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MIDSOUTH LITERACY JOURNAL

The University of Alabama at Birmingham, in partnership with The MidSouth Reading/Writing Institute, has established this peer-reviewed online journal, *The MidSouth Literacy Journal* (MLJ). This new online, peer-reviewed journal is dedicated to disseminating and extending scholarship through original research and practice articles in literacy education. MLJ highlights constructivist-based literacy theory and practice that places the child at the center of the learning process and furthers the legacy of Dr. Maryann Manning. Each journal features a focus on teachers' perspectives about issues in the field along with contemporary releases in children's literature. Utilizing a combination of real-world classroom applications and concrete theoretical framework, the journal provides bi-yearly publications each fall and spring.

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ISSN 2471-4453

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MIDSOUTH LITERACY JOURNAL

ISSN 2471-4453

Volume 2

Issue 2

Spring 2017

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Dr. Maryann Manning's achievements were significant, the products of her boundless energy, unfaltering determination and deep commitment to children. Dr. Manning's footprint can be seen in the many projects that the UAB School of Education is known for today. Dr. Manning authored numerous books, book chapters, monographs, and articles that have guided and inspired educators throughout Alabama and beyond. Organizations around the world esteemed her with awards and accolades. She was particularly honored and excited to serve as a future president of the International Reading Association. At the time of her death, she was working at a literacy conference in Indonesia, doing what she loved.

Overview of Issue

I begin this fourth issue of *The MidSouth Literacy Journal* with a heartfelt thank you our Editorial Review Board for their hard work and dedication in launching this journal. Review board members have given two years of service—reviewing manuscripts for inclusion in each issue. Thank you for your time and commitment. Without your expertise and insight, this journal would not have experienced such a successful start.

The first two articles included in this issue of *MLJ* examine current research, issues, and trends related to digital literacy and literacy requirements for new teacher certification. The first article, *The Social Media Literacy Connection*, is a literature review exploring current research on the incorporation of social media literacy and learning in online and blended courses offered in higher education. The author uncovers the advantages and disadvantages associated with social media usage and identifies future areas of study to continue informing educators of the risks and benefits of integrating social media in classroom and online learning settings.

The second article, *Small Things Make a Big Difference: The Lesson, The Teacher, The Students, The Environment*, introduces the five dimensions used to assess teacher candidates for certification through the edTPA process, an evaluation system designed by Stanford University faculty to measure candidates' teaching readiness. The authors, all faculty members at a small liberal arts college in Alabama, explore the effects of an increased emphasis on reflection, action, and research within the program to support students with successful completion of all course and edTPA requirements. The article concludes with a reminder for teacher educators to not overlook the power of “the seemingly small things: the lesson, the teacher, and the environment.”

The third article included in this issue, *Literature Review: Literacy Coaching*, highlights the history and continuing evolution of the complex and multi-dimensional role of a school literacy coach. A review of recent research on coaching precedes the author's suggestions for future research to continue increasing the effectiveness of inclusive professional development based on a coaching model.

The Social Media Literacy Connection: Student Engagement in Online Learning

Laura McNeill

University of Alabama at Birmingham

The rapid rise of technology use among students today has inspired many instructors worldwide to incorporate social media tools into teaching and learning, with the hope of enhancing students' media and technology literacy as well as engagement, particularly in online learning. It should be noted, however, that there is a lack of research to definitively support such efforts. This paper summarizes recent research incorporating social media literacy and learning into online and hybrid courses and investigates the benefits and challenges of using social media in higher education. Some limitations are discussed and future areas of study are proposed.

Keywords: literacy, social media, engagement, higher education, online, learning

Across the globe, technology has transformed the way students communicate, collaborate, and learn. Online education has seen substantial expansion, with the Babson Survey Research Group (2015) reporting that the number of students taking online courses has grown consistently for the past decade. In 2015, the number of students enrolled in online courses stood at 5.8 million nationally compared to 3.5 million students in 2006.

Online courses are appealing for today's busy student, allowing much flexibility in how assignments are completed, when lessons are learned, and where projects can be created. As students arrive at colleges and universities already solidly connected through social media, many instructors have embraced the use of social media in the online classroom, choosing to incorporate tools such as Facebook, Ning, and Twitter, as well as Web 2.0 tools like wikis, podcasts, and blogs. Greenhow (2011) encouraged instructors to find new ways to use these tools to motivate and engage students. Currie, Greene Wheat, Wilkinson, Shanbrun, and Gilmore (2014) further underscored the significance of using social media, stating that "it is well placed to provide autonomy to the current generation of students in an environment in which they are comfortable communicating" (p. 399).

While flexibility is one of the strengths of social media tools, many other benefits exist for students and instructors. Platforms offered are typically accessible, easy to incorporate into lesson plans, and not difficult for most educators or students to master in a short amount of time. In addition, for cash-strapped universities looking to expand student skill sets, engagement, and connection in online and hybrid courses, social media tools are free and offer apps that can be downloaded to a Mac, PC, desktop, smartphone, or tablet in seconds. Often, the only basic requirement for using social media is having a device that connects to the Internet.

Currie et al. (2014) noted "the greatest pressure in the current higher education environment is the ability to match student and institutional expectations against sustainable, cost-effective innovation" (p. 399). Taking this into consideration, earlier technological systems (Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle, etc.) provided only inter-classroom collaboration functions such as sharing articles, posting group assignments, and holding discussion forums. However, new

social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) are distinct from earlier technology in terms of expense, innovation, and reach. Social media offers educators sustainable, cost-effective methods of providing students with inventive, cutting-edge technology tools. These platforms offer students the ability communicate information and ideas in real-time with colleagues on the same campus, as well as students, instructors, and experts around the world.

In some instances, educators in online courses have used social media tools to deepen instruction and the time students spend learning. In particular, Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2010) examined the impact of using Twitter in discussions as well as in reflections on readings and service work completed. The researchers compared a student group trained in and required to use Twitter and a second group in which there was no social media requirement.

The Twitter users “had a significantly greater increase in engagement than the control group, as well as higher semester grade point averages” (Junco et al., 2010, p. 1) which led researchers to conclude that Twitter was educationally useful and could be included in social media tools to help students achieve greater educational results. Further, recent case studies involving social networking software reveal several benefits for instructors and educational institutions, including student retention, collaboration, and engagement, and an increase in student success (Grover & Stewart, 2010; Hoffman, 2009). These examples will be further explored in this paper.

This review begins with a brief examination of the frameworks of New Literacy Studies and metaliteracy, examples of practical social media use in online learning, followed by operational definitions of the terms social media and social media literacy. The discussion section focuses on current uses of social media in education which have garnered a positive student learning experience as well challenges instructors and students have faced as a result of social media being incorporated into lesson plans. Suggestions for best practices and future research conclude the paper.

New Literacy Studies

New Literacy Studies refer to how literacy practices connect to the way people live, self-identify, and relate to others in society. According to Larson (2008), leaders in education must create an improved definition of the term – one that is focused on social practices. Through this lens, educators better understand the way technology requires educators to re-think current literacy practices and requirements, including the process of “being able to decode and comprehend multimodal texts and digital format and also engage with these texts in a purposeful manner” (Ungerer, 2016, p. 3).

Koc and Barut (2016) stated that being literate in the 21st century means consuming, producing, sharing and critiquing digital content—all crucial skills needed for students preparing for careers in today’s society. Mills (2013) added that literacy cannot be identified or classified through an explicit skill, rather it should encompass the shared, dynamic, and cooperative aspects of digital technology. In order to prepare young adults for the complexities of the world, educators must go further than assisting students in gaining knowledge. In order to prepare young adults for the complexities of the world, educators must go further than assisting students in gaining knowledge. Ungerer (2016) stated that students must master new literacy studies,

including the skills of “creativity, being proactive and committed, thinking critically, and being able to collaboratively generate knowledge (as well as) the ability to locate and select relevant information and then produce and share it through various types of media” (p. 3).

Metaliteracy

To further explore the concept of literacy in terms of the growth and reach of technology; social media; and collaborative, online communities, Mackey and Jacobson (2011) proposed re-conceptualizing information literacy as a new principal framework, metaliteracy, which would function as a foundation for other literacy types, including media, digital, visual, and information and communication technology (ICT) literacy.

In order to successfully participate in online communities and social media, researchers contend that students must become “metaliterate,” requiring critical thinking, information fluency, and the ability to repeatedly become accustomed to new technologies. Putting metaliteracy into practice, Ungerer (2016) emphasized that students “actively participate in these social environments, query the views of others, critically evaluate the materials that they find and take care when incorporating the information in their own work” (p. 4).

While information literacy encompasses students accessing, evaluating, and analyzing information, metaliteracy offers students the opportunity to create and share content through social media and online communities. In addition, metaliteracy requires students to understand and be able to use new media tools, evaluate, utilize, and “create visual information, as well as assess and synthesize Internet content and original digital information” (Mackey & Jacobson, 2011, p. 76).

Practical Social Media Use in Online Learning

The majority of today’s college students have never experienced life without the Internet, smartphones, devices, and tablets. With this in mind, it is crucial for educators to capitalize on ways to use these methods of capturing student-to-student and student-to-teacher interaction as well the potential to cross local and global communication divides. By marrying social media literacy and current technology with education pedagogy, it stands to reason that educators have many opportunities for collaborative, meaningful, and engaging opportunities to teach students.

Hoffman (2009) discussed the implementation of Ning, a social network similar to Facebook, in an education course at a large university. Instructors required that students set up profiles and post photos on Ning. After being asked to review and react to 12 different discussion forums over the semester, many students opted to share “personal images and videos, wrote friendly comments on each other’s profile pages, and...started their own discussion items, typically to share stories or resources that supplemented the course content or provided helpful technical tips for completing assignments” (Hoffman, 2009, p. 31). Though this particular research did not reveal a significant spike in student achievement, Hoffman (2009) discovered that student perceptions shifted positively in that the “personalization and knowing others increased their enjoyment, sense of involvement, and the friendliness of the course, all elements typically accorded to the attitudinal domain of learning, particularly motivation and engagement” (p. 23).

At the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), Dr. Oliveria (personal interview, 2016) integrated Twitter as a method of keeping students engaged, motivated, and thinking about course content. Oliveria (2016) asked students to post 30 times during the semester, disseminating what she termed “good information about infectious disease.” Students were

offered professional organizations and journals to follow as well as a class hashtag, #CLS538, to use on Twitter. Students often Tweeted additional information and links on topics similar to those covered in class lessons, reported Oliveria (2016), who expressed hope that students “can see Twitter as an avenue to keep engaged with their profession.”

UAB Spanish instructor Dr. O’Leary (personal interview, 2016) used Twitter as a supplement to the material covered in coursework, particularly with intermediate language learning students. In one instance, O’Leary (2016) brought student attention to the debate over Uber use in Birmingham, Alabama and Uruguay, in the hope that students “make a connection of similar issues and questions. Why is it a problem here? Why is it a problem there?” O’Leary reported that the students who benefitted the most were those who started following her on Twitter, started reading her Tweets, and paying attention to real world issues on social media.

Maday, an instructor in the UAB Physician Assistant (PA) program, used Twitter to share medical information, tips, and modern research with both current students and alumni. Maday (2016, personal interview) noted:

One of the hallmarks of the millennial generation is they don’t want this big 50-page textbook. They want nuggets they can use as they want...great blog posts or podcasts that come out and really hammer home those key philosophies that I’m trying to make in the classroom.

Interestingly, Maday’s largest Twitter following came not from current students, but from practicing physician assistants located all over the country. UAB physician assistant alumni stated that they utilized the “just in time” links and information on current health care issues in their own professional practice” (Maday, 2016).

Romeyn, a high school AP History teacher, employed Facebook for a school project focusing on influential people in the early 19th century, with the goal of making the project “more realistic...and to use something (Facebook) the students are already using on their own” (2009, personal interview). Romeyn asked students to choose a politician, religious leader, or reformer and assume that identity in a private classroom Facebook page. Students posted status updates containing information about the person, images of the person and his or her family, as well as historical milestones. According to Romeyn (2009), students were highly engaged in the projects. Romeyn said that she

[w]as amazed because...I would see on a Saturday night 10 or 11 people...posting pictures and uploading videos. Students got really creative with it. (One student acting as Samuel Morris, one of the early 19th century inventors, actually posted his status updates in Morse Code, so he really took a lot of time and care

Schwartz and Caduri (2016) cited more recent efforts of a science teacher who utilized a private Facebook page to foster inquiry-based learning after creating an ecological garden in a schoolyard in Israel. Students in small groups were asked to identify a subject of interest and define a research topic. The groups then conducted a scientific study, collecting video, data, photos, and digital notebooks, all of which were uploaded to Facebook. Students then asked each group questions, requested clarification, and discussed alternatives. According to Schwartz and Caduri (2016), this group work helped “establish a community of inquiry...(leading) the students toward meta-strategic thinking...from the concrete—the specific case or specific research question—toward abstraction, that is, the formation of meta-strategic knowledge” (p. 15).

In contrast to the community of inquiry, Schwartz and Caduri (2016) discussed a geography instructor who utilized Facebook not only to share videos, presentations, and information, but as a vehicle through which the instructor could work toward forming a moral community in which everyone respects each other, makes sound judgments, and acts ethically. The instructor used incidents regarding inappropriate posts, vulgarity, privacy, and issues of sexual orientation to shed light on the issues and discuss them on the class Facebook page (Schwartz & Calduri, 2016).

Kitchin, assistant professor in the Nutrition Sciences Department at UAB, teaches students how to write blogs, emphasizes interpreting the science of nutrition in an evidence-based, unbiased, and accurate way in order to convey information to the public. Kitchen (personal interview, 2016) emphasized that if students

[c]an communicate a really complex idea to a non-scientist or someone who that is not their field of expertise, then that shows that (they) really get it. Probably the thing that is most rewarding for me is when students, when I see a student...later and they (say), "Oh, I'm so glad you did that. I didn't want to do it at the time. I kind of hated it, but now I'm glad you made us go through that".

As cited above, social media technologies and literacies have done much to shape the cognitive, social, and cultural environments of the 21st century. As Mehringer (2010) pointed out:

[e]ducation that acknowledges the full impact of networked publics and digital media must recognize a whole new way of looking at learning and teaching...modern societies need to assess and evaluate what works and what doesn't in terms of engaging students in learning. (p. 7)

Social Media Definition

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a tool that allows for both the creation and exchange of content generated by users. More specifically, the process and product are considered "social" because of the ability to exchange ideas within this new media (Everson, Gundlach, & Miller, 2013). Social media is a relatively new phenomenon, with none of the most popular tools appearing before 2004, when Harvard student Zuckerberg debuted Facebook. Since then, sites like Twitter, Ning, Instagram, and Snapchat have been created, each offering its own attraction, benefits, and challengers for users.

Social media sites are defined by Boyd and Ellison (2008) as

[w]eb-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a...system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (p. 211)

Likewise, Joosten (2012) described social media as any number of technological systems related to collaboration and community.

Social Media Literacy Definition

For instructors, higher education leaders, and researchers to better assess and evaluate the effectiveness of social media literacy, Vanwynsberghe, Boudry, and Verdegem (2011) defined the term social media literacy as "the access to social media applications, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and self-efficacy of individuals to (appropriately) use social media applications and to analyze, evaluate, share and create social media content" (p. 31). Further, Vanwynsberghe et al.

(2011) stressed the importance of “enhancing people’s social media literacy, or the capabilities to deal with social media, (making) people more empowered to conduct their social lives in a meaningful way,” which impacts student networking, career growth, and effective communication (p. 60).

Prevalence of Social Media

In 2010, social media use for teens, on average, was 81%, compared to 61% of adults who regularly interacted with one another on social media (Ferriter, 2010). That same generation of teenagers, according to Greenhow, Robelia, and Hughes (2011), found that many students who used Web 2.0 tools daily also felt that they would benefit from more technology use in the classroom.

Today, with nearly 80% of teenagers in the United States owning computers and cell phones, it stands to reason that students would expect, and perhaps demand, more social media utilization in online or hybrid classrooms (Agosto & Abbas, 2016). As social media tools continue to grow in popularity, and new social media platforms are introduced, it will be incumbent upon researchers to examine and redefine the use of tools, especially as they relate to education.

Twitter and Engagement

Twitter has been observed to promote engagement and translate into increased enjoyment of coursework, better retention of concepts, and improved student achievement (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011). A recent study found a strong relationship between Twitter usage and student engagement (Evans, 2014). This is consistent with an earlier study which concluded that Twitter usage increased overall student engagement, including extracurricular activities (Junco, 2011). Previous research integrating Twitter with blogs showed moderate levels of interaction, learning, and community (Thoms, 2013).

Forgie, Duff, and Ross (2013) found that the use of Twitter can enhance participation in lecture-based settings. Students may post questions via Twitter, which are posted live as the classroom discussion unfolds. If instructors are concerned about interrupting the flow of the lecture, teachers may wait until the end of the class to address questions students tweeted during the presentation.

Educators may also use Twitter polling applications as a different option for informal quizzes and polls (Forgie et al., 2013). During a synchronous presentation, questions can be projected on a screen, and students can tweet their answers, allowing for instant feedback about group understanding, as well as additional discussion and clarifications.

Facebook and Engagement

A 2014 study by Churcher, Downs, and Tewksbury found evidence that utilizing Facebook created a more positive and less-threatening learning environment which enhanced student engagement and learning experiences while creating a stronger rapport between each other and with the lecturer. It was also discovered that instructors who used Facebook provided a rich team-based learning environment, allowing students to channel their creativity in a virtual medium (Churcher et al., 2014). Manca and Ranierit (2013) identified the following five uses for Facebook in education: allowing students to learn from each other through discussion thereby fostering mutual understanding and critical thinking; developing multimedia content; sharing

resources; exposing students to resources outside the course; and using Facebook to bolster self-managed learning.

Facebook was also found to be useful as a means for business computing students to receive the extra support and instruction they needed outside the classroom (Nkhoma et al., 2015). Every week, instructors discussed review questions relating to the prior week's lesson before moving on to new material. Those review questions were also posted on the class private Facebook page, allowing students to comment and form discussions online as needed.

In two studies cited by Wang, Sheu, and Masatake (2011), the researchers demonstrated that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students improved their English vocabulary knowledge through periodic entries in English on a private Facebook group. Facebook groups also promoted motivation, socialization, discussion, and sharing resources for language learners (Wang et al., 2011). Additionally, Schwartz (2009) noted that instructors can successfully mentor students on social networks like Facebook. Schwartz discovered that instructor exchanges with students on Facebook provided comparable benefits to holding after-class meetings and provided highly valid opportunities for communication and mentoring students.

Other Tools

Other collaborative and communicative tools, such as blogs and wikis, have grown in popularity and use in online courses. These tools allow for students to contribute content and communicate, thus promoting social interactions (Skiba, 2005). Muncy (2014) revealed that regular, reflective journaling in blogs helped marketing students better retain course information on research, advertising, e-marketing, and sales. In addition to existing knowledge of the material, students were also better able to connect the material to their life experiences.

Finally, in an online women's health course, Oomen-Early and Burke (2007) determined that blogging was a viable strategy in preparing health education students to better communicate health information, interact with their peers, and practice current technologies. Weekly blogs allowed students more self-expression, synthesis, and personalization of the course material (Oomen-Early & Burke, 2007).

Discussion

According to Greenhow (2011), it is possible to create a more student-centered course using social media tools for learning. Social media tools, argued Hoffman (2009), encourage broader student-to-student interaction and collaboration, as well as student-to-teacher interaction. This is achieved, Hoffman (2009) stated, because students are already familiar with social media and enjoy the personal choice and customization of tools that most social media platforms allow and encourage.

By generating their own content, particularly in collaborative wikis and blogs, researchers have suggested that students are better able to understand learning concepts when using these tools (Agichtein, Castillo, Donato, Gionis, & Mishne, 2008). These tools allow students to remain engaged in content creation and receive feedback and formative guidance, which is crucial to keeping instruction learner-centered. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) found that such collaborative projects support the concept that a collective effort of many students can lead to a better outcome than what one student can achieve by him or herself.

Facebook supports the potential for student-to-student and student-to-instructor interactions, according to Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, and Witty (2010). However, the

authors stated that while students found Facebook useful for communication and engagement, instructors did not find the tool as effective.

Further, recent research on integrating Facebook in higher education coursework did not yield higher self-report of student engagement or understanding, according to Dyson, Vickers, Turtle, Cowan, and Tassone (2015). One theory presented by the researchers for the lack of engagement centered on a possible unwillingness to share online because of concerns over privacy issues. In addition, Dyson et al. (2015) indicated that, in this instance, a blog or discussion board post on Blackboard would have worked just as well if not better for student engagement.

Recently, Rohr and Costello (2015) identified Twitter as an appropriate tool in encouraging engagement and active participation. As stated by Hoffman (2009), social media can be effective for learning because students are already familiar with using these tools. Meanwhile, Rohr and Costello found that for students familiar with Twitter, it was a natural adaptation for coursework use, while students new to Twitter quickly adapted and mastered the platform. Rohr and Costello emphasized that the use of Twitter should be carefully considered by the instructor and tied to learning design, clearly communicating to students why Twitter is being used. For Twitter activities to be most effective, those activities must support class content and assignments (Rohr & Costello, 2015).

Through their research, Junco, Elavsky, and Heiberger (2013) determined several best practices for integrating Twitter into college courses. First, requiring students to use Twitter as part of a course is important in affecting academic outcomes. Junco et al (2013) found that students who were required to use Twitter experienced better engagement and academic benefits versus students who were not required to use the tool. Similarly, Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2010) found that students who were given assignments that required them to use Twitter impacted student engagement and affected student grades. Their data demonstrate that students using Twitter had a significantly greater increase in engagement, as well as higher semester grade point averages versus a separate group of students in the study who were not required to use the social media tool.

Junco et al. (2013) recommend that that Twitter must be incorporated into a course in ways that are educationally relevant. The researchers used Chickering and Gamson's (1987) seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education to guide Twitter integration. The researchers also found that having a theoretical reason to use Twitter and including that theory in course pedagogy maximized student outcomes. Finally, Junco et al. (2013) determined that active faculty engagement while students are using Twitter is essential in positively impacting student outcomes.

Conclusions and Future Study

The research brought forth in this literature review suggests that the successful integration of social media literacy into coursework can be beneficial and challenging. A number of factors come into play, including determining the most appropriate social media to use in coursework, how to integrate social media with course content, and the perceived impact and benefit of including social media with coursework, as well as ensuring students are literate in media, digital, visual, and information and communication technology (ICT).

Within this literature review, Twitter appeared to be the social media tool with the most versatility, ease of use, and promise for achieving student engagement in online learning. Further research and the gathering of additional empirical evidence will be needed to further support this idea. Based on the rapidly changing social media landscape, other tools may emerge that provide an equal or better impact on student engagement in the online classroom. Those tools, in turn, will need to be studied and evaluated for effectiveness and impact.

Regardless of how social media is used in education, researchers have collectively recommended several best practices for incorporating such tools to achieve better student engagement and social media literacy. First, researchers suggest that it should be clearly communicated to students why a particular social media tool is being used in a course. Second, according to the studies presented in this paper, requiring student use of a selected social media tool is necessary, or at least helpful, in enhancing student engagement. Third, designing social media activities that support course content, activities, and assignments seems to be an effective approach in promoting learner engagement. Finally, based on the research presented within this paper, faculty participation with students while in the social media tool appears to be a crucial factor in the success of student engagement. Additional study on the impact of social media literacy and social media tools on student engagement is required to further support and validate any suggested best practices.

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**Small Things Make a Difference:
The Lesson, The Teacher, The Students, The Environment**

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The purpose of this article is to describe how the teacher educator faculty of one small liberal arts college met the challenge of program review and made a small change to deepen teacher candidates' planning, instruction, assessment, and analysis of teaching, which are the competencies measured by the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), the certification process required of their students. Teacher educators in states adopting certification processes such as edTPA, a teacher portfolio assessment, are gifted with the opportunity to change, shift, and rethink teacher candidates' paths to certification and at the same time reflect on their own teaching practice and partnerships with in-service teachers. Understanding the requirements for teacher certification is a critical part of teacher educators' work as they evaluate coursework and plan meaningful field experiences. By using the Understanding by Design (UbD) process (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) teacher educators ascertained that consequential certification processes matched their intended curriculum.

Keywords: certification, edTPA, portfolio assessment, lesson study

Introduction

Some things never change like the mission of the small liberal arts college where the authors of this article teach. In 1867 the founders of Talladega College, Savery and Tarrant, were committed to education and saw the college as "*vital to the preservation of liberties.*" Certification of secondary educators is the focus and mission of our college dating back to 1890 when the college moved beyond educating the children of slaves to developing leaders in education. This mission continues into 2017 as the college expands its mission to develop leaders in a program for certification in an elementary and special education collaborative while it continues to offer six secondary education certifications.

The Beginning

Coinciding with this latest certification program at our college, a new era of teacher education begins as all Alabama colleges and universities look forward to successful implementation of the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), a candidate support and assessment program that is consequential in 2018 for Alabama teacher certification. The edTPA process has been examined with input from teachers and teacher educators. Stanford University faculty and staff created the edTPA process as a measure of teacher candidates' readiness to teach. The process is designed to support teacher candidate learning and teacher preparation program growth and renewal (Board of Trustees Stanford, 2013). The edTPA process creates an authentic purpose for closing the divide between universities, their school partners, and most importantly their teacher candidates, as described in a recent literature review (Summerlin, 2016). The divide that is most salient for the purpose of this article is the one that exists in teacher candidates' implementation of best practices that they previously learned in their education coursework.

The first steps of this edTPA journey at our college began with the relationships built between the teacher candidates, the in-service teachers who support them in dynamic field experiences, and the college teacher educators who nurture their knowledge of theory and pedagogy. The natural progression of these relationships creates a bond between all parties and insures a deepening of everyone's teaching craft. Sustaining edTPA teacher candidates demands the formation of learning communities with common goals. As pointed out in a recent *MidSouth Literacy Journal*, "A growing emphasis on raising the quality of teachers exiting teacher education programs continues to be the focus of educational stakeholders" (Summerlin, 2016, p. 46).

Our learning community understands this focus first hand since edTPA creates the condition where everyone is a stakeholder. When *one* process such as edTPA becomes consequential, what matters most for our community's success is a focus on a few things of great import. Embracing the goal of having all of our teacher candidates successfully complete edTPA and enter the profession with confidence, our teacher education community asks the following question:

What are the smallest things that the Education Department consistently does that make the most difference to edTPA teacher candidates?

The Inquiry

Participating in and preparing for a new teacher certification process produces many benefits. As teacher educators know, disequilibrium experienced during new learning creates conditions for great growth. We teach this concept in basic child development and education psychology classes for undergraduates, and now we live it as we reflect on the course work, assignments, assessments, and field experiences offered to teacher candidates.

For the past two years, teacher educators at our college experienced this type of growth as we utilize a backward design process to study our program. The process is formally known as Understanding by Design (UbD) (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). By interrogating the course syllabi and assessments and carefully scrutinizing the hundreds of hours our students spend outside of our classrooms, we charted a path of discovery to weed out unnecessary assignments, assessments, and field experiences that did not accelerate students' deep learning of best

practices required by edTPA. We sought to end the divide between student learning and performance once they take their positions as in-service teachers. (Summerlin, 2016)

Beginning with the end in mind, we considered the journey for our students, school partners, and college faculty members by reading the edTPA handbooks that describe three things teacher candidates must do. Drawn from documents that explain what skills are required of teacher candidates, the following three task dimensions describe the edTPA teaching cycle that focuses on student learning (SCALE, 2016):

- Task 1: Planning for building student content understanding and supporting students' learning needs by using knowledge of students. Assessments to monitor student learning are an important part of planning.
- Task 2: Instruction that considers the learning environment and learning engagement that deepens students' thinking. Subject-specific pedagogy is a part of instruction.
- Task 3: Assessment that includes analyzing student learning, providing feedback, and supporting student use of feedback.

During the edTPA process, teacher interns collect a portfolio of evidence based on the teaching cycle of *plan, instruct, and assess*. They receive a score based on the five dimensions of teaching: planning and instruction, instructing and engaging students, assessing student learning, analysis of teaching effectiveness, and academic language development. Surveying the Education Department's rich resources (i.e., teachers, students, lessons, environment), the faculty uses backward design to align courses and field experiences with edTPA. Here are the steps we used:

Step 1 *Reflect*

Review of the edTPA five dimensions and the work that students submit for their portfolios creates conditions for students and teacher educators to utilize the published edTPA rubrics. Teacher educators dissect the rubrics and design a grid to interrogate the current curriculum and syllabi. The grid found below serves as a data collection tool to guide the alignment of coursework and field experiences with edTPA along with the key assignments and assessments that department teacher educators agree to implement. As we reflect together, the grid (see Figure 1) becomes an anchor chart or memory of the department's brainstorming sessions and focuses the group's professional learning.

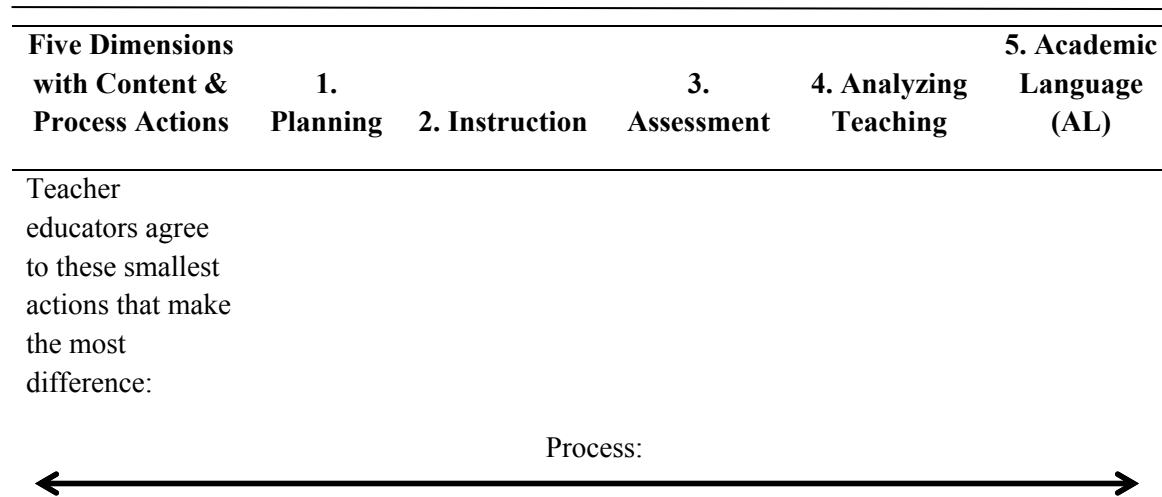


Figure 1. Grid of Five Dimensions of Teaching & Department Content/Process Actions.

Teacher educators chart the decisions (Figure 1) that develop during weekly professional learning sessions. As teacher educators complete the grid, the curriculum agreements are visible and remain in the faculty workroom for revisions based on student data, course discussions and grades, and teacher educators’ observations of teacher interns. The reflection process includes charting evidence of the five dimensions *currently present* in our department, brainstorming the smallest consistent actions that make the most difference for the entire department, and agreeing on the consistent application of the smallest actions that make the most impact. Over time, we gather data from student feedback on the content actions and the process continues to be refined.

Step 2 Actions

Teacher educators make decisions and complete the grid to equally balance the content and processes as shown in Figure 2. Selection of processes and routines to deepen teacher candidates’ learning as well as teacher educators’ pedagogy is now visible. One author of this article works extensively with teams of in-service teachers and attends national and international professional learning on the implementation of lesson study, a routine that is “...a teaching improvement and knowledge building process that has origins in Japanese education” (Cerbin & Kopp, 2006, p. 250).

During a lesson study, teachers work in small groups to plan, teach, observe, analyze, and refine class lessons. The use of lesson study during teacher candidates’ field experiences appears as a small adaptation that makes a difference. This realization seems to answer our original inquiry and the teacher educators adopt lesson study as a process with the expectation that it will involve teacher candidates in authentic edTPA processes. Embracing this innovation of lesson study, we recognized it as a hands-on process to experience the reflective practice required during edTPA.

| Five Dimensions with Content & Process Actions | 5. Academic Language (AL) | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| | 1. Planning | 2. Instruction | 3. Assessment | 4. Analyzing Teaching | 5. Academic Language (AL) |
| Teacher educators agree to these smallest actions that make the most difference: | <i>Write a series of 3-5 edTPA lessons in Methods Classes and evaluate them with edTPA rubrics.</i> | <i>Teacher educators & students utilize Collaboration & Facilitation Tools in all college classes as a model. Teach in a Lesson Study Event.</i> | <i>Require students to keep Response Journals in all classes as a course assessment tool to emphasize AL.</i> | <i>Build student Case Studies gathered during field experiences in all Methods Classes and Diagnostic & Prescriptive Reading Course.</i> | <i>Write a series of 3-5 edTPA lessons for analysis with videotape of the lessons; evaluate the video and lessons with edTPA rubrics.</i> |

Process: Lesson Study Participation

Figure 2. Grid of Five Dimensions of Teaching & Department Content/Process Actions.

We begin to adapt and use lesson study as a part of field experiences in three settings. One setting is in teacher educators’ college classrooms where teacher educators teach the lesson. The second setting is a campus public research lesson with an expert who has more experience in a given field, a *knowledgeable other* (Vygotsky, 1978) as the lesson study teacher or as the respondent to the lesson (Watanabe, n.d.). The third setting is in the classrooms of our public school partners where in-service teachers and teacher candidates teach the lesson. As teacher educators, we continually seek new ways to adapt lesson study.

The *first lesson study setting* is the college classroom. In the Education Department classrooms, teacher educators study their own instruction and model reflection as teacher candidates experience the lesson during their coursework. Desiring to show reflection as a key component of an exemplary teacher’s experience (Block & Mangieri, 2009) the first author of this article leads lesson studies in the college classroom. Invitations to public school principals, reading specialists, and teachers from partner schools result in the formation of a lesson study team. This setting provides an immersion in the edTPA five dimensions of teaching for the teacher candidates as well as the school partners and department teacher educators. The college classroom lesson study content is often a comprehension strategy lesson where future edTPA candidates are learning about literacy instruction. The professor teaches and reflects with the lesson study team while teacher candidates participate in their normal student role.

The Education Department agrees with the stance of reflection on beginning teaching practice and we believe that everyone learns by planning, instructing, and assessing student learning including college teacher educators. This process does not require perfect teaching

(Board of Trustees Stanford, 2016). When renowned scholars describe the study of lessons as “research lessons” (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998, p. 14), we agree and embrace this label as the exact language and stance we desire for our pre-service teachers and ourselves as teacher educators. The process of lesson study illuminates pedagogy and is particularly useful in discussions that focus on the learners’ construction of knowledge as opposed to a transmission model of teaching (Wood et al., 2017). This makes lesson study imperative for the department, and we continue to seek other settings for the use of the lesson study process.

The *second lesson study setting* is the public research lesson study that happens when a school or college opens its research lessons and lesson studies to educators and guests beyond the school (Lewis, 2006). In January, the Education Department invites a guest who acts as a *knowledgeable other* in a literacy content area, which is often reading comprehension. The *knowledgeable other* teaches a public research lesson with public school students on our campus or responds to a lesson taught by a professor. Watanabe (n.d.) referred to this role of *knowledgeable other* as one that brings fresh perspective from the view of someone not in the immediate school circle. The lesson always focuses on the expressed needs of students and public school partners.

These public research lessons allow in-service and pre-service teachers to study in a professional learning community and to get to know each other. The process offers learning opportunities seen as promising by researchers of professional learning such as (a) attention to discourse (Chapin, O’Connor, & Anderson, 2009; Smith & Stein, 2011), (b) development of high-leverage practices (Grossman, Igra, Compton, Ronfeldt, Shahan, & Williamson, 2009; Lampert, Beasley, Ghouseini, Kazemi, & Franke, 2010), (c) student thinking (Carpenter, Fennema, Peterson, Chiang, & Loef, 1989), (d) formative assessment (William & Thompson, 2007), and (e) cognitively challenging tasks (Smith & Stein, 1998). All of these practices connect with edTPA.

The *third lesson study setting* is in the classrooms of public school partners where teacher educators, in-service teachers, and teacher candidates teach the lesson. As the Education Department reviews the reflective decisions shown in Figure 2, we question and study the current field experiences offered to our students. Miller et al. (2003) stated that real-world activities and meaningful work with children are critical to professional performance. They posited that authentic experiences develop teacher candidates who are confident in meeting the myriad abilities and needs of children in today’s public school settings. Lesson study as collaborative reflection provides a venue for pre-service and in-service teachers to form a community that supports everyone in sharing knowledge and pedagogy. This results in a feeling of being valued and respected by peers. (McMahon & Hines, 2008)

Reading the field experience research led the faculty of the Education Department to reconsider our current field experiences and the work with our school partners. After careful study of Summerlin’s (2016) literature review on the university/school divide, we decided to use lesson study as *one* of our key authentic field experiences.

Step 3 Research

While lesson study appears to be too simple to make a difference, the research and resources (Appendix A) of this innovation are compelling. Improved lessons and improved teacher learning result from cycles of research lessons in lesson study (Hurd & Licciardo-Musso,

2005; Lewis & Hurd, 2011; Lewis, Perry, Hurd, & O'Connell, 2006). The process also proved to be a match for the edTPA five dimensions of teaching and a plan continues to take shape for the Education Department. The process of lesson study is a fit for deepening pre-service teachers' ability to address the work called for in the edTPA literature. Since the edTPA five dimensions align with the lesson study process, the overlap provides an authentic process for teacher candidates' investigation of how the dimensions "feel" as an adult learner.

Final Thoughts

At present the Education Department is conducting case study research with the purpose of studying the development of a cadre of Talladega College pre-service teachers preparing for the edTPA and Talladega City and County in-service teachers who use the process of lesson study to improve literacy instruction and comprehension for children. Data are currently being analyzed, and a final series of lesson studies is being conducted.

In conclusion, lesson study is often a hard sell to schools. It seems too simple and almost too good to be true as an innovation that improves teaching practice; however, our school partners who participate in the lesson study process continue to offer the opportunity for the process to happen in selected classrooms. Could the process of lesson study become the answer to our original inquiry: *What are the smallest things that the Education Department consistently does that make the most difference to edTPA teacher candidates?*

The results remain to be seen. We do know that inquiry into our Education Department coursework, field experiences, and teacher educators' pedagogy is creating a community among the faculty, school partners, students, and edTPA candidates. We find ourselves saying more often, "We've got this!" and lesson study appears to be the process that demystifies edTPA for everyone. We now understand that nothing has more impact on student learning than the seemingly small things: the lesson, the teacher, the students, and the environment.

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Appendix A Lesson Study Resources

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Contact rmckay@talladega.edu for joining a lesson study and support network.

Literature Review: Literacy Coaching

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In this literature review, literacy coaching is defined and described, while addressing the nuanced and complex nature of the field and the multifaceted roles of literacy coaches. A history of literacy coaching and a description of its continuing evolution is given, as well as a review of the literature in the field of literacy coaching research. The paper concludes with suggestions for further research.

Keywords: literacy, coaching, literacy coaching

Literacy coaching is difficult to define, in part because “literacy” can be complex and multidimensional, and in part because literacy coaching can take a variety of forms, looking very different from one school district to another, and even from one school to another. Oftentimes literacy is thought of as reading and writing; however, literacy can also be defined as all activities related to understanding and communicating within an academic discipline. This more comprehensive definition of literacy honors multiple texts, including graphs, charts, maps, videos, pictures, conversations, and so forth, rather than privileging print texts (Draper & Siebert, 2004).

Literacy coaching is multifaceted as well (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010). It can include such varied behaviors as observing classroom instruction, conferencing with teachers before and after classroom observations, modeling research-based practices, facilitating analysis of student work with teachers, assisting with lesson planning, and leading professional development for teachers, to name a few activities (Gallucci; Sailors, & Shanklin, 2010; Matsumura, Garnier, & Spybrook, 2012). Further, within any of these activities, coaches can employ either directive or responsive behaviors, or a combination of the two.

As Ippolito (2010) describes them,

[r]esponsive relationships are those in which coaches focus on teacher self-reflection, thereby allowing teachers’ and students’ needs to guide the coaching process. Directive relationships are those in which coaches assume the role of expert and are assertive about what instructional practices teachers must implement. (p. 165)

Because of the diversity of activities and behaviors employed, as well as the existence of several different models of literacy coaching, such as student-focused coaching, peer coaching, cognitive coaching, change coaching, and content-focused coaching, some literacy coaches themselves feel confused about what literacy coaching actually is (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010; Matsumura et al., 2012;). As one coach remarked regarding reflections of elementary school literacy, “I am not certain I know what a coach is” (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010, 211-212). This confusion persists despite the International Reading Association’s publication of *The Role and Qualifications of the Reading Coach in the United States*, a 2004 document that defined the role of the “reading coach” (Lynch & Ferguson).

Regardless of the coaching model subscribed to, or the specific behaviors enacted by a coach, the overall goal of literacy coaching can be described as on-site, embedded professional development with the goal of supporting teachers and increasing teacher reflectiveness (Gallucci,

2010; Gross, 2010; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell, 2010). Literacy coaches can bridge the gap between knowledge of effective instruction and classroom application, a bridge that is often lacking in traditional professional development models (Smith, 2012). This coaching role can be described as an apprenticeship of sorts, as the coach supports the teacher in implementing effective instructional practices within the teacher's own classroom setting, in order to create and sustain changed teacher behavior (Matsumura, Garnier, & Spybrook, 2013). This harkens back to the Vygotskian idea of the Zone of Proximal Development, where one learns by working with a more knowledgeable other on something more difficult than the student would be able to master alone (Gallucci et al., 2010; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Pomerantz & Pierce, 2013). Literacy coaches can fulfill this role of the more knowledgeable other and mediate teachers' learning (Gallucci et al.).

In order to effect such changes in teacher behavior, literacy coaches must establish and maintain credibility as people who can effectively support teachers in literacy instruction (Cassidy & Ortlieb, 2013). They must engage with administrators, teachers, students, and other stakeholders in the various roles described above, in manners appropriate to the situation. In other words, literacy coaches have *situated identities*, which means that their roles, how they are seen, and how they interact with others is dependent on the context of the situation (Rainville & Jones, 2008). Literacy coaches' roles, then, are socially constructed (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013). These socially-constructed identities also reflect social contexts such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and more; therefore, the identity of a literacy coach is nuanced and dynamic (Hunt & Handsfield). Other contextual factors, such as resource access, support of administration, and collaboration time, can all influence the role and effectiveness of literacy coaches (Hunt & Handsfield).

Literacy coaches must navigate not only these socially-constructed roles, but also the power dynamics involved in their relationships with administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013). A poststructural framework would acknowledge that power is involved in all relationships, whether that power is wielded intentionally or not (Jones & Rainville, 2014). Literacy coaches are often described as having a nonevaluative role; however, power is present in relationships even when the role is defined as one of support rather than evaluation (Coburn & Woulfin).

For example, a common issue faced by literacy coaches is teacher resistance to coaching. However, using a poststructuralist lens, this resistance may be viewed as relating to Foucault's declaration that power and resistance have an interconnected, causal relationship (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010). In other words, the teacher may perceive the coach to be in a more powerful position, and the teacher may respond with a different show of power, displaying resistant behavior (Jones & Rainville, 2014). In this case, the literacy coach and the seemingly resistant teacher are both wielding power, just in differing ways.

Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *field*, and *capital* can also be helpful in understanding the role of the literacy coach. When a literacy coach enters a field, or sociopolitical space, such as a classroom, the coach's habitus, or self, is viewed as belonging or not belonging, depending upon the extent to which the coach's capital is valued in that field. The capital belonging to the coach could take the form of economic, social, symbolic, or linguistic capital, among others (Jones & Rainville, 2014). Bourdieu's theory reinforces the idea that literacy coaches' roles are complex because they are dependent on the situational and social contexts in which they occur.

Development of Literacy Coaching

Having operationally defined *literacy* and described *literacy coaching* using a poststructuralist framework, it may be helpful to consider the beginnings of literacy coaching and its development as a field, in order to better understand and critique where literacy coaching is today. Sailors and Shanklin (2010) noted that the concept of coaching first appeared in research literature almost 80 years ago. However, it was not until the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act in 2002 that the use of literacy coaches really gained popularity (Cassidy & Ortlieb, 2013). Following the institution of NCLB mandates, many people formerly employed as reading specialists—a position that often involves working directly with students, rather than coaching teachers—experienced a position change to that of literacy coach, due to NCLB stressing job-embedded professional development and an increased focus on literacy (Bean et al., 2015; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Sailors & Shanklin).

Other initiatives, such as Reading First and Early Reading First, also contributed to the increased presence of literacy coaches, by emphasizing the use of coaching (Scott, Cortina, & Carlisle, 2012; Shidler, 2009). Ninety-nine percent of schools participating in the Reading First initiative used reading coaches (Blarney, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008). Further, changes to Title I, which funded many reading specialists, may have also led to an increase in literacy coaches in schools (Bean et al., 2015), to the point where “literacy coaching has been supported by nearly every urban district in the country” (Matsumura et al., 2012, p. 214).

Due to this increase, several professional organizations, including the International Literacy Association (ILA), the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Science Teachers Association, and the National Council for the Social Studies, have developed professional standards for secondary literacy coaches (Blarney, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008; Sailors, Minton, & Villarreal, in press). Several of the states involved in the Reading First initiative also developed guidelines for reading coaches (Blarney et al.).

Yet, despite the increased popularity of literacy coaching and its recognition by professional organizations, literacy coaching is still described as “fairly new” (Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, & Schock, 2009, p. 500) and “relatively new” (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010, p. 200). Further, perhaps due to the rapidity of the growth, “few of the various models or types of coaching currently being employed seem to directly link to relevant and informative research based consultation” (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007, p. 692).

It is almost as if, as some scholars have noted, the airplane is being flown while it is being constructed (Calo, Sturtevant, & Kopfman, 2015). This has resulted in problems such as coaches not receiving training; in one study, 25% of randomly surveyed literacy coaches across the continental states, K-12, report not receiving either pre-service or in-service training in literacy coaching (Calo et al.). Other problems include “role confusion, teacher resistance, and limited administrative support,” as well as lack of agreement on the role of coaches, even within a single district (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010, p. 200; Peterson et al., 2009). In fact, despite the existence of professional guidelines, in many cases, these are not enforced, and schools do not necessarily select their literacy coaches based upon the qualifications recommended by professional organizations (Matsumura et al., 2012).

Gross (2010) referred to literacy coaching as a “current trend,” hinting that the trend may lose popularity just as quickly as it has gained it in the last 14 years. This decline may even be coming into fruition now. In 2010, literacy coaching was identified by Cassidy and Ortlieb (2013) as a trending topic, but recently, there has been less interest in coaching in academic

scholarship (Sailors et al., in press). This may be partly due to reduced federal funding, resulting in the elimination of many literacy coaching positions (Cassidy & Ortlieb).

It should be noted that literacy coaches at middle and high schools face unique challenges. For one, secondary literacy coaches may benefit from having solid content knowledge, as well as an understanding of disciplinary literacy, in order to earn the trust of secondary teachers and build more effective relationships (Blarney et al., 2008). In other words, the creation of social capital through disciplinary knowledge might better ensure teachers' recognition of the value of the coach's habitus in the field of the secondary classroom. Moreover, an understanding of adolescents and the particular culture of secondary schools might also be beneficial for literacy coaches (Blarney et al.).

Research studies on literacy coaching are limited by the sheer complexity of coaching relationships. The nature of coaching relies upon relationships of trust, the willingness of teachers to participate in being coached, and the particular social context of each individual coaching interaction. Therefore, variables such as "changes in attitudes, instructional practice, or student achievement" are difficult, if not impossible, to isolate, and "may reflect factors other than coaching itself" (Lockwood et al., 2010, p. 374). Furthermore, Lockwood et al. (2010) stated:

[c]oaching has often been implemented as one part of a more comprehensive reform package, which makes it difficult for researchers to evaluate the degree to which changes are caused by coaching or by other aspects of a reform package, such as a new curriculum or changes in school structures or leadership. (p. 374)

Future studies engaging critical pedagogy and a Gramscian theoretical framework could shed additional light upon the complexities of literacy coaching. As Rainville and Jones (2008) noted, "The growing empirical research in the field of literacy coaching does not sufficiently explore the complexities that people in such positions must negotiate as they move from classroom to classroom, working with different teachers, students, and materials in each place" (p. 440). How do coaches respond to situational contexts by shifting identities? How does the social context influence coaches' negotiation between various roles? What factors influence the power dynamics between coaches, administrators, teachers, students, and other stakeholders in the school? (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). How does literacy coaching maintain or challenge the status quo?

Further research is also needed regarding how coaches can support teachers' use of socially just literacy instruction (Sailors et al., in press). Considering that coaches are often middle class and white, coaching teachers who are middle class and white, and not reflective of the demographics of their students, this is an especially important consideration; yet, of the 118 studies identified in a meta-analysis of literacy coaching literature by Sailors et al. (in press), none had studied cultural responsiveness.

The ability to read, write, speak, and otherwise interact with texts is critical for success in academics, careers, and life; yet many lower-income and minority students struggle in these areas (Lockwood et al., 2010; Matsumura et al., 2013). Oftentimes, these students have not had access to the most experienced, skilled teachers (Sailors & Shanklin, 2010). It is necessary, then, for all teachers to have access to embedded, ongoing professional development, such as that possible with literacy coaching, so they can grow in their craft and, in turn, support student success (Al Otaiba et al., 2008).

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