followers. The ISD’s Twitter accounts are laced with posting from educational agencies and gurus and retweets from other on campus organizations. The retweets are mostly covering homework assignments and due dates, STAAR testing information, parental forums, concession work schedules at football games, and final athletic scores. Through its various Twitter accounts, the ISD is getting school-related information out to its followers; however the largest follower base is with the high school at 235, followed by the elementary school at 122, and the high school band at 123.

The majority of the postings for the 2013-14 school year, were done during the first two months of the school year. The elementary school posted 28 tweets and the high school 8 tweets from mid-November to mid-December. The high school Twitter account has the most followers; however the high school is not disseminating information at the rate of its elementary school counterpart.

All of the on-campus organizations tweeted the majority of their organization’s information on activities, deadlines, and trips during the fall semester, with only a handful of tweets during the one-month window. There is no evidence of dialogue or two-way communication. Some tweets contained vital information that stakeholders can rely on, like hazardous weather conditions and school power outages. The hazardous weather conditions were updated daily, with bus routes, late starts and cancellations. Two instances of student tragedy were mentioned and followers were asked to wear certain colors and artifacts in support of the two students and their families.

The content is mostly retweets from “following” accounts of educational agencies, pundits, educational research institutions, and through the various ISD accounts. So the original content comes in the form of school programs, internal games to promote learning, and classroom craft or science projects, showcased through videos or pictures uploaded to Twitter. The ISD display its various school programs, outreach programs, and internal educational initiatives, to engage students and parents with hands-on learning activities. Some examples of original content are images of sticky notes filled with words that symbolized dedication and commitment on behalf of the ISD teaching staff. Another example is the an award that is given out once a week to a deserving elementary school teacher. One post for an upcoming parent forum showed with an image of modeling clay, with the caption, “parents will be using this stuff...big fun!” Through these images and videos, the follower can witness that the
campus is staying active in circulating content.

Pictures and videos were largely missing. The elementary school only uploaded two pictures during the month studied. The high school did not upload a picture or video. Similarly, the on-campus organizations as a group only showcased three pictures. The elementary school mean average for Twitter postings of videos or pictures was every five days. The Class of 2017 Twitter account uploaded a new image or video on average, every seven days. The high school band only uploaded two pictures.

The Independent School District’s Twitter accounts are lacking in consistency, original content, and two-way communication with students, parents, and the district community. The purpose of the campus improvement plans of both the elementary and secondary school are lost. There is a lack of communication involvement on the ten Twitter sites that encompass the ISD social media system. There are no replies or rebuttals of any tweets found on the ISD’s varying Twitter accounts. Only re-tweets are present. This is an avenue that needs to be utilized more, so that students, parents, and the community, can actively engage with educators and administrators to formulate an environment where active learning is not only happening within the confines of a classroom, but within the greater community.

Discussion
The three Effective Schools Project districts and schools studied in this piece are using social networking sites for communication with stakeholders like a modern-day newsletter—sending news, pictures and videos with little to no encouragement for stakeholder responses. The districts and campuses focused on Facebook and Twitter, with some use of YouTube and Instagram. Posting was erratic on some sites with bursts and then periods of inactivity. Photography was well used to accompany posts and illustrate campus activities.

To answer the second research question, schools in the Effective Schools Project employ more one-way communication through their social networking sites, and exhibit very few instances of two-way communication. This is consistent with finding from other studies of nonprofits (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012) and corporations (Lee, Gil de Zúñiga, Coleman, & Johnson, 2014).

To prepare for effective SNS implementation, it is vital to understand the fundamental difference between being present online versus establishing true presence (Poore, 2014). The three districts in this study have their feet in the social media pool, but it is not enough for schools to have a Twitter page or Facebook feed. That does not yield instant engagement. And, simply posting the cafeteria menu, sports schedules and cross-posting the stories already found on their district web pages is similarly ineffective. It is like taking a worksheet, scanning it in, and making it available for print online—that is not integrating technology; it is just repackaging content. Instead, schools need to reach out to audiences through differentiated messages and platforms and encourage discussion and re-posting by featuring platform-specific content that appeals to students and parents.

Salient distinction in online presence and profile is crucial (Poore, 2014). Online presence is simply the act of being online and interacting with others socially, while one’s online profile presents a consistent and coherent professional identity to the world. True presence requires a partnership, a conversation, a community. Two-way communication requires more thought than a monologue. Two-way communication means asking stakeholders what they think, believe and feel, and being prepared to handle responses that stretch the district’s current practices. A symmetrical two-way communication model means treating stakeholders as partners, asking their feedback and valuing their opinions for a mutually beneficial relationship. Social networking makes that relationship transparent for all to see. While it might seem risky to ask parents or students what they think about a particular topic, the two-way model offers a way to build and maintain relationships.

The community’s support of and belief in the district is imperative for the establishment of productive partnerships, yet it is at the campus level that parents and students demonstrate true passion. Parents have an innate fascination in the daily activities of their children’s school. The age-old “what did you do at school today, honey?” that is asked at every dinner table cements their interest, yet has been historically defeated by the shoulder shrug or guttural “Nothing.” Proper implementation of SNS can bypass this showdown by providing families with insider access to the daily happenings of the classroom via
pictures, real-time tweets, and embedded video, which can reveal students actively learning, capturing their excitement and ah-ha moments, and celebrating their achievements and accomplishments.

Even in the smallest unit of a classroom, social networking can encourage two-way communication. Instructors seeking to harness the power of collaboration and creativity have found interactive discourse to elevate understanding and mastery of concepts. The learning environment has shifted to embrace the social constructivist theory that “learning is a collaborative, participatory process in which the creation of knowledge and meaning occurs through social interaction: we learn best in interaction or when working with others” (Poore, 2014, p.17).

**Recommendations**

The three cases offer a backdrop for lessons learned and recommendations. Suggestions can be implemented at the district, campus and individual classroom levels. Incorporating students into the process would provide a layer of real-world experiences for the social media natives.

1. Conduct a communication audit on your social networking presence at least annually. A communication audit simply looks at the collective messages published or produced by an organization. You will be able to look for trends and themes, key messages and shortcomings. You could even ask another ESP school to review your social media messages and you could review theirs for an outsider’s perspective.

2. Create editorial calendars or plans with content ideas. This makes posting for your stakeholders more purposeful and works toward your goals. Planning different types of messages in advance will help the content creator from going to the same well day after day, and falling into the habit of only one-way communication. Build opportunities for discussion into the plan. Students in English classes could help develop content ideas and discussion prompts to practice their writing skills. History lessons about the campus could turn into posting fodder, and visuals could come from lessons on creating graphics, photography and art.

3. Embrace two-way communication; it is the hallmark of engagement. Ask questions. Ask for feedback. Ask for a vote. Ask for support. Respond quickly when stakeholders approach the district, campus or classroom online. Social networking platforms are built for multi-way communication, but organizations have been slow to use them consistently in this manner. Interactivity is key.

One-way communication: We are so proud of the bowling team. Congrats!!!

Two-way communication: Our bowling team won first in the regional competition. Share your good wishes below. Extra points if you can use a bowling-related term, or a pun.

One-way communication: Today our school turns 50!

Two-way communication: Today our school turns 50!

What is your favorite NAME OF SCHOOL memory? Or, share your best school portrait.

One-way communication: Our students are learning about grammar to celebrate National Grammar Day.

Two-way communication: Our students are learning about grammar to celebrate National Grammar Day. What is your grammar pet peeve? Extra points for posting a picture of your favorite grammar fail.

One-way communication: a video message from your principal.

Two-way communication: a synchronous Twitter chat where stakeholders can tweet with your principal in real-time.

4. Market your social networking sites as platforms for two-way communication. If stakeholders know that you want feedback, or that you will respond to questions, they will be more likely to join the conversation. Post a round-up of the social media outlets for your district on the district website. Add the social media icons to your printed materials, and mention them on your on-hold messages.

5. Use social networking sites as a way to listen to stakeholders. Sometimes, you may not like what you hear, but in building and maintaining relationships, the organization should value stakeholder feedback. Hashtags are ideal for listening. Even a district without Twitter, can ask stakeholders to use hashtags for making feedback searchable.

6. Encourage teachers to utilize...
social networking sites as extensions of their classrooms to revolutionize homework by moving away from static, one-sided demonstration of knowledge to application of creative thought via multi-way communication. In younger classrooms or districts with limited access, this can be scaled down to include the concepts without actual technology: Facebook/Fakebook posters, table-top Twitter, Post-it Note exit tickets posted to a Twitter Wall. This “baby step” allows for introduction of digital citizenship and acclimation of social networking framework, rules, and possibilities. For more technology-advanced environments, connected classrooms can scaffold learning through Hashtag Homework, Instagram scavenger hunts/demonstrations, and Twitter Creative Writes. Incorporating social networking sites in these manners transforms the standard classroom lecture from teacher-centered education to student-driven learning. A variety of exemplar lessons and SNS integration strategies can be found (Link withheld for blind review - authors will provide a site with links.)

Social networking sites, as part of an overall communication plan, can help build relationships with stakeholders. The goal is to build a community based on effective, interactive communication. There is no “silver bullet” as far as preferred platform. To engage stakeholders, we must provide a “menu of offerings” to pick and choose from to best meet needs, styles, and accessibility. Social networking sites are channels to “develop relationships. These include engaging donors, providing teachable moments, informing the community about services, developing a broader view of the community, and getting more people involved” (Briones, et al. 2011, p. 41). Social networking can document, disseminate and dialogue the driving change from the heart that educators with professional passion exude.

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The Importance of Student Choice and Informed Teacher Guidance Using the Young Adult Genre to Engage Struggling and Reluctant Adolescent Readers

Dr. Beth A. Garcia

Adolescent literacy is at the forefront of literacy concerns in a nation that sees more and more teenagers either drop out of high school or graduate with low literacy skills. Many students are currently being labeled as struggling and reluctant readers in secondary schools, yet secondary schools continue to mandate traditional literacy curriculums that fail to engage adolescent students as life-long readers. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry explores adolescent perceptions of choice in literacy texts and tasks with the informed guidance of passionate English language arts teachers to introduce books that mirror students’ personal interests and lives. This study posits that the significance of these research findings can likely be transferred to similar secondary English language arts classrooms to encourage struggling and reluctant adolescents to enter the world of literacy.

One of the greatest problems in the American educational system is the fact that many adolescent students lack proficient literacy skills, which will cause them lifelong problems; additionally, educators are not providing what these students need. “Approximately 8 million students in grades 4-12 are reading below grade level, and limited literacy skills cause 3,000 students to drop out of high school every school day” (NCTE, 2012). This finding reported by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) should cause educators and school administrations concern. Many adolescents read below grade level, and this affects their chances for success later. Adolescents who struggle to read see themselves in a negative light concerning literacy, and this too affects their identities as literate individuals. Part of this problem stems from the widespread use of predominantly traditional curricula, which ignores our changing world and students’ identities (Appleman, 2000). The continued, singular use of traditional curricula has not been and will not be effective in improving adolescent literacy rates in the United States. Therefore, it is imperative that educators begin to consider adolescent identity formation in a “new light” (Appleman, 2000) by including popular, contemporary books from the Young Adult (YA) genre into English language arts classrooms, providing informed teacher guidance in reading choices, and giving students choice in what they read.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine how providing struggling and reluctant adolescent readers more student choice in literature materials affects their motivation to engage in classroom reading and then continue reading independently once the assigned literature has been completed. Additionally, this study examines the ways in which informed teacher guidance concerning popular, contemporary series books assists students in choosing texts that engage them in literature and encourages them to become part of what Frank Smith (1987) calls the “Literacy club” (pp. 123-126) where they choose to become independent readers and continue reading past assigned texts in class.

Research Questions
The following questions guided the research in this study:
1. In what ways, if any, does giving struggling and reluctant adolescent readers choice in their reading materials affect their motivation to read assigned classroom texts?
2. Once adolescents become engaged with a Young Adult series, how does this affect their motivation to continue reading independently and enter into the “Literacy Club?” (Smith, 1987).
3. How does informed teacher guidance concerning popular, contemporary series books affect adolescents’ choices in their independent reading materials?

Literature Review
Hopper (2005) found one way to motivate students was to offer them choice in what they read. She asked the age-old important question, “What are teenagers reading?” Then, she observed and interviewed adolescents in England about their reading choices and habits to help teachers understand what motivated students to read. This was an action research project that was supposed to influence classroom practices. The
background to Hopper’s (2005) problem dealt with the idea that there had been a decline in reading among adolescents due to technology, and there were gender differences in reading methods as well.

In consideration of motivation, Hopper (2005) also asked, “What prompts choice?” (p. 117). She found that adolescents chose books based on previous experience with the book or author, the way the book looked, recommendations, television, and preferred genres. In fact, the term “the Harry Potter effect” (Hopper, 2005, p. 117) was coined to describe how reluctant readers read long books if they were popular, contemporary, and held some meaning for the child. Hopper found that there was not a significant decline in adolescent reading if one considers popular texts, magazines, comics, and electronic texts. She believed that children still read; however, the context was different. Hopper (2005) insisted that if teachers wanted to reach their students, they should become familiar with contemporary texts and make recommendations to students based on student interest and preference.

Ultimately, Hopper (2005) concluded that adolescents read for two main reasons: the search for identity and role experimentation. She also found that what children chose to read was critical to their development as readers. In her research, Hopper (2005) also found that it was important to consider the types of texts, genres, and formats children chose to read on a daily basis. The author cited Benton (1995) who stated that the canon was being replaced by popular, contemporary literature because most adolescents chose to read current texts. At the time of this study, Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings trilogy dominated the list of what students were reading by choice. In fact, many of the books on the popular text list were series books. Hopper (2005) discovered what had changed in the last four decades was the idea of not necessarily reading the same authors but concentrating on similar genres.

Moje et al. (2008) established that adolescents wanted to read texts where they could identify with the main character, situation, setting, or conflict. The authors stated, “Offering youth high-quality adolescent literature, in addition to canonical texts of English language arts, does appear to make a difference in young people’s reading lives” (p. 146). Additionally, this study reported that students did read, but many times they did not know how to find a book that they liked or that would be relevant to their lives. The authors suggested that teachers should become familiar with their students on a personal level and be able to make suggestions about books that students might find enjoyable. Moje et al. (2008) showed that modern students needed more options in what they read, and they needed to see texts that represented their lives. In short, students read to identify, learn, glean information, and relate to their own lives. “Their reading and writing practices foster communication, relationships, and self-expression among peers and family members; support their economic and psychological health; and allow them to construct subjectivities and enact identities that offer them power in their everyday lives” (Moje et al., 2008, p. 149).

Rosenblatt (1938), a pioneer in literacy research, also maintained that teachers needed to find works of literature that were in some way connected to the reader’s interests and personal experiences. Her theories insisted that teachers had to know their students on a personal level, and they could not merely rely on previously used lesson plans. Murphy (1998) claimed, at times, teachers found it necessary to have students read teacher-chosen texts; however, if educators introduced more contemporary, parallel texts, they could build background knowledge and interest their students in tales of unrequited love and teenage suicide; later, the teacher could introduce the canon by presenting a traditional text such as Romeo and Juliet. The teacher could then expand and stretch the student’s comfort zone, and the students would remain engaged in the more difficult works of literature because a foundation of knowledge had been previously established (Murphy, 1998). The reader had a personal connection to similar literary topics that he had already deemed interesting and important. In fact, Rosenblatt (1956) reminisced about a high school student, who after the attempted assassination of the President in 1950, found Julius Caesar to be an immensely relevant work of literature. At this time, to this particular student, Shakespeare was able to shed light on the current situation in a universal way that no news article could do justice.

Methodology
This qualitative study was framed as a narrative inquiry to examine adolescent reading practices using popular and contemporary series books in the Young Adult (YA)
genre to motivate struggling and reluctant adolescent readers. For this narrative inquiry, the researcher used semi-structured interviews (Bernard, 2002), formal classroom observations, and a collection of documents and records to guide the study. Through the process of collecting assignments, quizzes, tests, student journals, observations, and interviews, the researcher was able to triangulate the data. Fifteen formal classroom observations were completed in a sophomore English classroom where she took field notes in a researcher’s journal. The researcher conducted three separate 45-minute interviews with each of the six participants as well. The researcher used the data collected to inform her thinking on students’ perspectives concerning reading popular, contemporary series books in the classroom.

**Participants**

Purposive sampling was employed to identify six students to interview. The participants in this study were very diverse; each came from a different background, socioeconomic status, and four participants identified with minority cultures. The participants included: Antonio—struggling reader, Jessica—struggling reader, George—avid reader, Skyler—reluctant reader, Lola—reluctant reader, and Abiel—struggling reader and second language learner in Ms. Epping’s (all names of people and places are pseudonyms) sophomore English language arts class who were reading *The Hunger Games* books as a supplemental part of the literacy curriculum.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Because the researcher was interested in the students’ stories regarding reading a novel, she used a narrative inquiry design for her data analysis (Connelly and Clavadetscher, 2000). Data analysis began immediately and continued throughout the entire research process. When the researcher transcribed all of the data from the student interviews and classroom observations, this familiarized her with the information, which led to insights and stimulated “analytic thinking” (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 281). To produce valid theory, constant comparative analysis (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) was used throughout the research process to code the data.

Recurring trends emerged as the data was coded resulting in themes considered in this study. Student choice, adolescents’ perceptions of reading less once they enter secondary schools, students taking ownership of their learning, continuation of reading once students became engaged in a text suggested by the classroom teacher, and informed teacher guidance were all trends that emerged as the researcher used open coding and constant comparative analysis. It became apparent that choice was an integral part of adolescents’ desire to read a text. Furthermore, teacher-chosen texts were considered less desirable, yet students still recognized the need for informed teacher guidance to help them choose appropriate and interesting literature.

By observing the students on a daily basis, the researcher became familiar with the students’ personalities. Through the use of interviews, she was able to ascertain what they thought about literature, education, their future aspirations, and how they viewed choice and teacher guidance in their literacy instruction. From the data provided by the participants, Garcia (2013) began to view what the students said and how they acted in class as their own personal stories. From these observations and interviews, the researcher found that choice and teacher guidance affected students’ motivation to read assigned classroom texts and continue reading on an independent level.

**Findings**

After coding and analyzing the data, two major themes emerged in the research with subthemes contained in each. The first theme concerned student choice and the lack thereof. The researcher found that students had a desire for more choice in the classroom and their reading materials. The three subthemes contained within this theme concerned students’ perceptions of why they read less as adolescents, taking ownership of their learning, and continued reading on an independent level. Over the course of the study, students began to realize that they did not know how to select literary texts that interested them, so even if they were afforded more choice, they were still unable to choose books that motivated them to read. This idea led into the second theme: informed teacher guidance. The participants voiced the need for educators to guide them on how to choose books, but the teachers had to be informed on popular, contemporary books in the young adult genre to provide this direction. Within this theme, the researcher found two related subthemes concerning inattention to student preferences and how to motivate students to continue read-
ing by turning the tables.

**Student Choice**

Imagine the scene, a high school English Language Arts teacher, Ms. Epping, begins handing out *The Hunger Games* to students as they sit at their desks. The tardy bell just rang, and students are still visiting. The classroom looks like a traditional, utilitarian, square room with white walls and utility grade blue carpet. There are many posters hanging on the walls and even on the ceiling tiles. The students sit in long rows of desks and groan outwardly as the books are passed back to them. Once the books are passed out, the students begin to respond:

**Regan:** “I’ve read this book before” (Garcia, 2013, p. 127).

**Lola:** “We shouldn’t have to read at all; that’s all we ever do in here!” (Garcia, 2013, p. 128).

Rolls her eyes and flips the book onto her desk with disdain (Garcia, 2013, p. 128).

**Abiel:** “I’ve already seen the movie to this; I’d rather just watch the movie because they always make more sense than these books; they (the books) are too long, and they have too many words” (Garcia, 2013, p. 128).

**Lola:** “I just don’t care” (Garcia, 2013, p. 128).

**Ms. Epping:** “Students, we are going to begin reading one of my favorite books of all times, *The Hunger Games*. How many of you have read this book before?” (Garcia, 2013, p. 128).

Five hands rise hesitantly. Ms. Epping looks around and takes note of this (Garcia, 2013, p. 128).

**Jessica:** “How long will it take to get through this book?” (Garcia, 2013, p. 129).

She makes this statement with some annoyance and her words and tone suggest that she wants to complete the task as soon as possible (Garcia, 2013, p. 129).

The previous scene is very commonplace in high school classrooms when a new novel is passed out to students. As a former high school ELA teacher, the researcher has witnessed scenes such as this many times during the course of her career. The preceding words were taken verbatim from one of the formal classroom observations conducted during the course of this study.

In contrast to the voices of the participants and a plethora of research indicating that student choice benefits literacy skills (Hopper 2005, Pitcher et al. 2007, Ivey and Broaddus 2001, and Oldfather 1993), current practices at West Texas High School (pseudonym) limits student choice almost entirely. This school requires its teachers to follow a set scope and sequence of curriculum and learning objectives. Much of this curriculum is based on the traditional Western, English canon comprised of classic works by authors such as William Shakespeare, Edgar Allen Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, John Milton, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, to name a few. However, reflecting the work of Benton (1995a, 1995b), who stated popular contemporary works were replacing the canon, the students in this study reported that many of these literary texts—none of which they had selected to read themselves—were difficult for them to read due to the archaic language used within the literature.

A recurring theme shared by the participants in this study was their mutual stance that they should be given choices when it came to the readings and assignments that would be used in their instruction. According to Ivey and Broaddus (2001) and Oldfather (1993), adolescents identified the importance of making choices in their literacy instruction. Echoing these studies, all of the participants in this research project discussed the lack of choice they had when it came to choosing reading materials and assignments. When questioned in the student interviews, five of the six participants stated that they did not voluntarily choose to read in high school; however, all six of the participants discussed avid reading habits in grades 3-5. In the interviews, each participant was asked about his or her current and past reading habits. George, the devoted reader included in the study, admitted that he did not read what was assigned if he deemed it to be boring, and he usually read self-chosen texts instead of doing assigned class work or reading (Garcia, 2013). However, each of the six participants passionately discussed reading and remembered books they enjoyed in the 3rd-5th grades. When questioned about what the participants remembered reading in the past, Antonio mentioned reading Dr. Seuss books and the *Bones* series (Garcia, 2013). George too discussed reading the *Bones* books along with *The Magic Tree House* series, Goosebumps, and the *Eragon* series (Garcia, 2013). Jessica read *Amelia Bedilia* and *Junie B. Jones* (Garcia, 2013). Lola discussed reading the *Captain Underpants* books, and Skyler remembered reading the R. L. Stein series, *Goosebumps* (Garcia, 2013). Each student specifically discussed reading series books in the past and...
reading for pleasure, so the question educators must ask, is what changes? How do these students go from passionate readers with favorite books to adolescents who immediately balk at any new book handed out in English class?

**Why Adolescents Read Less**

In an ironic paradox, the adolescents in this study perceived that the expectation for them to read was lessened once they entered secondary school, so they chose not to read as much as they did in elementary schools. The adolescents in this study initially struggled with reading required texts in high school, so they neglected to do so. Lola revealed, “I usually don’t read the books cuz I don’t understand them. Then the teacher wants me to do questions over the book, but how do you answer questions over something you don’t even get in the first place?” (Garcia, 2013, p.135). Several of the other participants voiced similar concerns. They felt that the required reading curriculum in high school was not only difficult but also boring, so they simply chose not to do the assigned readings. Once this happened, their teachers lessened their literacy expectations, so the students followed suit and read less, which resulted in a negative cycle of non-reading.

The students realized that they read less in high school than in previous grades. When asked why, they provided meaningful insight into this issue. Lola described a new world as an adolescent where homework and extra curricular activities “piled up” (Garcia, 2013, p. 136) on her. These were issues she did not experience in younger grades such as playing sports, being in the band, and cheerleading. All of the participants emphasized that they believed students read less today than in years or generations past. Skyler stated, “I think back in the younger days, we read more because we were actually forced to. Like in 6th grade, we had to read a book a week, but now, we don’t have to, so people don’t as much” (Garcia, 2013, p.136). Besides the lack of expectation, the participants felt that technology hindered their reading habits more today than in years past.

When asked about the reasons students read less today than in younger grades, Antonio stated, “Because of technology. People are too busy on computers, phones, and games” (Garcia, 2013, p. 136). Then the students were asked, “What would make students read more today?” (Garcia, 2013, p.136). George responded, “I would find what they like to read and take away some of the things that don’t let them read almost like making them read it” (Garcia, 2013, p. 136). Skyler stated, “I think if it was encouraged by the school like it was encouraged back then we would read more” (Garcia, 2013, p.136). After these statements, the interviewer questioned the students in more depth by asking, “You would take away their (other students’) choice?” (Garcia, 2013, p. 137) Where George responded, “Just on the things that stop them from reading. I would let them choose what kinds of things to read. I mean like schools give stuff that is traditional that they give every year, and that is fine for those who want to read those things, but for those who go to the library if they don’t find an actual book that they will read, then there is no point” (Garcia, 2013, p. 137). This illustrates the need for secondary educators to encourage and expect adolescents to read consistently.

**Student Ownership of Learning**

The participants did not feel as if they took ownership or responsibility for their own learning and literacy habits due to the lack of choice. All of the students mentioned the fact that they hated reading *The Odyssey* the previous school year. One student in particular stated multiple times throughout the study that he did not finish this book, and it was a negative literacy experience for him. “I saw no point in reading *The Odyssey*; I hated it” (Garcia, 2013, p. 137), and the rest of the participants agreed with this statement. Even the classroom teacher admitted, “That book is required curriculum by the state; it is not really a choice for any of us” (Garcia, 2013, p. 137). The students discussed becoming hung up on names and places that were difficult to pronounce and having difficulty understanding the storyline due to archaic language (Garcia, 2013, p. 229). Conversely, the participants found that contemporary books like the Percy Jackson series helped to build background knowledge from one book to the next. Even if the names or settings were difficult or uncommon words, once the background knowledge was established, the students were able to read with more fluency and automaticity. In conjunction to this idea, Jessica stated, “I have a hard time understanding what I read sometimes like when the names or places have made up words or they are hard to pronounce, but when we read the second book, I already know the
names and places, so I don’t have to think about them so much and can get more into the story” (Garcia, 2013, p. 220).

**Continued Literacy**

Once the students were presented with a text that they found engaging, they voiced sentiments of wanting the ability to be able to choose similar books for future assignments. When discussing *The Hunger Games* book after becoming engaged in the storyline, one student in class stated, “I like this book. Do you think we will read all of them in class?” (Garcia, 2013, p. 137). One of his peers responded, “I don’t know, but I hope so. I want to read them to see what will happen” (Garcia, 2013, p. 137). These are much different attitudes than the opening scene where students complained and fought having to read at all. However, when asked how they would get peers to read more, the participants were a bit more cautious about offering full student choice because they thought that peers their age were too engrossed in computers, video games, and technology in general. When asked if the students would continue to read after they completed *The Hunger Games* book in class, all of the participants responded that they did want to continue reading. Five of the six students completed all three books in the series even though the classroom teacher only required reading the first book. When asked what they would read after the series, Lola stated, “I really don’t know what else I would read yet. I would like other books by Suzanne Collins or books in a similar genre because I like the way that they (authors in the YA genre) write about everything. She (Suzanne Collins) explains everything and gives a lot of detail; I like her storyline” (Garcia, 2013, p. 139). Skyler stated, “I don’t know either; I am going to try to find some more books like this one (indicating *The Hunger Games*), but I don’t know what to read next” (Garcia, 2013, p. 139).

This contradiction suggests that the students realized at some level that they wanted and needed guidance when engaging in literacy tasks and choosing texts to read, but that they wanted their personal preferences to be considered as well. The students’ emerging awareness of their need for some guidance, rather than full responsibility for book selections, added a new twist or layer to earlier research on students’ preference for individual choice in school literacy tasks. Therefore, the classroom teacher suggested other texts to the students because she was well read in the YA genre, and she was able to provide insight into other books the students might like. She stated to the questioning students, “Suzanne Collins wrote *Gregor the Overlander* series as well. It is really good, a little bit younger, but a great story. It has five books in it, and the characters are well developed. You might also like the *Divergent* series or the *Maze Runner* series” (Garcia, 2013, p. 140).

**Teacher Guidance**

Even though the adolescents in this study cried out for more choice in literacy, they still recognized the need for informed teacher guidance. This is reminiscent of the work of Hopper (2005), the 1995 SCAA report, and OFSTED (2003), this study revealed how vastly important it is for teachers to become well acquainted with contemporary, YA literature because of the potential it holds to develop adolescent students’ reading interests. As a result of being required to read works with a literary style far removed from their life experiences, students remained disengaged with school literacy. The opportunity to choose readings with stylistics more suited to their tastes and experiences was not ordinarily provided to them. What is so important about this finding is that it indicates that due to their strict adherence to “the canon,” teachers inadvertently limited their students’ choices, which, in turn, created unnecessary obstacles to students’ literacy growth and engagement. A narrowly traditional curriculum, which by its very nature limited student choice, appeared to stifle participants’ motivation in more than one way.

Mirroring recent statements on student motivation made by the 2010 NCTE Policy Research Brief on Adolescent Literacy, the students in this study not only resented having all of the texts chosen for them to read, but they were also disenchanted by the lack of diversity afforded by teacher (or canon) selected readings. Five of the participants stated that when teachers told them about books or stated that they would like the book they were reading, they became very suspicious of the text. The reason for this stemmed from past experiences and educators not knowing about their personal interests. The students related countless stories of having to read archaic texts in class when they really wanted to read diversified texts that represented who they were as adolescents. Similar to Owen’s (2003) research that stated adolescents desired to see a representation of themselves in the literature, the students ech-
Inattention to Adolescent Preferences

Moving beyond what past research has indicated, the student participants indicated that inattention to student choice created personal barriers between students and teachers that could potentially inform students’ attention to even future teachers’ literacy guidance in negative ways. Due to the inattention given to their preferences and choices, the participants felt that teachers were out of touch and did not know about students’ personal interests. When teachers made book recommendations, the students immediately assumed that they would not like the book due to these past experiences.

This inattention to their preferences and choices left them feeling unknown, their identities unacknowledged. This finding was compounded by data revealing that the majority of the participants admitted to reading at least a little each week, but that they were more influenced on what to choose by observing what their peers were reading and by popular books posted on social media. Following suit with established habits of resistance, the students did not initially choose or want to read *The Hunger Games*; however, once they were introduced to the text, they made the conscious effort to fully engage in the book. This conscious effort made by the students was due to style, subject matter, and diversity that won the majority of the students over in the end. Then, many of the students in the class and all of the participants chose to read subsequent books in the series of their own volition. Additionally, an unexpected finding occurred when the students found that the relaxed teaching environment and style positively contributed to their desire and choice in reading the book.

Turning the Tables

In an interesting turn of events, the students began to enjoy reading each day. In formal observations, it was noted that students verbally complained on days that reading was not part of the daily agenda. On a non-reading day, Skyler stated, “I want to read some more. I am absolutely not doing any questions” (Garcia, 2013, p. 140). While Abiel stated, “If we don’t read today, it’s just gunna go bad up in here” (Garcia, 2013, p. 129). All of the participants discussed doing well on the tests and study guide questions concerning *The Hunger Games*, and their grades reflected this change over the course of the grading period (Garcia, 2013). “Several students in the classroom voiced sentiments of not minding answering questions and doing assignments on *The Hunger Games* book because they felt more confident about knowing the answers. However, a few students in the class still griped about having to stop the reading process to look things up” (Garcia, 2013, p. 141). At the beginning of *The Hunger Games* unit, the majority of the students in the class did not want to do activities or answer questions on the text and complained about the amount of questions being given as guided notes; however, once they read farther in the book and started to see success in answering the questions, most of the complaints ceased” (Garcia, 2013, p. 141).

Conclusions

Even though students want choice in the books they read, many adolescents are out of practice when it comes to choosing books that are appropriate for them and will interest them. Classroom teachers need to help guide students in what to read, but the only way to do this is to become very familiar with popular, contemporary YA books. After gaining student interest, then students are able to have more choice in what they read in and out of class. A key factor for educators is to find captivating texts such as *The Hunger Games* before the movie comes out, engage students with one book, and then allow students to choose other texts after interest and motivation to read have been established. Once this occurs, even struggling and reluctant adolescent readers are more apt to continue reading if they see their interests are taken into consideration. It takes a passionate teacher willing to work even harder than necessary to delve into a new genre and find texts that mirror adolescents’ lives, but it is exactly this passion that can introduce struggling and reluc-
tant adolescent readers to the world of literacy.

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About the Author:

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Student Service and Research at Tarleton

Therapeutic Riding: Partnering with the Horse

By Elizabeth B. Christensen, TSU Graduate Student

Tarleton Equine Assisted Therapeutic Riding (TREAT Riding) is a unique program designed to utilize horseback riding as a form of physical, emotional, and recreational therapy. This program is located in Stephenville, TX, and associated with Tarleton State University. “Therapeutic riding is fabulous; it improves the individual’s self-awareness, confidence, fine motor skills, posture, balance and coordination.” There are many disabilities that respond positively to equine therapy: autism, cerebral palsy, development delay, emotional disturbance, head injuries, PTSD, scoliosis, spina bifida, stroke, and many others. This is because the therapeutic riding involves all of the muscles of the body and stimulates all body systems. The rhythmical gait of the horse causes the rider’s/ client’s pelvis, shoulders and trunk to react similar to those produced by the normal human walk. TREAT also serves as a training program for college students who plan to enter careers in a variety of phases of the equine assisted therapy industry and for students involved with special needs in their chosen profession. TREAT is a hands-on laboratory for a variety of classes including special education, adaptive physical education, psychology, nursing

The TREAT program partners with the horse to enrich one’s heart, not only the rider’s, but all who are involved. I have obtained the real sense of dedication, sincerity, and compassion through this program. I can only hope someday I too can use this experience to further my understanding, awareness, and patience with all my unique and different students I come across in my profession as a teacher. How can I duplicate this amazing TREAT program? There were so many life lessons, and this is the best program I know of. It teaches one to be grateful, humble, and to give back to society. Within this program, I was very blessed to meet a devoted, caring, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, exceptional Dr. David Snyder, Shelby, and staff. They were professional, along with student and non-student volunteers. I thoroughly enjoyed talking with Dr. Snyder, to get his opinion or explanation on various things about the program, and what it takes to make things tick. He and his staff have been a wealth of knowledge for me, and I have learned so much from this class. Ty, a student of the class TREAT, was kind to show me around the tack room, how to set up for class, tie up horses, brush and pick feet, what the different size saddles were, and remind me to make sure gates are closed at all times. Lat- ham showed me how to saddle and end up with the TX (T) wrap. I was able to capture lots of amazing photos, videos, and action shots throughout the session. Nothing was staged; everything was the real deal. The volunteers were communicating and engaging in conversation with their riders, at all times. I expected to give back to the community through the program, but I myself attained so much more. What an amazing experience this was with such amazing people.

Immediately after arrival, I was trying to figure out how I could be of help. I wanted to add or contribute to this amazing program, and possibly run one similar back at home in my newly assembled indoor arena. After experiencing a day at the TREAT program I was able to come up with some ideas of my own, to add. Some of these ideas were to incorporate the use of swim noodles, present large alphabet letters to have participants ride to, and imaginary rain fall using (marking tape), to name a few. My expectations of this class were to learn and experience some valuable insight on what it takes to run such a special program as TREAT. While being a teacher, I know of multiple students that would benefit immensely from a program like TREAT. The progress that each of the riders made was amazing and being able to witness it with my own eyes was unbelievably incredible. For each event, the riders arrived full of excitement. Their smiles were contagious, and you knew they were ready for some fun. The bond between the rider and the horse was truly amazing. The horse was calm and collected, even in the heat, and made an excited rider happy. The horses were well trained, pretty much bomb proof, and truly loved their job. TREAT horses may have
tense child, or a loud excited child, a child tugging on its mane, or even one jumping about the saddle, but the horses never acted up. TREAT horses were gentle and kind. I feel it was an accomplishment for most of these riders, to actually mount, have a fun safe ride, and dismount. Fun is the key to this program I believe. I enjoyed talking to as many parents, caregivers, grandparent, etc. as I could to get their perspectives on what really makes TREAT tick. Along with learning from some amazing TREAT staff and watching how to run a program of this caliber so smoothly.

Method

While doing my part, leading the horse around the trail course, for Susan, with Jordan as my side walker, we talked, played games, and had some fun. Susan was so happy, waving to all her friends in the area. She was on top of the world, which I believe was a feeling all the riders shared. Once I was finished, I then ended the day by wiping down all the riding helmets with Morgan, and collected my questionnaires and read some amazing responses, which I believe makes it all worthwhile. There really isn’t much I would change, maybe only add to it by creating some new safe activities for the riders to experience. They could possibly use swim noodles, flagging tape, add more wind chimes, and get some barrels. One particular girl pretended she was barrel racing, but we only had three cones, I’m sure that is not the same in her eyes. So, I picked up three barrels and wrote TREAT on them for the program.

Jeffrey comes with his dad, and rides the large Clydesdale horse named “Brady”. Jeffrey was in a terrible accident as a teenager, once a talented athlete, now wheelchair bound. He goes everywhere with his dad. Jeffrey totally understands what is going on, but he has difficulty responding back. He uses various signs like thumbs up, nodding, and a smile. Jeffrey absolutely loves shooting baskets on horseback, which I think is his favorite thing to do. He especially loves all the girls being around and talking with him. Jeffrey and his father share such a special bond. His dad actually walks the whole trail and assists the volunteer walkers. The TSU football players were great with him and really showed him a good time. An observation I made was that Jeffrey was tense one day, and needed an extra minute to relax in order to lower his foot in the stirrup. I then witnessed the warmth of the horse relax Jeffrey so he was able to lower his foot.

The “Sure Hands” lift $8,000 several years ago and how it works is truly wonderful. This was the first time I had ever witnessed something like that. As I watched the machine in action my eyes welled up with tears of joy. What a beautiful thing to be able to witness. TREAT was giving a person their life back, something to look forward to, and to be a part of. It was a full day, this time, with a lot of riders. It was so amazing to watch Dr. Snyder, Shelby and the staff, select the horse for each rider. They knew exactly what horse would fit a particular rider. They definitely had their system down, and the program ran smoothly, well organized, and adjustments could be made as they arose. Dr. Snyder, especially, knew every rider and each of his horses, their strengths and their little quirks. He would explain to me what he was doing and why with a particular rider. I was totally amazed at his knowledge, and strength with physically lifting and placing riders on horseback. Dr. Snyder and Morgan were also back riders, which meant that they would ride on a pad behind the saddle to support / hold on to the rider during their 30-minute ride. I was able to get some really fantastic pictures of Dr. Snyder and Morgan, what special people they are.

Then there is Brent who loves the water activity, where he would scoop up toy plastic animals with a net on horseback. He was always giggling, talking, and having a grand old time. Brent’s brother or mother would bring him to TREAT. It was awesome to see how supportive and helpful his brother was, and his mom was very nice, too. It was remarkable to see how at times Brent’s horse would get hit by the ball, from the rebound off the backboard, and not even flinch a muscle.

Ian is a rider who usually cries when he first gets onto the horse and then has an absolute blast. When he rides, Morgan back rides with him, to give him support while riding. On this particular day he had fun with the rings and was a ham when I took pictures of him with my camera. He loved getting the attention. I was in the library the next day, and I believe that he recognized me as I waved to him and made eye contact.

Joseph was very stiff one day when Dr. Snyder was lifting him onto the horse. Dr. Snyder told us that it was an occurring thing and very typical for cerebral palsy. It was...
amazing to see that by the end of the ride he was very relaxed. This is just another prime example of how awesome this program is, and how much it truly helps those in need.

Our class was featured in Saturday’s local paper with TREAT rides for the local Veterans. It was very inspiring to see all that help that was given to the veterans in need, and I even captured a picture of Dr. Snyder using the “Sure Hands” lift to help a disabled veteran mount a horse. You could just see the sense of accomplishment written all over his face, priceless.

One day I was able to help Henry’s Mom; she was alone with the three boys, Henry, James, and William. What a truly special person she is. I was holding baby William, while also holding on to James who wanted to explore and communicate with Henry. I watched Henry, who was full of smiles and making great eye contact. At one point, I told Henry’s Mom I was down for the whole summer, and I would love to give her and her husband a break so they could go out and enjoy themselves sometime. She was like “Really?” and I said absolutely, and that I would even drive to Weatherford. You would think that I gave her a million dollars, from her reaction, and the smile that was on her face. After their ride, I helped her load the boys into their car, and she said she would bring their address, etc. to the next TREAT event. I was sad to not be able to make it work prior to leaving Stephenville, but there is always next year.

Dr. Snyder gave me an old Strides Journal (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship Internationals), which has an advertisement for the insurance company. Dr. Snyder was telling me about the name of it is Markel, and it’s “The Insurance Company with Horse Sense”. This provided me with a wealth of information for creating my own therapeutic riding program, and finding good reputable insurance company.

Results

Appreciation, confidence and learning were obtained every day for me. After an interview with Jared’s grandpa one day, and he had quite a bit to say, “Jared varies minute to minute, but he’s happy today. Communicating is tough; he goes to a school in Granbury, and rides once or twice a week. I could not say enough good things about Dr. Snyder and his staff. Jared is in constant motion, but I can control him when need be. Jared has come a long way from starting this program 4-5 years ago. The horses are great with him when he gets jumping around and repeating statements. It relaxes him when he gets on the back of the horse, and gives him another fun thing to do. Jared hesitates, collects himself before he mounts and dismounts on his own, like he is concentrating on what he needs to do” (James Watson).

There is always something amazing taking place at the TREAT program. One day, Luke waved and said “Bye, Bye”. Another day, Ian was talking a little and waving good-bye. It is Dr. Snyder’s goal to have Ian walking in a year.

Wow, I am still so amazed how smoothly the TREAT program is run. There are such a large number of riders, all with various disabili-
gathering up the TREAT horses from the pasture. I then proceeded to brush them and pick the dirt from their feet, for almost half the herd. I enjoyed doing it, but forgot to wear my compression sleeve for my edema in my right arm (I had lymph nodes removed, so it swells, I have to be careful). Dr. Snyder fixed me up with some horse vet wrap and I was good to go. It was funny though all the riders took notice right away, and were concerned asking me if I was OK? I reassured them and off they went on their ride.

A group of down-syndrome riders came this particular day. As Ricky came into the building he decided to pull the fire alarm, and got scared and ran into the room adjacent. The sirens were going off, lights were flashing like crazy. Most of the riders were already mounted and outside on their ride, so they were fine. The horses tied up just stood there during all the flashing and squealing, not even flinching. The riders that were waiting for their turn moved to outside the building like a fire drill, and did very well. Yet some of the riders were a little more shaken up than others. Dr. Snyder reported the incident, and nice gentlemen came to shut the system off. Dr. Snyder and Jeff’s Dad (involved for 7 years now), said that it was a first. Dr. Snyder remained positive and stated, “It was a great-unexpected practice.”

Gunner arrived and they needed a side walker and it was my turn. Gunner is an autistic boy with very little communication. I did ask him a few questions about his sister, who was also riding the horse he was on and if he liked TREAT. He seemed to understand, had a few grunts and eye movement. Gunner seemed to really enjoy going down hill. I believe it maybe because he had to adjust to the downward movement, but he would smile and make his special noises of joy. He especially loved the chimes, but was not a big fan of the ropes dangling, or even want to stop and play with them. You could tell that he was really having a fun time. He was singing out on that trail and moving his body with the horse, able to ride on his own and sits nicely, with great posture. You could tell he was so proud to be able to ride by himself like his sister did.

Discussion:
What Jared’s grandpa was telling me about Jared was so similar to what I have been reading in our class book Dibs in Search of Self. He told me Jared loves to read, is able to watch two movies at the same time, likes a schedule, and is amazed with calendars and dates. The main character in the book, Dibs, was very similar. Jared’s grandpa and I talked for a very long time. As he was leaving he said something I’ll never forget, “Thank you for caring and helping with our special kids.”

TREAT Riding Questionnaire Summary: Those that completed the form
### Physical Benefits Witnessed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved appetite</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease spasticity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved balance and coordination</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved respiration and circulation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase range of motion in joints</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in abnormal movement patterns</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory integration</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthened muscles</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretching of tight or spastic muscles</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Psychological Benefits Witnessed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of patience</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional control and self-discipline</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General sense of well being</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved self-confidence</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased interest in the outside world</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased sense of control</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of normality</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Social Benefits Witnessed of the Rider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of friendships and trust</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of respect and love for animals</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience a sense of being part of a team</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience independence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For my final report I chose to use Henry, a 5 year old that weighs 35 pounds. I chose him because I met him and his parents in April of 2014 when I was visiting the TREAT program for the first time. It was after that first day there that I decided I wanted to duplicate this program back home. At the time in April, his parents were new to the program, but very excited and seemed to have an invested interest. They drove from Weatherford, TX, about forty-five minutes, in order to attend the program. The whole family attends, younger brother, mom, dad (when he can) and now new baby William (5 weeks old). Henry’s middle brother James also rides in the program, and he just has a ball. Henry’s disabilities listed were: hydrocephalus, genetic mutation, rare genetic mutation, and general developmental disabilities. His listed medication was Miralax, which I assume he has for the common physical problem with this disability of chronic constipation. The term hydrocephalus is derived from the Greek words “hydro” water and “cephalus” head. It is a condition in which the primary characteristic is excessive accumulation of fluid in the brain. Hydrocephalus was once known as "water on the brain," but the "water" is actually cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) — a clear fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. Hydrocephalus may be congenital or acquired. Congenital hydrocephalus is present at birth and may be caused by either events or influences that occur during fetal development, or genetic abnormalities. Henry’s mom stated that his is genetic.

Henry’s mom also mentioned that he can sit with assistance, he is not mobile, and that he uses a wheel chair. She also stated in his history information that he is very social but non-verbal. The goal Henry’s parents have for him is to gain core muscle strength. On my TREAT Riding Questionnaire Henry’s Mom checked: Physical Benefit: Improve balance and coordination; Strengthened muscles. Psychological Benefits: General sense of well-being; Increase interest in the outside world. Social Benefits: Development of friendships and trust; Development of respect and love for animals. Jennifer (Henry’s mom) stated: “Henry loves the social aspect of TREAT. It’s great opportunity for him to get individual attention while riding and gaining strength. His core muscles have gotten stronger since he has started. We also appreciate that the TREAT class gives students the opportunity to work with kids with special needs.”

I have now witnessed Henry as a rag doll little boy held on a horse by a back rider, in April, to a boy sitting up and trying to straighten himself up in August. He is so full of smiles now, and I believe he recognizes me, as we laugh, and communicate before each ride. I like to try and help his amazing mom, who will sometimes come to TREAT by herself with all three boys. She is very knowledgeable and such a sweet person, and I really enjoy talking with her and her husband. They are an amazing family, and Henry has truly flourished right in front of me in this TREAT program. I am so happy for all of them, amazed, and thrilled by such good things this program does. Dr. Snyder, Shelby and staff are some real special people.

Following are various rider evaluation sheets filled out by various students and volunteers:

Henry likes to be outside and usual does 3 laps on the outdoor trail. Ty Tapp commented: “Posture and balance play a key role to help his head from tipping over; Henry loved the chimes and ropes; He was happy.” Mandi hopes that soon he could sit up on his own with no back rider, even though Morgan is awesome. Sara states: “I think he enjoys riding and needs to work on his posture, balance and core strength.” She also mentioned how Henry fell asleep at one point of the ride, also how they weaved the poles and had a fun safe ride. Latham suggests that he work on his hips, to try and stretch them out to give him confidence. He also mentioned that Henry liked weaving the poles. Morgan Miller usually back rides with Henry, and she noticed that Henry is tighter on the right side of his body, and grips the rein well with his left hand. By the end of the ride Morgan seems to notice and feel Henry relax more. The last few rides with him he tried to hold himself up more, and increased his balance and coordination. Henry actually pets Leo (the horse) and seemed more confident and needing Morgan less. He attempts the rings, water toys and weaves the poles, with her also. Morgan continues to work on posture, relaxed legs and holding the rein. Morgan and Henry have a wonderful bond. Another rider evaluation from Morgan states similar to the above but this time she says, “His confidence grows every round, he let go of the bareback rider, held the reins, and started petting “Thumper” the horse.” Henry has been on a variety of horses, which is awesome and allows him to feel different gaits to different horses. Macken-
zie would like to achieve communication and balance for Henry. She too did three laps out on the trail, rings, and the water activity with him, and saw some smiles a bit of sound. Jacey, on the other hand, again wants to work on balance and posture. She experienced the same activities and he only held on or grabbed one ring. Which I believe it is a lot of work for him to do that. She said he seemed to enjoy the water area, but would not grab the wet toys. Sara worked on bareback riding with him to strengthen arms, legs and core muscles. Henry built confidence with each round, slowly touching the horse. She believes Henry needs to work on loosening his limbs and stretching while walking on horseback.

The student and volunteers are just wonderful. In the heat of the day, they are tacking, setting up, assisting riders, filling out paper work, communicating with our special riders, and creating a fun atmosphere here at TREAT. I am so fortunate to be able to experience and witness such an amazing program and people who run it. I thoroughly enjoyed taking pictures and videos of some amazing happenings right before my eyes. I witnessed children laughing, smiling, waving bye-bye, talking, and petting the horse while saying “Thank you.” My heart just melts with warmth and is tickled pink. Watching Dr. Snyder and Shelby use the lift to get wheel chair bound riders on horseback was truly invigorating. To see the reactions on the riders’ faces of accomplishment, and the bonding taking place with students, volunteers, and staff was remarkable. Again, it was neat to see how organized they were and how they were able to give a large number of clients a nice fun safe ride, in an orderly fashion with little to no waiting around. There was just so much magic happening before my eyes, that I feel like each Tarleton student should experience this outstanding TREAT program before they graduate. It truly puts life into perspective.

My recommendations for Henry’s future riding sessions to help him improve in his core muscle groups would be as follows. As I watched this young boy Henry grow before my eyes, and actually sit up from his back rider, it brings tears of joy to my eyes. His parents take notice right away as it is happening, with smiles on their faces. As I witnessed Dr. Snyder lift another boy from his wheel chair, up the mounting steps, and placed on top of the horse for his ride, I heard him say, “I will do whatever Dr. Snyder tells me to.” It was inspirational to see how much confidence this boy had in Dr. Snyder. He and his staff are so highly educated and committed to this outstanding program.

I asked Dr. Snyder what he believed would improve the core muscles in Henry, he responded by saying, “I would eventually like to see Henry sit on his own, wean him off the back rider and the dependency of the back rider. Just have him riding the horse and mimic the walking of the horse is great for the core muscles. Also the rings activity will help, reaching across does wonders for core muscles.” He continued on talking about how shooting the basketball sideways, where Henry would have to balance sideways on the saddle, would help too. All I could think of was that the horse does not like the basketballs coming back at their face, but that’s not true, they don’t even flinch. It was ideal for clients to mix up their angle of shooting, in order to work on core muscle groups. Dr. Snyder went on to explain about this ply wood board with cut out shapes, where the clients would throw bean bags or knobby balls through, it is a great activity. “Especially, throwing down at the target works those core muscles,” stated Dr. Snyder. Then off he went to assist another rider; he is an amazing man, and difficult to describe in just words. I just respect him, his work, and gifted nature so highly beyond belief.

I was looking forward to working with Henry to watch progress unfold before my eyes of his improvements from April 2014, as we wrap up this session. Henry and I always bond right before his ride, and I just know he understands me with that great big smile he has. He loves his family and they love him so very much. Henry has made some new friends here at TREAT, what a wonderful thing. Henry’s mom was so happy and appreciative that the Tarleton TREAT class gives the students the opportunity to work with special needs kids. I would like to say, thank you for allowing us to work with Henry in this program. You chose a wonderful program, in which he has just flourished. I am so grateful for you allowing me the opportunity to meet and interact with such a wonderful child.

This next ride I would like to create would have something Henry will throw down at. We could possibly use the little tikes basketball backboard, and see if he enjoys that, and if it works on his core muscle group. Just watching Hen-
ry come alive and open up is amazing. I always love to see that big beautiful smile he has and it just makes my day. Every time he comes we have a fun safe ride with him. I hope the program TREAT continues to do what it has for Henry. It obviously has been working; I have watched him grow right before my eyes. I only hope to one day open up my own facility that could do what the TREAT program is doing for Henry, and will try my best to continue their tradition. Therapeutic riding is fabulous; improves the individual’s self-awareness, confidence, improving fine motor skills, posture, balance and coordination. This hands-on lab is truly life changing, and I am blessed. Thank you for an amazing experience with some amazing people.

Quotes:
“TREAT riding offers many benefits for the riders. The most important thing that they offer, I believe, is improving self-esteem. Every rider has a different condition or reason why they are at TREAT Riding, but improvement on self-esteem is something most of them all benefit from. Learning and knowing that they can ride and/or control a horse is an extreme self-esteem boost.” -Tonya King

“TREAT helps Lizzy build muscle to enhance her balance and posture.” -Jacey Tomlin

“When she can't necessarily run or jump or be very athletic normally, on a horse she can do it all. In addition, it helps with healing and core muscle strength which is extremely important for her both on and off the horse.” -Kelli Bannert

“TREAT gives every rider a place to go out, be social, and interact with other people. It is a place where they can be themselves and enjoy life.” -Eric Martinez

“TREAT has been an excellent addition to Rock House! Our clients have something to look forward to every week. It helps them stay active and motivated to do well throughout the week. They are happier, feel better, and tend to socialize more. I don’t see how it can get any better!” -Maegan Moreno

“Balance, coordination helps him cope with adaptability. A fun therapy out of 5 total he takes. Helps develop social skills. He is cute and rocks the helmet. Anything that may help him, we will take advantage of necessity for momma, gives me a 30-minute break.” -Paula Nielsen

“Awakening senses, child is excited to be around animals and talking a lot.” -Jeanna DeVinet

“This is a wonderful program for children with different forms of spina bifida. My daughter would rather this form of physical therapy then going to a hospital. She looks forward to it and that is wonderful.” -Jessica Gilbert

“Has improved his balance and coordination. Allows him to be out in fresh air and get exercise in a safe environment.” -Shaun Baker

“Brent has developed a rapport with the workers at TREAT. He is also more confident when being addressed by new people (he doesn’t look at me before he answers anymore). He has gotten stronger in his core muscles, upper body strength, and balance has improved.” -Amy Morrison

“Great enjoyment of program, which increased interaction physical and emotional abilities with others.” -Jim Gartrell

“The TREAT program has helped/ is helping Henry in his physical abilities and cognitive skills. The horse helps Henry to use his core muscles for balance as well as stretch his leg muscles. Without this program, I feel that Henry would not progress so rapidly.” -Morgan Miller

“Jake loves being around animals and has gotten more confident and more independent being able to ride the horse by himself. He thinks that it is the coolest thing ever and did not think he would be able to do it.” -Grace Clark

“I feel the most difficult thing for special needs or anyone is leaving their comfort zone whatever it is. TREAT Riding encourages a new found trust in a horse and team of caring individuals, which attributes to physical, psychological, and social benefits.” -Cody Christensen

“Some are a little scared at first and build confidence throughout the TREAT Riding program. The added fun to their life, a hobby, they can talk about and look forward to. It is not only rewarding experience to the rider, but the volunteer walkers as well.” -Liz Christensen

I already have riders and parents “chomping at the bit” to begin therapeutic riding in my community. Been receiving numerous calls, I guess the word is out. I am looking forward to opening horizons with my new acquired passion of
therapeutic riding and its benefits. After witnessing this amazing program with some amazing people, my goal is to create a similar program in my community for our special needs, foster care, and veteran population. Volunteer and get involved - it is a life changing experience. Please view my YOUTUBE below and see for yourself the amazement.

TREAT Riding Summer 2014
YOUTUBE created by Elizabeth B. Christensen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gk1k7omKkrE

References:


Delta Society© The Delta Society uses all species of domestic animals for animal assisted therapy. Their website contains a wealth of information and research about the benefits of animal assisted therapy.
ESP Bookshelf: Raising Upstanders—The Emotionally Strong

Dr. Rebekah Miller-Levy

In the last edition of ESP, the Bookshelf focused on resources to address bullying in schools. This edition will continue the theme of bullying but focus on how can schools help to create students who will be upstanders – those students who refuse to stand by and witness bullying and instead stand up and prevent bullying.

This is a partial bibliography of resource, picture books, and novels dealing with self-esteem and emotional strength to help create upstanders.

Teacher Resources


Johnson, M. (2015). ABC’s for bully prevention, simple as 1-2-3. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris. ISBN: 978-1-5035-2220-6. Although this book is in ABC format, it is not simply an ABC book. This provides the reader with a toolbox of inspiring advice, strategies, and techniques to inform young people about issues relating to bullying and how to redefine themselves as upstanders.


Student Resources (Picture Books)


Johnson, M. (2015). ABC’s for bully prevention, simple as 1-2-3. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris. ISBN: 978-1-5035-2220-6. Although this book is in ABC format, it is not simply an ABC book. This provides the reader with a toolbox of inspiring advice, strategies, and techniques to inform young people about issues relating to bullying and how to redefine themselves as upstanders.

Student Resources (Novels)


Preller, J. (2011). *Bystander*. New York: Square Fish. ISBN-13: 978-0312547967. Eric is the new student in a new town and a new school. Before school even starts, he has to decide is he going to be the bully, the bullied, or the bystander. (Middle School).


Student Resources (Informational)


Tarleton Stars is an award given to current and past Tarleton students based on recognition for outstanding contributions in the classroom. Administrators, faculty members and ESP members are all eligible to nominate candidates for this award. Nominations for 2016 must be submitted to Dr. James Gentry, JESP Editor and received by December 1st, 2015.

2015 Tarleton Stars Recipients

Jennifer Harrist  Victor Sauceda  Olivia Woods

During her first year teaching at Jane Long Middle School (JLMS) in Bryan ISD, Bryan, Texas, Jennifer Harrist quickly noticed the large number of students who remained on campus after the final bell (often getting into mischief) as well as those who shared with her their challenging home life. With the aid of JLMS Principal Lindsay Harris, she helped organize representative focus groups and, with the Sequor Youth Development Initiative through Texas A&M University, found a significant interest in an after-school program.

The Jane Long Afterschool Program (JLAP) is a partnership between JLMS, Texas A&M University, and the City of Bryan to provide positive after school experiences that engage JLMS youth in supportive peer-to-peer and youth-to-adult relationships, allow them to explore post-secondary options through recreationally based activities, and equip them with pro-social competencies to prepare for lifelong success.

Jennifer serves as the co-coordinator of JLAP and the JLMS faculty lead. Her responsibilities include deliverable distribution to faculty and students, coordination of faculty leadership team, oversight of programming and activities, and student liaison.

All of these qualities place Jennifer proudly as a Tarleton STAR.
**Victor Saucedo** has served as an education professional in Granbury ISD and Stephenville ISD for over 10 years as a teacher, district coordinator, and campus administrator. Mr. Saucedo demonstrated the highest level of professionalism and concern for students. He is very committed to upholding the vision and mission of Stephenville High School and strives to contribute to the success of all Stephenville High School students and the Stephenville community.

Victor was born in Chihuahua, Mexico and graduated from Tarleton State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise and Sports Studies. In December of 2008, he graduated from Tarleton State University with a Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction. His continued focus since his first year in education has been to contribute to the success of English Language Learners and increasing parent involvement with schools, specially with families of different sub-populations.

His dedication to being the best educator he can be makes Victor a true Tarleton STAR.

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**Olivia Woods** grew up in Marble Falls, Texas with her parents and younger sister. There, she developed a love of education as she observed her family teaching students of all ages. However, it was participating in the MFHS PALS program where she discovered her true passion: teaching special education. From 2010 to 2014, Ms. Woods attended Tarleton State University. While there, she studied at the College of Education, worked for *Texans 4 Texans Tutoring Services* and took part in an undergraduate research study. This study focused on the retelling of children’s literature through iMovie and green screen technology.

On December 13, 2014, Ms. Woods graduated from Tarleton with a bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary studies and a focus in special education. She also acquired the following teaching certifications for the state of Texas: *Generalist (Grades EC-6), Special Education (Grades EC-12)*, and *English as a Second Language Supplemental (Grades EC-12)*. Presently, Ms. Woods is substitute teaching, working for an after school program and preparing to teach an academic summer camp. Her current goal in life is to find a permanent teaching position for the upcoming school year.

Congratulations Olivia, a true Tarleton STAR.
On-Line Nomination Form

Describe in narrative, the significant accomplishments of the nominee and why you believe he/she should be recognized as a Tarleton Star in the 2016 edition of The Journal of the Effective Schools Project (JESP).

Submit nominations on-line to http://goo.gl/forms/ztqDFbZ3nJ

Please send a digital photo to Dr. Jim Gentry (editor@thejesp.org) no later than December 31st, 2015.

Remember, nominees must be either a current student or graduate of Tarleton State University.

Preferably, the digital photo of your nominee should be an action in teaching or other working situation.
Call for Papers

The Effective Schools Project (ESP) at Tarleton State University is dedicated to the goals of improving school effectiveness, raising the achievement level of public school students, and improving the professional development of pre-service and in-service educators. Established in 1988, ESP seeks to unite the efforts of public school educators and university faculty in striving for continuous improvement.

The official publication of ESP is The Journal of the Effective School Project (JESP). The journal is dedicated to the dissemination of information, ideas and research among the participants in ESP, as well as, other interested educators. Published annually, each issue of the journal focuses on a particular theme, but consideration is given to non-thematic articles.

The theme for the 2015 edition will focus on the professional passion to educate all students (K-12). Educators are constantly seeking to meet the needs of all students as they strive to influence a diverse world for the better by investing in the lives and well-being of their students. Teachers engaging students while providing a safe atmosphere for learning manifest qualities needed in today’s diverse classroom. Therefore, best practices considering all students’ affective and cognitive needs enable students (K-12) to learn and communicate learning in a diverse world. As we share our best practices and passion for our students’ well-being, we assist in the creation of healthy classrooms—THE GOAL OF ESP.

Volume XXIII 2016

“Enhancing Teaching and Learning with Innovative Instruction”

Submission Deadline: December 31, 2015

JESP SUBMISSION PROCESS…

To submit a manuscript for review with JESP, please go to http://www.thejesp.org and click on For Authors. Follow all instructions for registering with us and upload your manuscript. You will hear from us soon.

If you wish to become a reviewer for JESP, please submit your request via email to Dr. Robin Pate, Editor, at rpate@tarleton.edu. All reviewers must have K-12 teaching experience.

Sincerely,

James E. Gentry, Ed.D.
Editor
Manuscript Submissions

*The Journal of the Effective School Project* solicits articles dealing with field-based, or action research; descriptions of successful programs or practices designed to promote school improvement or increase student achievement; the application of effective schools research to the design and delivery of educational programs; descriptions of classroom practices or instructional strategies; position papers; reviews of literature; or historical perspectives. Generally, articles selected are those written in an informal, practical, and readable format.

*The Journal of the Effective School Project* editorial committee will evaluate articles submitted for publication consideration. Manuscripts must adhere to the following guidelines to be considered:

1. **Length:** The manuscript, including references, charts and tables generally should not exceed ten typewritten pages.

2. **Style:** Manuscripts must conform to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2009, 6th ed.).

3. **Cover Letter:** Submit a cover letter explaining the relationship of the article to the theme of the journal. Indicate that the article represents original material and is not currently under consideration by any other publication.

4. **Cover Page:** Include the following information on a separate sheet: title of the manuscript; author's name, complete mailing address, business and home phone numbers, institutional affiliation and address; biographical information about each author (not to exceed 50 words per author).

5. **Abstract:** Following the cover page, submit an abstract of 100 to 150 words and short biography of the contributing authors.

6. **Photographs:** All photos embedded in the manuscript have participants’ permission to be included in the manuscript for possible publication. Students who are younger than 18 years old have guardian consent for their photographs to be displayed in the manuscript for possible publication. Space is limited. Please submit 1 or at most 2 photos if your manuscript requires photos.

7. **Figures/Tables/Charts:** Again, due to limited space, a maximum of two (2) figures, tables, or charts will be allowed.

SEE EXAMPLES OF PAST MANUSCRIPTS:


Authors Register and Submit manuscripts at [http://www.thejesp.org](http://www.thejesp.org)

After initial review by the editor, articles that meet editorial specifications will be sent to the Editorial Committee. The journal editor reserves the right to make editorial changes, but any proposed changes will be discussed with the primary author prior to publication.
The Jim Boyd Effective Schools Project

Tarleton State University’s Effective Schools Project (ESP) has evolved into one of the nation’s largest and longest running school improvement ventures. With the Effective Schools research as its foundation, ESP is a school improvement network linking the Tarleton faculty and campus leadership teams from over seventy Texas schools in an ongoing study and dialogue designed to enhance school effectiveness.

Effective Schools Conferences     Effective Schools Conferences are at the heart of ESP. This annual series of conferences and seminars provides members with current research and theories, as well as practical methods and strategies from the nation’s most prominent educators and reformists. The conference series is organized around a school improvement theme broadly associated with one or more of the correlates of Effective Schools.

Campus Planning Retreat     In March, ESP leadership teams are invited to attend a planning retreat. During the retreat, school leadership teams are able to evaluate their school year to date, to reflect on the research and other information received at ESP conferences, to refine their campus improvement plan, and to exchange ideas, goals, and triumphs with other campus teams.

The ESP Journal     The Journal of the Effective Schools Project is the official publication of ESP. The journal is dedicated to the dissemination of information, ideas, and research among the participants in ESP, as well as other interested educators. Published annually, each issue of the journal focuses on a particular theme, but consideration is given to non-thematic articles.

thejesp.org

www.tarleton.edu/esp/journal/index.html

For more information about The Jim Boyd Effective Schools Project, please contact:

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