South Carolina
English Teacher

South Carolina English Teacher

Co-Editors

Mary E. Styslinger
University of South Carolina

Matthew C. Nelson
Francis Marion University

SCCTE
Call for Articles

The South Carolina Council of Teachers of English welcomes contributions to *South Carolina English Teacher* (SCET), a journal that represents varied perspectives, formats, and voices focusing on the teaching of English in our state. SCET publishes teacher research, critical essays, teaching strategies, bibliographies, interviews, personal essays, short stories, poetry, and other creative works including photography and drawings. We invite original artwork for our cover design. Each manuscript should be no more than 12 double spaced, typed pages in current APA style. SCET is a blind, peer-reviewed journal. Place the author's personal and institutional identification including an e-mail address on the cover page only. Please attach a copy of your manuscript in Word, subject heading, SCET, to mstyslin@mailbox.sc.edu. Deadline for submission for the next issue of SCET is July 30, 2016. All submissions attached by this date will be considered.

Table of Contents

From the Editors

Reading and writing are perhaps, above all the other important work we do, the "non-negotiables" for English teachers. We use reading and writing to help our students better understand themselves, one another, and the world. We're excited to bring you an issue with articles that explore significant issues related to our important work of reading and writing pedagogy.

In the "Teachers as Researchers" section, you'll find articles where teachers interrogate their own classroom practice. Mary E. Styslinger and Jessica Overstreet discuss one such project in "Are We On the Same Page? What Teachers and Students Value about Reading and Writing Workshop." They describe a study that explored students' responses to workshop-based literacy instruction and the implications of their findings for the way we think about how student perspectives can inform instructional choices. In "A Wow Moment: Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges through Teacher Research," Sara McLean Suber explains what she learned about her students' reading practices during the course of her reading conferences with them and how her new understandings about her fourth graders' reading shaped her pedagogy.

"Methods that Matter" contains articles focused on pedagogical strategies. Sarah Hunt-Barron, Rebecca Kaminski, Dawn Hawkins, Emily Howell, and Rachel Sanders discuss argumentative writing in "Beyond the 'Plop': Using Quotations Effectively in Argumentative Writing." They describe strategies that are designed to help students more effectively incorporate textual evidence into their argumentative writing. This piece is an excellent complement to Jana C. Moore's article, "Say-Mean-Matter: Using Quotations Fluently in Writing," where she discusses strategies for students to both be critical readers in looking for relevant quotations and thoughtful writers in synthesizing the quotes effectively in their own writing. Meanwhile, in "Engaging Readers with Thoughtshots," Crystal Chappell discusses a set of strategies that help students develop authentic voice in their narrative writing by exploring deeply their personal experiences.

In the "On My Mind" section, Dawn J. Mitchell provides a critique of the uses of reading levels to guide students' reading choices in "Public Libraries Don't Limit Their Readers By Levels, Why Should We?" Her piece draws on personal experiences and current research to argue for students being given more freedom to choose what they read rather than relying on quantitative measures of text complexity to dictate those choices.

And in "Writing just Because," we have South Carolina teachers showing off their personal writing with poems contributed by Katherine Mailloux and Kailey Beck as well as a narrative about the teaching life by Kristy Eubanks. We hope you enjoy this issue and that it provides you with an opportunity to think more deeply about reading and writing both inside and outside your classroom.

Are We On the Same Page?
What Teachers and Students Value about Reading and Writing Workshop

By Mary E. Styslinger and Jessica F. Overstreet

Our students have a great deal to teach us about effective and ineffective instruction in the language arts classroom. They are, as Alvermann et al. (1996) reminds, experts on the topic of their own experiences. Inspired by Hubbard (2011) whose students wrote about what works for them in the classroom as readers and writers and Hill (2008) who fearlessly conducted classroom research on book club discussions, questioning her pedagogy and reflecting with students, we decided to gauge attitude towards workshop-based instruction. While we were personally convinced of and professionally committed to the merits of reading and writing workshop, did our students feel the same?

We believe quality teaching involves learning with and from students, approaching each day, every teaching effort, with a sense of inquiry. Is what we are doing having any impact on students? Not necessarily on test scores, but on their attitudes towards reading and writing, talking and listening? Collaborating as teachers with students and asking tough questions can lead to a better understanding of each other and practice.

So we wondered, what are student responses to reading and writing workshop, and what can they teach us about quality teaching? In order to answer these questions, we surveyed our eighth grade students and collected written artifacts throughout a unit focused around ill-fated love. We are an instructional team, one of us a teacher wanting to implement reading/writing workshop and the other a professor spending sabbatical in the classroom. Together we analyzed student data and looked for patterns to answer questions.

This article shares the story of our classroom inquiry. It begins with an introduction to workshop teaching and includes a description of the structures and strategies implemented. We share what we learned about reading and writing

workshop from students, and in the end discover, are we on the same page?

Our Reading and Writing Workshop

A workshop is a metaphor for a particular kind of learning environment which organizes reading and writing experiences in meaningful ways. Richly described and detailed by Atwell (1998, 2007) in foundational and follow-up texts, reading and writing workshop creates authentic and sustained literacy experiences in classrooms. A workshop is learning and learner centered, social and collaborative. Students have choices in what they read and write. There is access to varied texts and time allocated for reading, writing, talking, and sharing. The schedule is predictable, and blocks of time are allotted for each literacy experience. Teachers design focused mini-lessons, guiding students through reading and writing processes. Expectations are high, but there is room for reflection and confusion as long as a safe literacy learning environment is established which teachers ensure through structured management.

Workshop teachers immerse students in language-rich experiences through a wide variety of genre. The teacher demonstrates how he or she reads and writes and utilizes his or her own processes of reading and writing as a model for students. In turn, the teacher expects students to read, write, talk, and listen and encourages them to take responsibility for many of their own assignments. Students have time during class to read and write with, talk and listen to one another, and the teacher and other students provide feedback on literacy experiences.

We decided to implement a reading and writing workshop around the cornerstone classical text, *Romeo and Juliet*. Our unit focus was ill-fated love, a predictable choice, but adolescents relate well to this central idea. Who hasn't been unlucky in love? Who hasn't experienced a doomed or disastrous

relationship? So we began this new unit by discussing unfortunate relationships. We considered movies with not so tragic endings (i.e. *High School Musical, Twilight*) and those with tragic endings (i.e. *Titanic, The Fault in Our Stars, Star Wars: Episode II and III*). We discussed star-crossed lovers on television. We listened to songs including Taylor Swift's "Love Story" and We Three Kings' "Check Yes Juliet."

Commonly tied to a unit focus are essential questions. Essential questions relate to a unit focus and can be used to connect a core text to other genre. Effective essential questions accommodate many possible answers (Smith, Wilhelm, and Fredricksen, 2012). *What is ill-fated love?* wasn't a strong enough essential question because there is likely agreement on the answer. *Are some relationships more ill-fated than others?* and *To what extent are we victims of fate or our own poor decisions?* work better because of the range of possible answers. The best essential questions develop and deepen a unit focus, prompting higher levels of critical thinking across texts.

After exploring the unit focus and establishing essential questions, we introduced students to the supplementary texts. We purposefully selected more contemporary and accessible genre that complemented the core classical text and expanded the unit focus. We introduced a variety of young adult novels through book talks and book passes. Students voted on their top three choices, selecting among: *The Fault in Our Stars, Perfect Chemistry, Matched, Street Love, Scribbler of Dreams, Son of the Mob, If You Come Softly,* and *Romiette and Julio*. Students were placed in book clubs based on their choices with some consideration given to student personalities and group management.

Once we introduced the unit focus and diverse texts, the reading workshop took on a somewhat predictable structure. Barring field trips and mandated testing, students engaged in shared reading and close reading of Shakespeare's play three days a week. Sometimes students read independently for homework. Jessica conducted mini-lessons on iambic pentameter, blank verse, puns, and paradox. To help students overcome some of their anxiety with Shakespeare's language, she showed a TedX talk by British Hip-Hop artist Akala (2011). Through his talk, students were able to make connections between modern Hip-Hop artists like Jay-Z, Eminem, and The Wu Tang Clan to Shakespeare both in terms of subject matter and rhythm. To help students visualize, Jessica showed snippets of the 1996 Baz Luhrman's and the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2012 adaptations of the play. Additional mini-lessons introduced key literary concepts (i.e. foils, soliloquy, imagery, figurative language, poetic language v. prose) and were followed by close readings of key scenes highlighting the subject matter of each mini-lesson. Jessica used a wide variety of activities to engage students with both the content and language of the play. They were asked to rewrite the Prologue using modern day language and situations (Mast, 2002), and students formed tableaux to create a kinesthetic understanding of the action. Students also drew body biographies to create visual and artistic representations of characters.

On alternate days, we switched texts and focused on young adult novels. Students and teachers read independently, making themselves comfortable along the walls or squabbling over the beanbags. After reading, Mary prodded personal connections, helping students recall experiences, elicit associations, and prompt reactions to what they were reading. As responses were shared, she grew the interpretive community. A mini-lesson would follow, focusing either on reading strategies (i.e. visualization, inferences, questions, predictions), literary analysis (i.e. story elements, figurative language), or author's craft (i.e. syntax, style). Students then met with book clubs, using the ideas and products of mini-lessons to move conversation along. If time allowed, each group would briefly share what they talked about. Students reflected on their book club experiences in writing.

Writing workshop evolved from the reading workshop as students wrote in response to the unit focus and novels read. Approximately two weeks into the unit, students began writing a multigenre paper that demonstrated their thinking about *Romeo and Juliet* as well as their book club novel, choosing an idea that bound the two texts and different genre together into a coherent paper. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, but connected by a prevailing idea (Romano, 2000). Along with a title, table of contents, and introduction, students created 6-9

different informational/explanatory genre including: lists, summary, description, process description, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and definition in response to both *Romeo and Juliet* and their young adult novel. On the last day, students wrote a reflection on their writing process.

As workshop teachers, we supported student writing in a variety of ways. We provided mini-lessons on different genre, including models of craft. We afforded time and technology for writing. We offered feedback on drafts of varied genre written for homework. Students also met with their book clubs (aka writing circles) to share drafts and gain feedback. When finished, students published their final copies by sharing with classmates.

While not perfect, our workshop environment offered students authentic and sustained reading and writing experiences. It was social and collaborative. Students had choices when reading and writing, and there was certainly room for reflection and feedback. As we walked away with a renewed commitment to workshop as quality teaching, we couldn't help but wonder if our students felt the same.

Student Responses to Reading and Writing Workshop

To answer our questions, *What are student responses to reading and writing workshop, and what can they teach us about quality teaching?* we read through surveys and artifacts. Survey data allowed us to quantitatively describe student reading preferences (see Fig. 1) while written reflections encouraged us to qualitatively supplement these percentages. Drawing from this data, we will first summarize student responses below then conclude with a discussion of what we learned about quality workshop teaching.

Based on surveys, a whopping 96% of our students enjoy book clubs. They like to talk about "how we feel about books," claiming they "like to hear other people's opinions." Reading a book with friends is "cool" and "fun." Students share that book clubs motivate them to read more and comprehend better. As Santanna explains, "your members can help you with parts of the book you may not understand."

Just as much as students enjoy talking about reading, they enjoy seeing their reading. 96% of our students like watching video clips which supplement mini-lessons, revealing it helps them picture and visualize story elements including plot and characters. Similar to book clubs, students mention how video increases and enhances understanding. Kyla even noted how video can "show another point of view." One student who did not appreciate video explains why: "I don't like watching video because I can't ask questions."

Workshop teachers recognize the value of independent reading, but do students? Yes! Reading independently in class was valued by 84% of our students. They appreciate the time, the quiet, the pace. No one bothers them, and they can "enter the book world and explore freely." Interestingly, students valued reading independently at home slightly less at 76%. Those who don't enjoy reading at home admit to being easily distracted by the out-of-school environment.

Along with time for independent reading, 64% of students appreciate when teachers read aloud. Apparently no one is too old for a good read aloud. "It reminds me of kindergarten," Davius shares. Others claim teachers' reading aloud increases understanding, especially when they are able to follow along and ask questions. Students who don't value teachers reading aloud struggle to pay attention, admitting the pace may

Method	Like	Undecided	Don't Like
Book Clubs	96%		4%
Video	96%		4%
Independent Reading (at school)	84%		16%
Independent Reading (at home)	76%		24%
Teacher Read Aloud	64%		36%
Close Reading	52%	8%	40%
Audio Recording	40%		60%
Students Read Aloud	24%		76%

Figure 1. Student reading and writing preferences.

be too fast or too slow; they "zone out" and comprehend better when they read themselves.

While we did not call on students or listen to an audio recording in our workshop, we wanted to gather student opinion about these methods. While a majority of our students appreciate teachers reading aloud, only 24% of students like it when other students read aloud, confessing, "I hate being called on." They are frustrated by the pace, volume, and mistakes of other student-readers. They also dislike listening to an audio recording, acknowledging it is "boring," "slow," and "robotic."

Student response to close reading resulted almost in a dead heat. While 52% of students value the process, 40% do not, and 8% are undecided. Our students acknowledge close reading increases understanding of the text, but also question its relevance to the holistic reading experience as well as recognize "it ruins the fun of the reading." Melody summarizes the dilemma: "Sometimes it's interesting to analyze things and find out what they really mean, but sometimes it's also aggravating because it overcomplicates things. Most of the time, it's not all that fun."

When asked whether they prefer reading modern or classical texts, not surprisingly, 88% of students favored more contemporary works; 4% classical, and 8% wanted to read both. Individual choice won over a whole-class reading as 88% of students would rather select their own books rather than read a common text. And writing multigenre papers was preferred by 68% of students over the more traditional 5-paragraph essay. Those who favored the essay claimed it is "way easier," "simple," "less time consuming," and they are "used to doing it."

What We Learned from Students

Quality teaching involves learning with and from students. As a result of this inquiry, we learned students recognize and value workshop methods which increase comprehension. Our students acknowledge the importance of talking about reading (especially asking questions), seeing reading, and writing about reading. Conversely, they recognize and do not value that which decreases comprehension, disliking both audio recordings and other students reading. Our students value time to read. They want to read at school and listen and follow along as teachers read. They will read at home but worry about distractions. They want choices and prefer contemporary texts. And much like us, our students question close reading as a process. Whereas they see the value in analyzing text, they do not want to lose the holistic literacy experience.

We began this inquiry, wondering if students valued workshop experiences. In the end, we have learned they do. We are on the same page. Quality teaching encompasses book clubs, video clips, independent reading, multigenre papers, and read aloud. Quality teachers allow for choices in reading selections and provide access to contemporary and relatable texts. They provide opportunities for students to talk, see, and question reading. They may analyze text, but not so much as to detract from the whole reading experience. They challenge students to write multiple genre, fostering connections among texts and subsequently deepening comprehension. But above all, quality teachers question and wonder with students, seeking always the ways and means to improve literacy instruction. Quality teachers inquire into practice alongside students, not only to see if we are on the same page, but also to write the next page.

References

Alvermann, D.E., Young, J.P., Weaver, D., Hinchman, K.A., Moore, D.W., Phelps, S.F., Thrash, E.C., & Zalewski, P. (1996). Middle school and high school students' perceptions of how they experience text-based discussions: A multicase study. *Reading Research Quarterly 31*(3), 244-267.

Akala. (2011, December). Hip-Hop and Shakespeare? [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSbtkLA3GrY&list=RDDSbtkLA3GrY.

Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Atwell, N. (2007). T*he reading zone: How to help kids become skilled, passionate, habitual, critical readers.* New York: Scholastic Inc.

Condie, A. (2010). *Matched.* New York: Dutton Books.

Draper, S. M. (1999). *Romiette and Julio*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Elkeles, S. (2009). *Perfect chemistry*. New York: Walker.

Goold, R (Director). (2012, April). *Shakespeare Unlocked: Romeo and Juliet.* Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00qbnv7.

Green, J. (2012). *The fault in our stars.* New York: Dutton Books.

Hill, K.D. (2008). Conflict in a sixth-grade book club: The impact of rule-driven discourse. *Voices from the Middle,* 16(2), 16-24.

Hubbard, J. (2011). Three student perspectives: An introduction. *Voices from the Middle, 18*(3), 37-48.

Korman, G. (2002). *Son of the mob*. New York: Hyperion Books.

Luhrman, B.(Producer and Director) & Martinelli, G. (Producer). (1996) *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet* [Motion picture]. United States: 20th Century Fox.

Mast, S. (2002). Copy Change: Rewriting the Prologue from *Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.* The Quarterly. Retrieved from http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/download/nwp_file/452/Copy_Change.pdf?x-r=pcfile_d.

Myers, W. D. (2006). *Street love*. New York: Amistad.

Pearson, M. (2001). *Scribbler of dreams.* San Diego: Harcourt.

Romano, T. (2000). *Blending genre, altering style: Writing multigenre papers.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

Smith, M. W., Wilhelm, H. D., & Fredricksen, J. E. (2012). *Oh, Yeah?! Putting argument to work both in school and out (exceeding common core standards).* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Swift, T. (2008). Love Story. *On Fearless* [CD]. Nashville: Big Machine Records.

We Three Kings. "Check Yes Juliet." Perf. *We Three Kings.* We Three Kings. S*A*M* and Sluggo, 2007.

Woodson, J. (1998). *If you come softly.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Jessica Overstreet *taught 8th grade English Language Arts at New Ellenton Middle School in Aiken County. She received by Bachelor of Arts in English and History at the University of South Carolina and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Augusta State University.*

Mary E. Styslinger *is an associate professor of English and Literacy Education at the University of South Carolina where she directs the Midlands Writing Project. She is passionate in her efforts to interweave literacy into the secondary English curriculum and across the disciplines. Recently she has focused her attention on marginalized and at-risk youth including those incarcerated and those on the autism spectrum. She has published articles in English Journal, Voices from the Middle, Language Arts, Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, and Kappan. She has one book under contract, Fostering Literacy Behind Bars: Successful Strategies and Services for Incarcerated Youth and Adults, and another, Workshopping the Canon, under review.*

A Wow Moment: Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges through Teacher Research

Sara McLean Suber

On the surface, my fourth grade ELA class is not much different than many others across the state. It is composed of fifteen, rambunctious, opinionated, African-American students, most of whom are eager to please and willing to try new things. However, it did not take long to realize that my students did not like reading. According to a student survey I conducted at the beginning of this internship, I knew the class overwhelmingly indicated that math and science were their favorite subjects. Over half of the class specified that they played video games more than three hours a day. Conversely, the majority of the class replied they 'never/rarely' read at home. Another quarter of the class indicated they only read 1-3 times per week at home. Reading was not a part of their lives outside of the class. I was not sure if I could completely alter this mindset, but I knew I had to try.
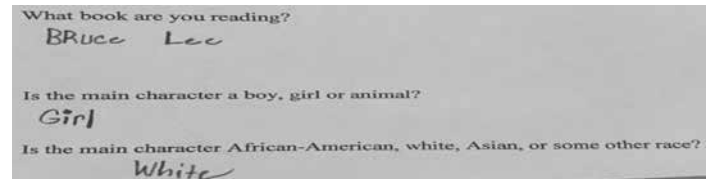
My students' negative connotations about reading had to come from somewhere. These were not new feelings; the students entered the fourth grade with a solid dislike for this activity. This research was designed to hopefully change some of their minds. It was rooted in the idea that the students do not see themselves in the books they read. They do not have access to quality literature that is a reflection of themselves or their futures. These obstacles prevent the students from making literary connections to themselves, other texts, or the world. The purpose of this teacher research study was to break these barriers and to build bridges between the students and the literature they read.

To initially investigate, I conducted individual conferences with students about their current book of choice. These discussions honed in on their reasons for choosing the book, connections being made, and the race/gender of the main character. I asked these questions because I wanted to have record of the students' choices and connections prior

to conducting any further research. For this research to be pertinent and applicable, I had to know where to begin and how to base my decisions on the needs of my students. The results of these conferences revealed that connections to the text were not consistently being made:

Type of Connection	Connections Made (out of 15 students)
Text-to-Self	6
Text-to-Text	3
Text-to-World	1

It also seemed that comprehension was lacking with the students. For example, one student was reading *Bruce Lee* and had been for at least a week. This student reported that the main character of the book was a white girl:

What book are you reading?
BRuce Lee

Is the main character a boy, girl or animal?
Girl

Is the main character African-American, white, Asian, or some other race?
White

After conducting the individual conferences, I administered a group survey (see Appendix A); included in these questions were a variety of prompts used to determine what the students envision, as far as race and gender, when they think of certain professional or adult roles. The purpose of this survey was to gather more information related to the collective mindset of my students and to help guide the literature selection to be used in the research. Prompts were designed to be gender neutral and open to interpretation. I asked these questions because I wanted to know more about the students' preconceived notions concerning adult roles. I was wondering if they saw themselves in any

of these capacities. According to the student interest survey I administered at the beginning of the internship, when asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, students replied with a variety of answers including professional athlete (basketball, football and baseball), fighter pilot, astronaut, zookeeper, interior designer, teacher, doctor, and musician. However the data compiled from the prompts (see Appendix B) revealed that overall the students did not see themselves in many of the selected professions or roles. Specifically I realized the students needed exposure to African-American males in roles other than athletes. This was supported by information from the individual conferences. Only one student was reading a book in which the main character was an African-American male; it was called *I am Lebron James*. I planned on using this information, coupled with the knowledge that connections and comprehension were lacking, to design a literary unit that would expose the students to a framework of quality, reflective literature.

The information from the conferences and survey were eye-opening. How is it that these students were not making connections to the book that they were selecting for themselves? Did they not understand the content? Were they not interested in the subject matter? Did they not relate to the main character's struggles and celebrations? Or were the students simply not taking the time to process what they were reading and how it applies to their own lives? These were some of the guiding questions that led to the development of this project. Delving further into the information gleaned from surveys and the conferences I realized the main characters were not reflective of our classroom community: 78.5% of the main characters were Caucasian, and 21.5% of the main characters were African-American. Did this have any influence, or lack thereof, on my students' ability to make connections to their books?

Using the data as a springboard for this teacher research, the foundation was set in two main goals:

1. Building Bridges
Provide the students with quality literature and explicitly practice making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections to further comprehension (and hopefully enjoyment).

2. Breaking Barriers
Use literature to expose the students to adults in roles that debunk some of their preconceived notions.

I knew that the students needed to be able to make connections to increase their comprehension of the text. Barton and Sawyer (2003) point out that the act of making personal connections to the information presented in text aids comprehension. Brown (2007) highlights the difference between just reading and getting something of value from the reading. By using personal connections from reading and interacting with the text it is possible to facilitate valuable outcomes (Brown, 2007). These readings gave me the idea that I should create the time and space for students to explicitly make connections to texts as a way to increase comprehension.

One of the clearest indicators of the direction for this project came from a student's exit slip. "How can you make connections when you have nothing to connect with?"
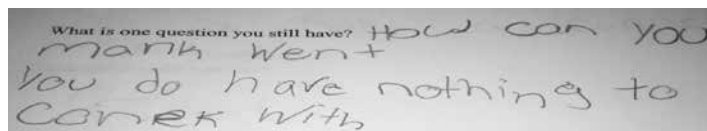

This was a WOW moment for me, which led me to the realization that I needed to not only explicitly show these students how to make connections, but also provide them with shared experiences on which to base these connections. Once I realized what my students needed, I developed a plan to expose them to literature that was more reflective of my classroom population.

Ketch (2005) offers many reasons why literature needs to be reflective. Some of the main reasons students need access to reflective literature is so they can make connections, comparisons, and increase comprehension (Ketch, 2005). However, Walter Dean Myers sums it up the best in his 2014 *New York Times* article titled "Where Are the People of Color in Children's Books?" He shares the overarching message contained in the feedback he receives from people about his writing, "They have been struck by the recognition of themselves in the story, a validation of their existence as human beings, an acknowledgment of their value by someone who understands who they are. It is the shock of recognition at its highest level."

At the beginning of this project the class spent some time exploring the current (March 2015) Scholastic book order form. The students charted the race (if applicable) and gender (if applicable) of the main characters featured on the front covers of the books. Our results were reminiscent of the data collected at the beginning of this study concerning the main characters of the books the students were reading. Similarly, the Scholastic book order contained mainly white main characters, and in the books containing African-American males as main characters, they were mostly athletes.

Main Characters
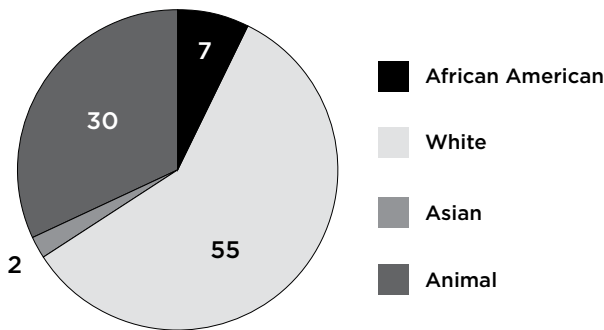
The students were surprised by these results. On their exit slips that day, one question asked how the students felt about what they learned. The following are some of their responses:

- Sad, because there are more whites than blacks
- Unfair
- There must be more white authors in the world than black authors
- Why is it like this
- It could be the same stories, but just about black kids

At first I thought it might be a coincidence that this month's book order was like this. But after further research, it became apparent this was not an anomaly. According to a study by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, out of 3,200 children's books published in 2013, only 93 were about African-American people. This was another WOW moment for me. This trend was happening across our nation, not just in my classroom.

After much deliberation, I selected eight read aloud books to use with my students.

These were purposefully selected to highlight African-Americans in roles that my students could identify with and that presented African-American males in roles other than as athletes:

- *Dave the Potter* by Laban Carrick Hill
- *Mr. Lincoln's Way* by Patricia Polacco
- *Nappy Hair* by Carolivia Herron
- *The Rain Stomper* by Addie Boswell
- *Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting
- *Something Beautiful* by Sharon Dennis Wyeth
- *Speak to Me (and I Will Listen between Lines)* by Karen English
- *Wings* by Christopher Myers

Since it was apparent that my students needed practice making connections to texts, we practiced this strategy. Burke (2006) reminds us that we should not assume that students know how to make connections. Not wanting to leave anything to chance, I knew that I would have to model making connections and be explicit about how I want students to share and chart their personal connections. Students were given sticky notes and were encouraged to write down their connections as they listened to the books being read and took part in discussions. At first any and all connections were welcomed; however as the project progressed students were scaffolded into making more evidence based, quality connections. Text-to-world proved to be the most challenging connections for the students to make. The main barrier with this connection was the limited access the students had to world news. However, overall the students participated eagerly and grew with their connection making. Below is a picture of one of the connection charts we made for a book in this project:
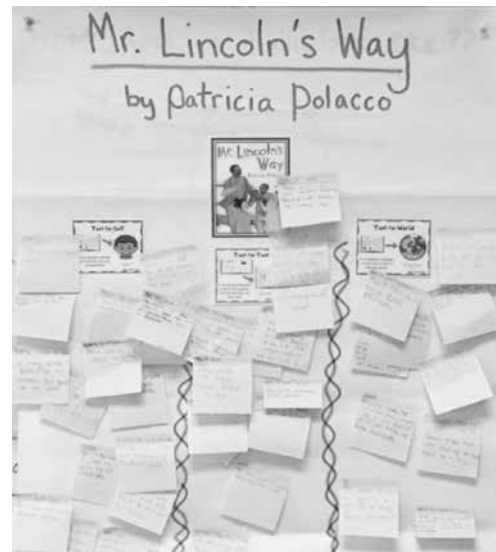
Certain activities associated with the project lessons were more popular than others with the students. Some of their favorites were the *Nappy Hair* Readers' Theatre and similes, making onomatopoeia comic strips after reading *The Rain Stomper*, using the bully ball to facilitate discussions with *Mr. Lincoln's Way*, and making pottery in conjunction with reading *Dave the Potter*. These activities not only provided common experiences for the students, but also furthered their understanding of writing craft moves and continued to strengthen our classroom community.

Combing through my hair is like I'm crawling through a jungle

To be able to compare comprehension before and during the project, the students took comprehension quizzes that I created on all of the books. These quizzes focused on multiple aspects of comprehension such as character traits, problem/resolution, sequencing, vocabulary, inference, and retelling favorite parts of the book. The results seem to indicate reading literature in which students see themselves, making connections, and sharing in book talks all contribute to increases in comprehension. The six students used in the chart are representative of the classroom community as a whole (two receiving resource services, two middle performing, and two higher performing).

	Before	**During**
Student 1	73.8	97.75
Student 2	78.5	96.25
Student 3	63	96.5
Student 4	66.7	97
Student 5	77.5	91
Student 6	72	84.9

I began to realize during this project that there were bigger implications to what we were doing. It became more than just an ELA unit or an MAT assignment. I started to see the

reality of teaching for social justice, specifically developing democratic activism. According to Sleeter (2014) teaching for social justice means developing democratic activism, which helps prepare students to challenge forms of discrimination. Carlisle et al. (2006) call this "direct social justice action and intervention" which occurs when a teacher "seeks to facilitate a living and learning environment for the development of liberatory thinking and action" (p. 61). I wanted the students to know that if they did not agree with something, they should look for ways to change it. They should take action. To combat the inequality we found in the Scholastic Book Order, the class made our own book order. The students chose to name the project "Book Order of the Future" in hopes that one day soon book orders will contain more diverse main characters. The students helped categorize the books and set-up the layout of the project. It contained chapter books, picture books, biographies, graphic books, and other popular books. Each student contributed two selections along with a write up of either the summary of the book or why they chose the book. As you can see the distribution of race among the main characters is much more reflective of our classroom community.

Main Character
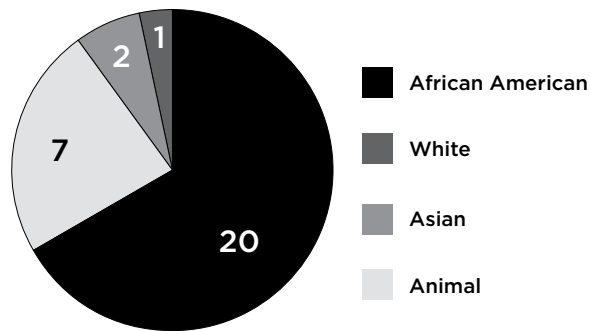
After seeing the results of this project I more fully understand the importance of teacher-provided reading experiences reflecting strong African-American lead characters, sharing time on the carpet to build community, reading conferences on independently selected books, meeting standards through read-alouds, and inclusion of connections in book-based discussions. Undoubtedly Walter Dean Myers has influenced my view of the available literature featuring American-American characters. At the end of his article in the *New York Times*, he states, "Then I'm told that black children, and boys in particular, don't read. Small wonder. There is work to be done." I cannot imagine a more appropriate outlook or a more important challenge.

Appendix A
Professional/Adult Roles Prompts

A doctor just operated on someone who was in a car crash.

The football player scored the game winning touchdown.

The teacher gave all the students extra credit.

The astronaut went to outer space.

The parent cooked dinner.

The firefighter jumped on the big truck.

The pilot landed the plane safely.

The basketball player shot a free throw.

The lawyer met with a new client.

The college student had to study for an exam.

The principal read a book to the class.

The singer released another album.

Appendix B
Results of Professional/Adult Roles Prompts

Doctor

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
▨	African American Male
▩	African American Female

Values: 8, 3, 2, 1

Football Player

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
▨	African American Male
▩	African American Female

Values: 4, 1, 9

Teacher

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
▨	African American Male
▩	African American Female

Values: 9, 1, 4

Astronaut

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
▨	African American Male
▩	African American Female

Values: 8, 2, 2, 2

Parent

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
■	African American Male
■	African American Female

3, 1, 10

Firefighter

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
■	African American Male
■	African American Female

7, 7

Pilot

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
■	African American Male
■	African American Female

2, 1, 11

Basketball Player

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
■	African American Male
■	African American Female

2, 8, 11

Lawyer

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
■	African American Male
■	African American Female

1, 6, 7

College Student

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
■	African American Male
■	African American Female

6, 8

Principal

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
■	African American Male
■	African American Female

2, 4, 8

Singer

Legend	
■	White Male
□	White Female
■	African American Male
■	African American Female

5, 7, 2

Teachers as Researchers

References

Barton, J. & Sawyer, D.M. (2003). Our students are ready for this: Comprehension instruction in the elementary school. *The Reading Teacher,* 57(4), 334–347.

Brown, M.D. (2007). I'll have mine annotated, please: Helping students make connections with text. *English Journal*, 96(4), 73-78.

Burke, J. (2006). Teacher toolbox: Making connections. *Voices from the Middle* 13(3), 38-39.

Carlisle, L. R., Jackson, B. W., George, A. (2006). Principles of social justice education: The Social Justice Education in Schools Project. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 39, 55–64.

Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Retrieved from: http://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/ on April 1, 2015.

Ketch, A. (2005). Conversation: The comprehension connection. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(1), 8-13. Myers, W. D. (2014). Where Are All the People of Color in Children's Books? The New York Times, March 15, 2014.

Sleeter, C. (2014). Deepening Social Justice Teaching. Journal of Language and Literacy Education, February 2014.

Sara Suber *After teaching at a private school for 6 years, Sara Suber decided to return to graduate school at the University of South Carolina to pursue an MAT (Master in the Art of Teaching) degree. She graduated in May 2015, and during the summer of 2015 she completed her Gifted and Talented Endorsement. Currently she is teaching 3rd grade at Meadowfield Elementary in Richland School Distrct One.*

Beyond the "Plop": Using Quotations Effectively in Argumentative Writing

Sarah Hunt-Barron, Rebecca Kaminski, Dawn Hawkins, Emily Howell, and Rachel Sanders

Teacher: "I see you included a quote as evidence."

Student: "It's perfect!"

Teacher: "How does it back up your claim?"

Student: "It supports what I am saying in my claim."

Teacher: "But how?"

Student: "It speaks for itself."

Sound familiar? The above dialogue represents a typical conversation teachers have, see, and hear in classrooms as students develop arguments. For the past two years, the Upstate Writing Project partnered with schools around the state, collaborating to help students learn to write effective arguments as part of the National Writing Project's College-Ready Writers Program. Throughout this effort we have worked with middle and high school English teachers, co-planning and co-teaching lessons in an effort to help students master argumentative writing.

Argument is not new. One common framework for talking about argument dates back to the early Greeks and Aristotelian argument. Books like *Everything's an Argument* (Lunsford & Ruszkiewicz, 1999) have been used in college composition courses for nearly two decades. With the recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards by many states and subsequent controversies, the teaching of argument in middle and high school was brought to the forefront of conversations about the English language arts curriculum. In the latest version of the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts (2015), argument is included in the reading and writing standards across grade levels. Teaching argument has become an expectation in our middle and high school classrooms and should be. After all, argument is an important part of our everyday lives. For many of us, when we talk about sports with friends, we make an argument. When we talk about books or movies, we make an argument. When we advocate for a cause we care about, we make an argument. Respectful argument is how we begin to see the world from another point of view and helps us make important decisions using available evidence. If one of the goals of school is to create an educated citizenry who can advocate on their own behalf, argument would seem to be an essential component of education.

Over the past two years, the Upstate Writing Project has worked extensively with teachers to find ways to effectively teach students the fundamentals of argument writing. One area where we see students often struggling, whether they are 7th graders or 12th graders, is integrating quotations into their argumentative pieces. We have come to recognize the "quote plop" as a typical technique less skilled writers use as they develop their craft. What does the "quote plop" look like in a piece of writing? Here is an example from an 8th grader, which seems to be fairly typical. The student's claim is that schools should start later, and he is writing his response based on an article from *Scholastic Scope*, "Should School Start Later?" (O'Neill, 2014). The following excerpt is the second paragraph of his essay:

> According to a National Sleep Foundation Study, 59 percent of sixth through eighth graders and 87 percent of high school students don't get the recommended 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep a night. Jilly Dos Santos, a senior at Rock Bridge High School in Columbia, Missouri, said she was "ten minutes late to school every day because of the early start time and it was disruptive."

The paragraph definitely has evidence, taken directly from the reading provided. But how can a teacher move the student from listing evidence to introducing evidence, citing the source (and perhaps mentioning the credibility of the source), and then connecting the evidence directly to his or her claim?

After some research, reading, and much trial and error, we found several effective strategies that helped us move students from the "quote plop" to using evidence effectively to support a claim. We introduced these strategies over time and gave students ample opportunities

to practice using each strategy in their own writing before moving onto another. With each strategy, we taught a mini-lesson (or several), modeled the strategy, and then asked students to immediately incorporate the technique into their own writing and revisions. This enabled students to gain some initial practice with each approach and emphasized the importance of revision in writing.

Strategy 1: The Quotation Sandwich

The quotation sandwich is a simple strategy to help students learn to "sandwich" their quote within ideas (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010). We used this technique to help students use the quotes they found to support their claims and incorporate the quotes into their arguments smoothly.

The quotation sandwich is simple and effective. First, we had students identify a quote that supported their claim. Next, we explained how we were all going to sandwich the quote (Figure 1). We then gave students an opportunity to practice each part, essentially modeling and writing a paragraph together.
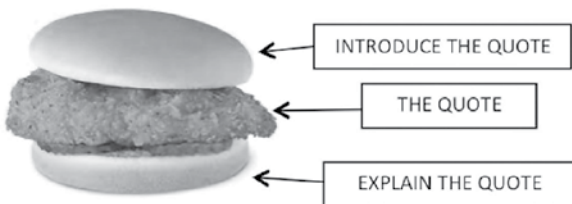

Figure 1: The Quotation Sandwich

For some of our students, this was not a new concept. Many students understood that they needed to introduce the quote, but they weren't sure what to do after the quote. A key for success was modeling each part. One example we used in a classroom of English 2 students centered around a set of articles about celebrities selling photos of their children to tabloids. Students read a short article on celebrity baby photos and were asked to make a claim based on the information presented in the article. Some students argued celebrities had a right to control who received their children's photos and others argued that this was just another way for celebrities to make money and violated the privacy of their children. We then wrote a paragraph together, choosing a claim to use as an example. In this case we argued celebrities should not be allowed to sell pictures of their own children to tabloids for profit.

First, we worked on the introduction of a quote. We wanted to make sure we tied this quote to our claim and also stated clearly why the quote was included. Our sentence to introduce our first quote became, "Celebrities no longer may have the financial incentives to sell photos, even if they would like the extra income."
We then talked about how to use the quote we chose from the article. Should we just copy the quote after this first sentence? Do we need a technique to introduce the quote? Using language provided by Graff & Birkenstein (2010), we walked through some possible language to help integrate our quote more smoothly into our writing using some sentence frames (Figure 2). We elected to write, "According to New York Magazine's Kat Stoeffel, '..the recession hit [and] some magazines stopped paying for baby photos altogether' (1)."

TEMPLATES FOR INTRODUCING QUOTES

X states, "_____."
According to X, "_____."
In the article, X maintains that "___."
In X's view, "___."
X agrees when he writes, "___."
X disagrees when she writes, "___."
Can also use verbs like: states, asserts, complains, is alarmed, etc.

Figure 2: Sentence frames for introducing quotes (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010

Finally, we explained our quote, making sure our reader knew why we included it. After reviewing the sentence frames from Figure 3 (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010), we decided to write a fairly straightforward sentence to explain our quote: "The market for baby photos has largely disappeared, leaving celebrities without the option to make large sums of money from their baby's photos. This reluctance to pay for celebrity baby photos does not appear to be hurting tabloid sales."

TEMPLATES FOR EXPLAINING QUOTES

Basically, X is saying _____.
In other words, X believes _____.
In making this comment, X argues ____.
X is insisting that _____.
X's point is that _____.
The essence of X's argument is that ____.

Figure 3: Sentence frames for explaining quotes (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010)

After working through this together, students were able to write their own paragraph, using another quote from the same article to support our shared claim. We then shared our paragraphs in pairs. From this simple mini-lesson, we were able to begin using the sentence frames and language of the strategy in our own writing moving forward.

Strategy 2: Seeing Stripes

Once students have the idea of sandwiching their quote, they can use this simple technique to assess how well they are using the sandwich strategy. Students simply use a highlighter and find each piece of evidence from their sources in their paper. They highlight those pieces of evidence, whether they are direct quotes or paraphrased from the text(s). They do this highlighting of evidence for each of their body paragraphs. After they are finished, if students are introducing and explaining quotations well, they should see stripes. If they see large blocks of highlighted text and no white space, revision is definitely needed. In Figure 4, we see excerpts from a draft by an 8th grade student. As students become more adept at incorporating evidence, they should notice their white space expands, particularly after a piece of evidence, as they better explain how this piece of evidence supports their claim to the reader.

If we control pythons, then numbers of mammals won't disappear. "The giant invasive snakes are the reason for the near disappearance of rabbits, opossums, raccoons, foxes and even bobcats in the southernmost section of the 1.5 million-acre Everglades. "They're like vacuum cleaners on mammals," according to The Washington Post. The opposite side of the argument might say that controlling the snakes means killing them which is bad. However, it is better to decline the number of one species than numbers of mammal species going extinct. Burmese pythons are extremely large and very dangerous. Darryl Fears said, "They euthanized the largest snake ever captured in Florida, at 17.5 feet-more than twice as long as former basketball player Shaquille O'Neal is tall." They also reproduce rapidly. Three snakes lay an average of 50-100 eggs per year. That is another reason why these snakes should be left alone because there is no reports of them harming humans but if they continue to repopulate at a fast rate then they will become a serious, uncontrollable problem. They are learning to adapt to various temperatures and they are traveling south.

Figure 4: Example of highlighting text for evidence

The key for this strategy is revision – the purpose is to help students see their words and ideas in proportion to those they have used from the readings. Ultimately, their words and ideas should clearly outnumber the evidence, and their paper should contain both evidence from sources and their own commentary on this evidence. This strategy works well with peer conferencing. Rather than have a student highlight evidence in their own paper, partner students and have them highlight each other's papers, an effective way of also teaching students to read for evidence that supports a claim. The highlighting also gives students a clear role in peer conferencing and something concrete to discuss.

Strategy 3: Using the Moves

As part of our work with the National Writing Project's College-Ready Writers Program (CRWP), we also became acquainted with Joseph Harris's work, Rewriting: How to Do Things With Texts (2006). Harris (2006) uses the word move (p. 3) to talk about different ways to incorporate textual evidence to support the purpose of the writer. The moves give us terms to talk about how we can use quotes to best support our own claims. To help students see different ways we can use evidence in our arguments, we introduced four of Harris' moves: illustrating, authorizing, extending, and countering. These terms and moves became part of how we read, wrote, and talked about texts.

We started with illustrating. Illustrating is simply using an example to move your idea forward for the reader. It's basically offering an example from a text to make your point. To help students really understand what illustrating looks like, we used an example of a quotation sandwich with a quotation from a text on the dangers of mountain climbing. Our claim for this argument was that risk takers do not have the right to rescue services. Figure 5 offers an example of illustrating.

Mount Everest is an attraction for many climbers and too many are willing to risk their lives to climb it.

According to Guy Moreau in his article, "Why Everest?," "Not everyone manages to complete the climb, and some of these people pay with their lives. There have been over 230 deaths on the mountain" (Moreau 25).

When climbers risk their lives to climb Mount Everest, it seems they do not think about the rescue teams that will have to risk their lives to try to save the climbers. The actions of the climbers put others in harms way.
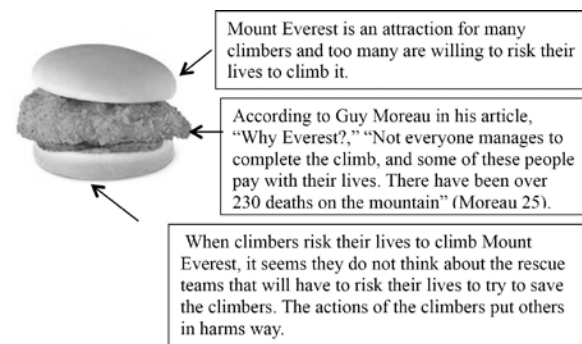
Figure 5: An Illustrating Quotation Sandwich

Authorizing is the next concept we introduced. This move is one of the simplest, because it asks the writer to use the expertise of another to prove their point. Using the same claim (risk takers do not have the right to rescue services), we selected another quote to make our point. Using the same visual support with the quotation sandwich, we offered the following example of authorizing:

Mount Everest is an attraction for many climbers and too many are willing to risk their lives to climb it. According to Rhys Jones, an English climber who successfully completed Everest, "Everyone is aware of the risk…But actually, risk is part of the attraction-it makes it more of a test, it gives you more to aim for" (Moreau 27). Climbers are thrill seekers who

want to overcome the risk of the climb, but this does not mean that rescue teams should have to put their lives in danger when the risk is so great and the climber fails.

Authorizing is usually one of the simplest moves to teach because students are familiar with it; we see people invoke experts regularly when we watch television news programs, read magazines and newspapers, or even have conversations with one another.

Extending is the third move we shared with students. This is when students put their own spin on someone else's idea to further their argument. This may be the most difficult of the moves to teach, in part because it requires some deeper thinking on the part of the student. Using the same example as above, we demonstrated extending by using the statistics about Everest climbers in a new way:

Mount Everest is an attraction for many climbers and of the hundreds who attempt the ascent each year many require assistance to leave the mountain. There have been over 230 deaths on Mount Everest (Moreau 25). This is just the number of climbers who have died, not the number who have required risky rescues. How many times have rescuers put themselves at risk to help an unprepared or injured climber? And among those deaths, how many have been rescuers who have died as they attempted to help less expert climbers get off the mountain? Examining deaths alone does not tell the full story. Clearly, if so many have died, many others may have been injured or maimed in helping climbers who had no business being on Mount Everest in the first place.

Extending is truly the most challenging of the moves so far, because it asks students to put their thinking clearly on paper and to use textual evidence in ways that may seem less straightforward than quoting an expert or simply using a quote to bolster their claim.

The last move we introduced was countering. Especially for middle school students, the idea that we acknowledge the other side's claim was often a challenging concept. First, we needed to identify what an opposing claim might be; according to Harris (2006), a counter is "…designed not to nullify but to suggest a different way of thinking" (p. 54). Our counter could argue the other side, but it could also just illuminate weak points in our argument. Because our claim was fairly simple (risk takers do not have the right to rescue services), coming up with a counter was not difficult. Students readily identified that all climbers have the right to rescue services as a possible counterclaim. We then shared the following example, using evidence from the text:

Members of climbing rescue teams are often in the profession because of a love they have for the sport of climbing. For many rescue teams, there is a sense of pride when a rescue is attempted, even if it ends in death. The family of Nick Hall, a ranger with Mountain Rainier National Park who lost his life during a rescue mission, explains: "We are proud of our son for his involvement in the mountain rescue. We hope his death will bring attention to the hazards and safety requirements and commitment to be involved in the profession and sport he so loved" (The Seattle Times 29). Rangers and members of mountain rescue teams choose the profession knowing the risk involved. Like all climbers, the risk they face is a challenge to conquer.

If we stop here, we have acknowledged the counter, but we have left off a critical step: the pushback. Without the pushback, the counterclaim has the opportunity to carry the day and sway the reader away from your claim. Together, we worked to compose a pushback. For this counter, a pushback might read as follows:

But also like all climbers, there are times when the risk is too great and common sense should overrule the thrill of the climb. It is not worth losing additional lives because some climbers do not know their limits.

As we used these moves in classrooms, we realized that to truly use them and use them effectively, students needed to practice them often. The good news is, according to Harris (2006), most academic writing is essentially argument so students should have the opportunity to practice these moves whether they are writing some form of literary criticism or writing an op-ed for the local newspaper.

Seeing Growth

After implementing these strategies and approaches to argument writing, students began making great strides in their incorporation of text. Formerly skimpy paragraphs began to bulk up, as students explained their thinking in more depth. By the end of the academic year, students who had been writing maybe a page to a page and a half in the fall were writing three to four page arguments. The plopping of quotations, although not completely absent, was much improved. In this sample from an eighth grader, written in February, the difference is clear. This student was writing about hunting, and her claim was animal rights groups should not try to stop hunting because hunting helps pays for their goals, including the preservation of wildlife. In her third paragraph, she wrote:

Eighty-five percent of Americans feel that hunting has a proper place in society. Meaning, when animal rights organizations toss around the word "majority" on the subject of banning hunting, they are disingenuous. In "Right to Hunt vs. Animal Rights" author Jim Armhein explains, "if the 'majority rule' model applied to matters of personal freedom instead of solely to matters legislative and elective, NOTHING

would be allowed, and no new technologies or activities would ever flourish or even take hold. Imagine how that would affect the economy. Beyond that, the whole point of personal freedoms is to be able to resist the tyranny of the majority if you're so inclined." Basically, using the word "majority" is the wrong way to go. For example, yes, the majority of Americans don't hunt, but no, the majority of us don't want to ban it. If you want more "majority" facts, take a look at a poll led by Roper and Starch. Sixty-two percent of Americans agreed that hunters are the world's leading conservationists. So, how's that for "majority"?

Clearly a well-reasoned argument includes much more than simply including evidence and connecting that evidence to a claim. Writing claims that are debatable, defensible, and insightful (Smith, Wilhelm, & Fredericksen, 2012) can be a challenge as well. We share these strategies as a starting point to help students begin to understand that simply listing evidence does not make an effective argument. Evidence is not the craft of an argument; rather, it is our use of that evidence that makes an argument effective. Giving students tools to make their thinking visible to others is empowering and enables students to advocate for themselves and others and make real change in the world through their words and ideas.

References

Burnett, A. J. & McEwan-Adkins, E. K. (2013). *20 literacy strategies to meet the common core: Increasing rigor in middle and high school classrooms*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2010). *They say / I say: the moves that matter in academic writing* (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Harris, J. (2006). *Rewriting: How to do things with texts.* Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Lunsford, A., & Ruszkiewicz, J. (1999) Everything's an Argument. Boston, MA: Bedford/ St. Martins.

Moreau, G. (2014). Why Everest? Collections, Grade 7, pp.25-27. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

O'Neill, J. (2014). *Should school start later?* Scholastic Scope, 62(6), 20-21.
Smith, M., Wilhelm, J.D., & Fredericksen, J.E. (2012). Oh yeah? Putting argument to work both in school and out. Portsmouth: NH: Heinemann.

South Carolina Department of Education (2015). *South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts (ELA).* Retrieved from https://ed.sc.gov/scde-grant-opportunities/documents/FinalVersion-EnglishLanguageArtsStandards.pdf

Sarah Hunt-Barron *is an Assistant Professor of Literacy Education at the University of South Carolina Upstate and a site coordinator for the Upstate Writing Project. Her current research projects include examining the effects of professional development in argumentative writing on teacher practice and student work in 7th through 10th grade ELA classrooms, as well as examining the development of pre-service teachers technological skills over the course of their education. She is the current president of the South Carolina Council of Teachers of English.*

Dawn Hawkins *is the Co-Director of the Upstate Writing Project. She also serves as the Professional Development Coordinator, providing professional development focused on writing instruction for K-12 school districts across South Carolina. She is currently researching the impact of extended professional development on 7th -10th grade ELA teacher practices for improving the argument writing of their students.*

Emily Howell *is a doctoral candidate at Clemson University pursuing a degree in curriculum and instruction with a focus on literacy. Her dissertation study was a formative experiment exploring a multiliteracies approach to argument in high-school English classrooms. Emily worked with the Upstate Writing Project as a District Coordinator for the College-Ready Writers Program.*

Rebecca Kaminski *is a member of the Literacy Faculty in the Eugene T. Moore School of Education at Clemson University. She is the founding director of the Upstate Writing Project and serves as a consultant for the National Writing Project. Rebecca provides professional development focused on writing instruction for K-12 school districts across South Carolina. Her current research examines the impact of extended professional development on 7th -10th grade ELA teacher practices for improving the argument writing of their students.*

Rachel Sanders *is a doctoral student at The University of Georgia in the Language and Literacy Education Department. She is the Children's and Young Adult Literature Editor of the online publication, JoLLE, and teaches undergraduate courses in writing and disciplinary literacy. As part of the Upstate Writing Project, Rachel served as a Teacher in Residence for the NWP College and Career Ready Writing Program grant and is the Summer Youth Camps Coordinator.*

Methods that Matter

Say-Mean-Matter: Using Quotations Fluently In Writing

Jana C. Moore

I found a strategy to assist my students in reading for useful evidence and using that evidence in their essays: the Say-Mean-Matter chart (see Fig.1). This chart organizes their thoughts and has columns for the quotation, what it means, and what it has to do with their claim. It is set up with three columns, each headed with the words say, mean, and matter as shown in Figure 1. In the say column, the students put the quotation they found. In the mean column, students state what their quote means in their own words. If they cannot explain their quote, they should not use it. The matter column is used for the students to make the connection from their claim to the quote they choose.

Say	Mean	Matter

Figure 1

Students use this chart to plan their writing, more specifically, their use of quotes; it automatically makes their writing more organized. This chart helps their reading because students know if they cannot explain the quote in their own words or explain what it has to do with their claim, they should not utilize the quote. As a result of this chart, students were much more careful in reading for relevant evidence and in being more selective in the evidence they picked to use when writing.

Say-Mean-Matter in My Classroom

The very first time my students used this chart, they were given a text set that had five different research articles related to a topic we were studying. They were responsible for reading the articles and finding meaningful evidence to back up their already formed claims about the material we were working with. I gave them a paper that had a pre-made say-mean-matter chart on it, just like in Figure 1. We took about ten minutes to review what goes in each column. No one asked any questions, but no one knew what they were doing either. When I took up their pre-writing charts to look over and check if everyone was on the right track, I was disappointed. It was time to back up and try again.

It was clear that my students needed a little more guidance with the say-mean-matter chart, so I decided to scaffold by placing sentence starters in the boxes for my students to fill in. In the mean column, I put the words "When he says this he means…" My students would finish out that sentence by explaining what the quotation means. In the matter column, I put the words "This matters to my claim because…" The sentence was finished with them telling me what that piece of evidence has to do with their overall argument. After providing these prompts, the charts looked totally different (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2

After Say-Mean-Matter

The essays that I received from the first round with Say-Mean-Matter were very formulaic. In each of the body paragraphs they had their topic sentence, the piece of evidence (say), the mean that started out with "when he says this he means," and their matter that started out with "this matters to my claim because…" Almost all of my students copied straight from their chart to the body paragraphs of their essays. Though the essays were boring to read, the writing had a flow and it actually

made sense! This was a huge milestone for my students, and even they were impressed with their work.

From that point, we worked on revising strategies in order to make the papers sound less prescribed. As a class, we found many ways to introduce the mean and matter columns so their paragraphs wouldn't sound the same every time.

What I Learned

This was a strategy that we used throughout the year with every argumentative essay that my students wrote. As my students became more familiar with the strategy, they developed their own charts with their own set of sentence starters. Toward the end of the year, my more advanced students were writing essays that very clearly followed the say-mean-matter sequence, but they no longer needed to make their chart.

Pictured in Figure 2 is an example of student work from the end of the school year. This is a say-mean-matter chart that went with a two-day, cold-text writing prompt. This student had one day to read the material and plan and the second day to write the essay. She took a lot of time to plan and really map out her essay with her say-mean-matter chart. Many of my students, like this one, really latched on to the idea of the say-mean-matter chart because most of the work is done before you even start to formally write your essay. If the say-mean-matter chart is completed correctly, the only missing pieces are elaboration and transitions in order to have a fluent paper.

Overall, in my classroom, this strategy has worked wonders. Say-mean-matter led my students to read critically with a specific argument in mind, and write fluently using evidence to effectively support their claim. Even with a few bumps in the road, say-mean-matter took my student writing from struggling at best to exceptional ninth-grade arguments.

Figure 2

Jana C. Moore *is a 2013 graduate of the University of South Carolina Upstate with a degree in Secondary Education. She is currently a third year English teacher at Union County High School in Union, South Carolina. In addition to teaching, she also serves as a Teacher Consultant for the Upstate Writing Project.*

Engaging Readers with Thoughtshots

Crystal Chappell

How do we assist students in improving the quality of voice in a narrative piece? This was the primary question I had after reading students' personal narratives. Page after page of blah, followed by uncontrollable yawns. As I examined the writing samples closely, I realized that the problem wasn't the content of the students' narratives, it was the lack of depth in the writing. I began thinking about all the revision strategies I've learned over the years. *Ba-Da-Bing sentences, Snapshots, Explode a Moment*, and then it hit me, a strategy that I hadn't yet tried with my students but could easily implement: thoughtshots.

What are "Thoughtshots"?

"Thoughtshots are a writer's ability to communicate what a character is thinking and feeling at a given moment" (Harper, 1997, p.197). The ability to add what students are thinking or what a character might think in a narrative not only adds more voice to a piece, it also helps students engage their audience. Authors incorporate internal dialogue, or "thoughtshots," many times throughout a novel or short story. This was the element that my students' narratives were lacking. In many cases, students were doing a sufficient job of telling the story, but that was also the problem. I wanted my students to do more than just tell me their narrative. I wanted them to help me experience these important moments with them, to bring their stories to life. As Fletcher and Portalupi (2007) note, "When you write a story, you can do more than just tell what happened to you. You can also tell what happened inside you: what you were thinking, how you were feeling" (p.47).

Middle school writing instructor, Laura Harper (1997), states in *The Writer's Toolbox: Five Tools for Active Revision Instruction* that "Thoughtshots, our third tool, give writers ways to move inside their characters and show what their characters are thinking" (p.196). Harper and her students studied novels to understand how professional authors give readers an inside look at their characters. After investigating several novels, they discovered authors often use three basic ways of revealing internal reflection: characters have flashbacks, characters have flash forwards, and characters internally debate what is going on or what to do. After analyzing her students' work, Harper found that by adding thoughtshots her students were able to add "sophisticated characterization." So, I thought to myself, *Why not give it a try?*

My students are third graders from a Title I school in the Upstate region of South Carolina. Most of the students had been in my classroom since August, however two of the students were fairly new to the school. For the students who started the school year with me, writing workshop was a sacred time they enjoyed. They loved the atmosphere that we created for writing time: the lighting, independence, collaboration, and soft music. However, after the state testing their attitudes toward writing conveyed a sense of doom and gloom. This was not the writing classroom that I wanted. I had to correct this: FAST!

After identifying the problem and choosing an effective revision strategy to correct the problem, I found myself questioning, *Where should I start?* I determined that it was best to simply start with a blank slate. My students needed to have a fresh perspective!

Step 1:

In order to establish this new perspective, I felt it was important to try something new. A strategy that would allow the students to write from the heart without all of the stress that came with the pressures from the state assessment was exactly what we needed. The rambling autobiography seemed like the perfect place to start (Reif, 2003). When writing a rambling autobiography, students generate memories that are important, memories that tell readers about who they are, and memories that would make great stories. I explained to my students that they didn't need to worry about correcting spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or sentence structure. I wanted them to focus on the ideas they had without the stress that often seemed to overwhelm them.

I modeled what this looked like. As I wrote my own rambling autobiography, I thought out loud so the students could understand my writing process, understand why these memories were written, and how one memory sometimes connected to another memory. As the excitement seemed to build among the students, I gave them 30 minutes to write as much as they could. My students loved the idea of just writing their thoughts freely! Many of them were disappointed when the 30 minutes were up. I then had them share with a partner. The conversations were amazing, and often the students shared with more than just their partner. This was the writing workshop I remembered!

Step 2:
Now that the students had ideas flowing, I asked them to read their rambling autobiography over and think about the significance of each memory. I asked students to choose their favorite memory from the rambling autobiography, one that would make a great story all on its' own. We called this their "Shining Moment" of the piece. This shining moment would be the story idea developed into a piece of narrative writing. I modeled this step for the students. As I read my own rambling autobiography out loud, I modeled thinking about which memories were the most significant to me and which memories would make the most interesting stories for my readers. I then highlighted my shining moment and explained why I chose this memory. The students then went back to their seats and re-read their rambling autobiography and chose the shining moment from the piece. As the students finished, they were invited to share this shining moment and tell their writing partner about this memory.

Step 3:
The next step was to create a story mountain with their story idea. A story mountain is an effective graphic organizer (See Figure 1). When creating a story mountain, the writer begins with the heart, climax, of the story. This helps the writers stay focused on the significance of the narrative. As I teach this to my students, I model identifying the heart of the story. I explain the heart of the story is the point of your story when your reader is hanging on your every

word and find themselves asking, "What will happen next?"

Figure 1: Story Mountain
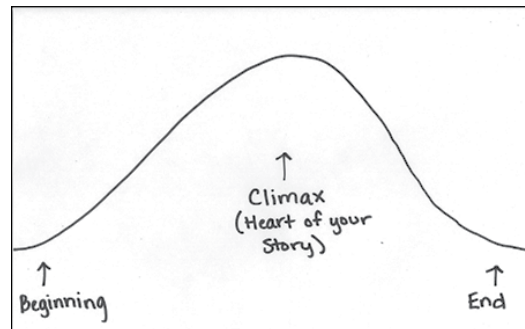
For these students, the story mountain was not a new strategy, so I didn't need to spend a lot of time explaining it. After finding the shining moment, I simply asked them to create a story mountain. I reminded them to stay close to the heart of their story, meaning that they should both begin and end the story close to the heart. The students then met with their partner and explained the events on their story mountain. Meeting with their partner and explaining the mountain is important because it gives the students an audience to help them judge how readers may react to the events and heart of the story (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Student Story Mountain

The students then wrote a draft using the story mountain and advice from their peers. Once the students finished with their drafts, I collected them and read the narratives. As I suspected, they lacked voice! Even though the students told their memories to their partners with such intonation and voice, their writing was missing something.

Step 4:

I knew that I wanted to teach my students about using thoughtshots in their writing, but I wanted them to see it in action. I thought that the best way to begin introducing this strategy was to have my students analyze how authors use the strategy to engage their readers. We had recently finished reading *Meet Addy*: An American Girl. In this book, Connie Porter uses internal dialogue, or thoughtshots, to help the reader understand how Addy's thoughts and actions carry out the plot of the story. The students enjoyed reading this book so much, that I knew they would enjoy studying what strategies Porter used to make it such a fantastic story.

We first discussed what italic font looks like. I showed them examples of words in italic font. I gave each student a copy of the *Meet Addy* text and put them in groups of two or three. Each group was assigned a chapter. The groups looked for examples of where the italic font was found. I asked the students to think about two questions as they read through the chapter: Why do you think the author included some of the words in italics? And how does this help you as you read the story?

Each group discussed the examples and the inquiry questions I posed. I walked around to help facilitate discussion. As a whole group, we discussed how these were the characters' thoughts. The students also thought about how many were found in each chapter. I urged the students to consider the places where Connie Porter adds thoughtshots in *Meet Addy*. She doesn't just add them to random places; she adds thoughtshots to the events in the story that are important to the heart of the story. Porter also doesn't overwhelm the story with thoughtshots. The students then returned to their story mountain. I instructed the students to add two thoughtshots to the story mountain. I encouraged them to choose events where a thoughtshot would help the reader really feel like they are right there in the moment. I added that one very smart place to add a thoughtshot would be the heart of the story.

I modeled what this would look like using my own story mountain. The students then returned to their own story mountains and added two thoughtshots. After that, I used my initial piece to model making editing marks in their drafts (we used a cloud symbol to signal

where to add thoughtshots). Now we were ready for the last step.

Figure 3: Story Mountain with Thoughtshots

Figure 4: Draft with Thoughtshot Revisions

Step 5:

The students took their revisions with the thoughtshots and created a published piece. In this step I didn't have an elaborate mini-lesson, I just instructed the students to write a little, then read what they wrote. This ensured that the students were using the changes they made in the revision step. Once students had a published piece completed, the students shared the two pieces with small writing groups. The groups reflected on the changes that each writer in their group made and how the quality of the piece improved.

Figure 5: Published Piece

After our writing group discussions, I had the students complete a reflection on their first draft of the piece and their published piece. Overall, the students felt their final piece scored higher than their initial draft based on the scoring rubric provided. The students expressed their enjoyment of "sounding like a real author." A few students indicated they wanted to use more than two thoughtshots in their narrative. Most of the students felt this strategy was something they would use in future pieces because it was easy to use when revising.

As I compared the initial drafts with the published pieces I saw improvement in voice. I noticed some of the students needed a little more practice with using thoughtshots because they were not using it like a dialogue. Instead, they would write like this: "I thought it was funny." If I had more time with these students I would follow up with a small group or individual conference and help them see the difference between a dialogue and just stating what you were thinking. To emphasize the difference, I would have the students go back to the novel and think about how the author didn't tell us the characters' thoughts, she actually had the words they were thinking about in their head. Using thoughtshots is a strategy that I will continue to use in the future. I plan on finding many examples of text that use internal dialogue for other examples. I feel that this strategy is one that many of my students will consider in the future to help improve the quality of their writing.

References

Fletcher, R. (1993). What a writer needs. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.

Fletcher, R., & Portalupi, J. (2007). *Craft lessons teaching writing K-8* (2nd ed.). Portland, Me.:Stenhouse Pub.

Harper, L. (1997). *The Writer's Toolbox: Five Tools for Active Revision Instruction*. National Council of Teachers of English, Vol. 74,(No. 3), Pp. 193-200. Retrieved June 22, 2015, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/41482858

Porter, C., & Rosales, M. (1993). *Meet Addy: An American girl*. Middleton, WI: Pleasant.

Reif, L. (2003). *100 Quickwrites: Fast and Effective Freewriting Exercises that Build Students' Confidence, Develop their Fluency, and Bring Out the Writer in Every Student*. Scholastic.

Spandel, V. (2005). *The 9 rights of every writer: A guide for teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Thoughtshots(n.d.). Retrieved June 11, 2015, from https://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/190/ccss-support/documents/Snapshots_Thoughtshots_and_Exploded_Moments.pdf

Crystall Chappell *has been teaching for 11 years (9 years in 3rd grade). She is passionate about teaching literacy to eager little minds. She has been a member of SCIRA and the Upstate Writing Project.*

Methods that Matter

Public Libraries Don't Limit Their Readers By Levels, Why Should We?

Dawn J. Mitchell

One of my favorite places to go as a child was our public school library. Plain Elementary School was located right in the middle of our neighborhood, Westwood near Simpsonville, and the best place in that school was smack in the middle of our library.

Our librarians had author study stacks of books where I found Beverly Clearly books that spoke to me. My Agewood Drive was a lot like Ramona's Klickitat Street. I loved reading the first book in the series, *Beezus and Ramona*, and then devoured them all in the second grade. *The Babysitters Club* series came next along with any and every other book that I was interested in and wanted to read. Some were encouraged by my teachers, such as *Charlotte's Web*, and have become lifelong favorites and now, dear friends of mine. Others were collections organized by my classroom teachers that called to me. In the fifth grade I found a collection of outdoor adventure books organized by this topic that appealed to me then and still does and immersed myself in *Where the Red Fern Grows, My Side of the Mountain, Hatchet,* and *Big Red*.

What I remember most about the experience was the choice I had to read books that interested me. Many times my choices were influenced by the suggestions of my peers, and often they were introduced to me by a thoughtful teacher's read aloud or a book she handed me she thought I'd like. These lessons of choosing books have become part of my life-long process as a reader. Not once in my formative reading years did a teacher tell me I had to read in a certain range or within a prescribed level dictated by scores from a reading test. Not once was I limited or labeled by a leveled classroom library.

What is a Leveled Library?

Scholastic defines a leveled book collection as "… a large set of books organized in levels of difficulty from the easy books that an emergent reader might begin to the longer, complex books that advanced readers will select. In some schools, the collection is housed in a central area. There are multiple copies of many books. There might be ten levels for grades K–1 and three or four levels for each later grade" (Pinnell, 2015).

The use of leveled texts was not introduced to limit students' reading choices during independent reading. Rather, it was introduced as a way for teachers to support readers through differentiation either in guided reading groups or individually. Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell are known for their work in *Guided Reading* (1996). In this work they share how through strategically chosen texts, responsive strategies, and a small group structure teachers can help facilitate independent and collective student growth. To help teachers with their choice of strategic texts, Fountas and Pinnell introduced their Text Level Gradient that provided specific levels, now commonly referred to as Guided Reading Levels or F&P Levels, that teachers could use to help choose books for their guided reading lessons.

Richard Allington, in his work *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers* (2001), advocates for teachers to use their knowledge of students' reading levels to help match them with appropriate texts. He proposes that the reason many students struggle as readers in our classrooms is because they are reading texts that are too hard for them. Determining students' independent reading levels and their current reading behaviors through diagnostic tools such as the Goodman's Miscue Analysis and Marie Clay's Running Records can help teachers choose texts that are at students' instructional level so that the students can apply strategies modeled with their teacher and/or peer within their guided reading group. This knowledge is also helpful for the teacher when

helping support students' independent reading. For example, when a teacher knows what levels her students are, he/she can work to ensure that there are a wide variety of texts for students to choose from.

In many classrooms today, teachers feel pressure to not only level their classroom libraries so their students can find texts within their range, but also to use the leveling system to limit their students' choices during their independent reading. The research that supports guided reading has been over applied to independent reading in ways that take away opportunities for students to determine what books they can read, to choose which books they want to read, and to implement the higher-level thinking skills required of all of us who read for pleasure in the real world. It fails to acknowledge that what determines our levels changes depending upon a variety of variables such as our background information on the topic, our motivation to read the book, and scaffolding systems that are in place and/or that are intrinsic to the reader that they can apply when they encounter a book they have a strong desire to read.

Leveling Limits Our Students' Independence

One enlightening experience I had with leveled texts was as an aunt to my seven-year-old nephew, Rayburn. Rayburn's independent reading level as determined by a test is 1.5-2.0. This test does not take into consideration Rayburn's interests and his background knowledge about topics he loves and already knows a lot about. For example, Rayburn is passionate about sharks. He knows nearly everything there is to know about them. He has watched Shark Week every year since he was born. He has his own collection of shark books, and he has a 3-D, anatomically-correct model of a plastic shark he received as a Christmas present.

Rayburn can independently read a nonfiction book about sharks that is at a much higher level than his test indicates because Rayburn likes sharks! If we limit him because of one assessment either on a computer or from a cold read DRA, ILI, DIBELS (whatever acronym/measure you use) we take away the essential component that research says promotes lifelong

independent reading–*choice*!

Rayburn is not alone. In a survey I recently gave to incoming freshman and sophomore students at a local junior college where I served as an adjunct instructor, asking about their reading experiences in their first teacher education course, Education 101, I found that the majority of my students loved reading in elementary school, but that their interest and love for reading gradually declined in middle school and drastically declined, and for many was non-existent, in high school (grades 9-12). I was puzzled by this, especially considering that my target audience for this survey was a class full of 18 and 19 year-olds who want to become educators.

When I asked them to tell me why this was, the resounding answer was because they didn't have time to read what they wanted, and they hated the assigned texts. Now, don't get me wrong, I am not against assigned reading. Many of the books that I love now I would not have chosen for myself had a skillful teacher not opened my eyes and my heart to the wisdom of John Steinbeck, Pearl Buck, or Barbara Kingsolver. What I am arguing for is a space for choice, and a place in our classrooms and in our schools to be student-centered. A balance of assigned reading and student choice of texts can both expand students' horizons and can promote individual and collective class growth. The choice we give our students to find their own books and the subsequent delight and sometimes struggle this choice provides creates the very independence that well-meaning and well-paid publishing companies say they are trying to help us foster with these leveled books. Yes, sometimes our students choose books that are too easy or too hard. Sometimes they choose ones they think they will like and then they don't. Don't we all do that as consumers in this world? Walk no further than your own closet and you will find a multitude of "just right" shoes that were just wrong when you walked in them for a while or a dress that you thought was perfect in the privacy of the dressing room but brought stares when you wore it in public. We learn from these mistakes, and we become more informed consumers.

According to Atwell, the three essential components to student independent growth are time, ownership, and response (Atwell, 1987).

When we level all of the books in our libraries and then limit our students to their current reading level, we take away the ownership; we limit the choice, and that impacts both the time students want to read and the response we are able to give them.

What We Can We Do Instead? Let's Look to Libraries

The last time I checked, the spaces where we go to browse and to buy books—including the public library, Barnes and Noble, my favorite indie bookstore, Hub City—do not level their books. There is no retina scanner to determine your reading ability and level, to tell you which shelf you should go to. They don't stop you at the door and ask to see your dot color or reading range so they can point you to the basket of books that they deem appropriate for you.

Amazingly, they believe the readers who walk through the door are capable of finding the books they want, of using the Dewey Decimal system which is a tried but true system of organizing books by author's last name and then by topics and interests such as animals, history, religion, etc. just like the librarian at Plain Elementary did, just like I did as a fourth grade teacher for my class, just like my own three children do now in their rooms.

Eli, my four year old, has his books organized by interests; his Ninja Turtle books are all together, his tractor books, books about animals that he says are mean (sharks, alligators, snakes, etc.) and books about animals that he says are nice (deer, bears?, and giraffes). His system baffles me, but he can use it.

Yes, it is important to have a wide variety of texts in our classrooms. Yes, it is important to reflect in those texts a wide variety of topics, of genres, of authors, and most importantly, of our students' interests. The organizing and labeling of these books should be both accessible and inviting. Yes, it is important that students play an integral part in creating their own text sets for independent reading that include books they choose based on authors they love, topics they are interested about, and books they determine are "good fits" for them.

As teachers we can help support our students' choices and scaffold their independence through taking time to know our students as people, to find out the shark lovers, the babysitters, the closet comic book readers so that we can make some suggestions, to create a box or a bin or a bag of books they may like that have multiple levels and multiple authors. Mini-lessons on choosing just right books, the permission of some trial and error, a few thoughtfully timed book talks, and the suggestions from friends of all ages are all you need to promote real independent reading. Isn't that what our public libraries, our Amazons, and our Goodreads web sites do for us? They make some suggestions and recommendations and leave us with a search engine and our own devices to find and explore, with the understanding that even if we pick wrong, we will live to pick again.

A Lifelong Lover of Books

The choice my parents, teachers, and my beloved librarian gave me to choose books for myself led me to be a reader when I wasn't at school. It led me to hop on my big-handle-barred bicycle throughout the summers of my fifth and sixth grade years and ride to the main branch of the Simpsonville library to check out books that I wanted to read.

I chose to spend many of my summer days stretched out across the window seat at the town library, long pigtails tied back with red yarn out of my face so I could see, perusing texts that I thought I might like (but didn't) such as *Little Women* as well as ones that I thought I wouldn't like *The Island of the Blue Dolphins* and *Anne of Green Gables* that became dear friends of mine. Some were too easy for me like *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood, but I read it over and over because I loved the language and loved playing school, reading it to my stuffed animal students.

Through my own experience as a reader and those of the young readers in my life I have discovered that it is more important to read and read widely than to always read in your range. My first taste of books was sweet and led to a lifelong love of words and a craving for places that hold rows and rows of books for me to wonder through, to get lost in, and then to find myself.

On my Mind

References

Allington, R. (2011). *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Atwell, N. (1987). *In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Teaching, and Learning*. Portsmith, NH: Heinemann.

Cleary, B. (2010). *Beezus and Ramona*. New York, NY: HarperFestival.

Fountas, I. & Pinnell, G. (1996). *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching For All Children.* Portsmith, NH: Heinemann.

George, J. (2004). *My Side of the Mountain.* New York, NY: Puffin Modern Classics.

Kjelgaard, J. (2011). *Big Red.* New York, NY: Holiday House.

Martin, A.. (1986). *Babysitter's Club Series.* New York, NY: Scholastic.

O'Dell, S.. (2010). *Island of the Blue Dolphins.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Paulsen, G.. (2006). *Hatchet.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Pinnell, G. (2015, June 22). *What is leveled reading?* Retrieved from http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/what-leveled-reading.

Rawls, W. (1984). *Where the Red Fern Grows.* New York, NY: Bantam Books.

White, E.B. (2012). *Charlotte's Web.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Dawn J. Mitchell *works in instructional services in Spartanburg (S.C.) School District Six. She specializes in literacy professional development and leads the district's induction course to provide relevant strategies and support to first-year teachers. Mitchell also serves as the partnership coordinator and an adjunct instructor for the Spartanburg Writing Project and as an adjunct instructor at Furman University, where she supervises and mentors preservice and induction teachers through the Teacher to Teacher program. She is currently a member of the ASCD Emerging Leaders Class of 2015.*

On mY Mind

Unknowing

Kristy Eubanks

Condensation from her tea glass slides down
her thin-skinned wrist.
The wrinkles in her neck smooth
as she swallows.
Her delicate fingers dance in the metal bowls
in her lap.
She smiles as I watch,
"Pass that towel to me, Hun."
She loosely drapes the tea towel
across her pillow lap,
To catch the film of dirt and dust.
My grandmother's intricate work
produces a sweet surprise
from the dark mahogany pecans,
The release of pleasure hidden
in the tough outer shell.
I kneel at her side,
Waiting for the next morsel to be dropped
into my open mouth,
The stories of "back when" tinkling in my ears.
Her attention focused on the flashing television
Her tutorage is the late afternoon
Sun behind her shoulders
And who is next to "come on down."

Hot Ice

Kristy Eubanks

After the blistering heat has subsided
And the blessed coolness of the day arrives,
The heat lightening begins.
The splintering white, violet light
Carouses like children playing tag.
The brilliance of the blinding flashes
Creates artistic displays of color.
The clothesline separating the sky into
distinct canvases.

Exhausted from continuous play,
I lie on the patio chaise
Tracing the stripped pattern on the cushions
with my fingers,
Vacantly gazing at the peeled crayons,
My creased coloring book strewn haphazardly
across the white wicker table.
My eyes frequently focusing on the flickering sky.

My taste buds tortured by
Hamburgers sizzling on a neighbor's grill.
I listen to my mother's muffled voice
Through the screen door
discussing Sunday dinner.
I sigh a whisper of contentment and listlessly
focus again on the sky electrified
by the erratic lines of splintering hot ice.

Kristy Eubanks *has enjoyed teaching gth grade Language Arts and English I in Spartanburg County School District Three for the past seventeen years. She is a graduate of Converse College with a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in Gifted and Talented Education. She is a member of the South Carolina International Reading Association and South Carolina Council of Teachers of English. Kristy lives in Pacolet, South Carolina with her husband, Leonard, and her two children, Brayden and Emily Kate.*

Summer

Katherine Mailloux

It was the first day of middle school for my daughter, Cassie. She had traded in her cute little girl clothes for the stylish teenage look. Cassie had blue jeans with holes in one leg and a skin tight t-shirt. "Just like all the other girls," she said. This was the end of an era in my life; my little girl was turning into a young lady right before my eyes.

She came home like always, slamming the front door, dropping her book bag on the floor, and shouting "Isn't anyone home?"

At dinner she spoke rudely to her father, spilled the salad on the floor, and stated that her teacher said, "We were not to say 'shut up'or say anything negative about another student."

"How was school today?" I asked casually.

"It was alright," Cassie said.

"Did you make any new friends?" her father asked.

Cassie regarded her father rather coldly. "I didn't learn nothing, but I made a new friend name Summer," she said loudly.

"Anything," I said. "Didn't learn anything. Can you tell me about your new friend?"

"Summer is the coolest girl in school," Cassie said as she was buttering her bread. "She told the teacher to shut up and made funny faces at her while her back was turned," she added with her mouth full of bread.

"What do you mean she told the teacher to shut up?" I asked.

Cassie pondered her answer before saying, "The teacher asked her to turn around and be quiet. That is when Summer told her to shut up," she said laughingly, as though she thought it was funny.

"Listen here young lady," her father said as she ran off to call Summer.

The next day Cassie remarked at dinner as soon as she sat down, "Well, Summer did it again today. She was rude to the teacher and kept hitting this boy in front of her." She grinned and said, "The teacher just ignored her and didn't do anything about it."

"Good heavens," I said, mindful to watch my words, "I can't believe the teacher just ignored her. She sounds like a bully."

"What did the teacher do today to make her mad?" my husband asked.

Cassie rolled her eye and said sarcastically, "The teacher gave us our first classwork assignment. She wanted us to read a short story and answer some questions."

According to Cassie, the third day of middle school was just as bad as the first two. We were informed that Summer took this kid's lunch money and made her cry; she broke the desk in social studies, and broke a window by throwing a book at it. The teachers gave her lunch detention and told her she could not talk to anyone, but she would not listen and just kept right on making faces and talking.

On Saturday I commented to my husband, "Do you think middle school is going to be alright for Cassie? I mean…with this girl, Summer? She sounds like a real handful and such a bad influence on our daughter."

"Cassie will be fine," my husband said encouragingly. "There are bound to be Summers in the world, and she needs to learn to deal with them on her own."

On Monday, Cassie came home late and full of still more stories about Summer. "Today she continued making funny faces at the teacher," Cassie said giddily. "I stayed late at school to walk home with Summer. She only lives a couple of streets over from us, and her mother drove me the rest of the way home."

I was thinking, *Why wasn't I in the front yard so I could meet this Summer and her mother?* "Why did she have to stay after school today?" I asked, wondering just what she had done today.

"Today Summer didn't have her homework for English and Social Studies. She refused to go to redo café and told the teacher she couldn't hit her because she would lose her job," Cassie said as she ran up the stairs.

Later that evening at dinner, I tried to tell my husband what happened at school, but Cassie kept interrupting with her ill-mannered comments…"When can I get a cell phone?" "When can I get a tattoo?" and "Can I get my belly button pierced?" I just couldn't believe my

sweet little Cassie was turning into this person I didn't know! It had to be the influence of Summer.

"What is happening to Cassie?" I asked my husband frightfully.

"She will be ok. This is just a phase she is going through," my husband said quietly. "Give it a few weeks and Cassie will get back to normal."

"I suppose you are right, but I am still worried," I said to my husband.

Over the next few weeks, things seemed to be better. Cassie said, "Summer is doing special things for all the teachers now. She gives out papers and books as needed. She always takes everything to the office. She has turned into the teacher's helper."

As I was putting dinner on the table on Friday night, Cassie came in and announced, "Summer is back to being bad again."

"What did she do this time?" I asked reluctantly. Cassie seemed to be in her own world, like she didn't hear me. "What did she do today?" I asked her again forcefully.

"She threw a book at the teacher, hit a boy, and gave him a black eye," Cassie yelled at me as she ran through the kitchen, headed for the phone.

I sat and pondered what I should do about this Summer. My sweet little girl had changed so much, and I needed to talk to her teachers about what was happening at school.

As I put dinner on the table, I could hear Cassie yelling at her father. I moved closer to the family room to see what I could hear without being noticed.

"Can I get my cell phone now?" asked Cassie.

"I'm sorry, but your grades will have to improve, and I am not sure I want you having a cell phone so you can call Summer more than you do now," my husband said.

"I'm passing my classes. I have a *B*, two *C's* and a *D*. My grades aren't so bad," Cassie said.

"You're telling me a *D* isn't bad? Well, I happen to think that is really bad, and there is still the issue of Summer," my husband continued.

"SUMMER, SUMMER, SUMMER!!!! THAT IS ALL YOU AND MOM TALK ABOUT ANYMORE. SHE IS MY BEST FRIEND AND THAT ISN'T GOING TO CHANGE. MAYBE I WILL JUST GO LIVE WITH HER," Cassie yelled at my husband, as she ran to her room and slammed the door.

I walked into the family room to see this shocked look on my husband's face. He had

tears rolling down his cheeks as he said, "What has happened to our little girl? I don't know her anymore."

I hugged him as I said, "I am not sure what is happening, but Open House is coming up next week, and I plan to be there to meet this Summer and talk to the teachers."

"What if Summer and her mother aren't there?" my husband asked.

"They will be there. How can the school have an open house without Summer and her mother? The teachers would not know how to act without Summer. They would be lost," my husband stated as he started for the kitchen.

"Cassie! Cassie! Dinner is ready," I yelled upstairs but got no answer.

"She will eat when she gets hungry," my husband told me as we sat down for dinner. We ate without either of us speaking another word. I had never felt so lost and scared but knew I had to be strong and find a way to get my little girl back again.

The next day was Tuesday, and I had to wait a week until Open House. I hoped nothing else would happen with Summer and Cassie, but I wouldn't be so lucky.

"Summer did it again," Cassie yelled as she ran to the kitchen for a snack.

"May I ask what she did today?"

"Summer called the teacher a fat bitch, then threw an apple at her, hitting her, causing her nose to bleed," Cassie told me as she made a sandwich and grabbed some pop.

"Surely they are going to do something with her now, aren't they?" I asked my daughter.

"Yep. She was suspended for a whole week. She can't come back to school until next Wednesday," Cassie said, as if it were no big deal and ran upstairs.

When my husband came home, I couldn't wait to tell him about Summer. I knew he would be excited to see they had finally stood up to this child. "You will never guess what happened at school today," I said as he walked in the door.

"What? Can't I get in the door?" he said rather upset.

"That Summer girl got kicked out of school for a whole week. She called the teacher a really bad name and hit her," I said as if I was happy to see her go.

"Well it is about time, maybe you will quit worrying so much. Cassie will get to go to school like a normal 6th grader, and if we

are lucky she will find some new friends," my husband said as he walked in to the family room.

The next week passed uneventfully. Cassie went to school every day as usual and came home to do her homework as if nothing was wrong. She seemed happy and like our daughter again. I hoped she was making new friends. I didn't dare talk about Summer. I thought maybe we could finally get her a cell phone in the next week or so.

Open House at the middle school finally arrived, and I would get to meet the teachers and find out for myself what was happening. I so wanted to know more about Summer and to meet her parents. "Cassie, would you like to go with me?" I asked as she came home from school.

"No, they said it would be better if parents came alone. They wanted to talk to you about our test scores and fundraisers. This is strictly for parents tonight," Cassie said as she ran into the family room to turn on the TV.

"Well, okay. I guess I will be on my way to school," I said as I left to meet my husband in the gym.

Once we were in the gym, I sat restlessly looking around for Summer and her mother. I scanned each matronly face, trying to determine which one hid the deep dark secret of Summer. I didn't see anyone who looked worn-down enough to be her mother. None of them stood up in the meeting to express regret for their daughter's behavior. No one ever mentioned Summer.

The principal welcomed everyone to the meeting. He was glad to see so many students and parents for Open House. He told us about the newest fundraiser and how they planned to update the courtyard with the money they raised.

"Parents, we have refreshments set up in the back. We would like for you to join the faculty and staff for a piece of cake and punch before visiting the class rooms. We have the finest teachers around, and each has baked a special cake to share with you tonight. I look forward to visiting with you," the principal said.

I looked at my husband very puzzled and wondered why Cassie didn't want to come. I knew I had to find the teachers and ask about Summer. I identified and sought out Cassie's teachers. I located her English Teacher, Mrs. Mailloux; she was holding a cup of punch and carrot cake. I had a plate with chocolate cake and punch, and as we maneuvered towards one another cautiously we smiled at each other.

"I am Cassie's mother, and I have been so anxious to meet her teachers," I said.

"We're all so interested in Cassie and very glad to finally meet you," Mrs. Mailloux said.

"Cassie seems to be excited about school this year. She comes home every day with an exciting story to tell us," I said very proudly.

"We had a hard time adjusting at the beginning of school, but things got better. She has become a great teacher's helper. She has adjusted well, except for a lapse in judgment," Mrs. Mailloux said.

"Cassie has always adjusted very well to most situations," I said. "She talks about Summer all the time."

"Summer?" Mrs. Mailloux said.

"Yes," I said, laughing, "You know Summer, she is the girl that has caused all the problems this year."

"Summer?" she said. We don't have any Summer this year in middle school. I hope Cassie has learned her lesson and will be a different student as she returns to school in the morning."

Katherine Mailloux *graduated from the University of South Carolina Upstate in December 2011. She has worked in Spartanburg School District 2 since January 2012, beginning as a substitute teacher then becoming a full-time teacher at Boiling Springs Middle School in August 2014. She completed her gifted and talented endorsement and the Spartanburg Writing Project in June 2015. She loves to write and some day hopes to publish a novel she has been writing.*

Picking Flowers

Kailey Beck

Morning's first rays pierced the dust
glazed glass
of the old home's windows.
Playful, they traced the scratches and dents
on the old hardwood floors.
Feet, two sets, soon welcome the warmth
as they slide from under the covers.
Traipsing a familiar path down the hallway
and staircase and on into the kitchen.
Laid out and waiting, scissors and gloves--
two buckets next to the door.
Shimmy into sandals, squeaking after first steps
onto dewy grass, wet with anticipation.
Drinking in the morning air, exhaling doubt.

The edge of the field lays in wait,
resting and clasping
memories of yesterday.
Each variety glistened its own hue--
some vivid, some subdued--
already Earth's exquisite bouquet
ready to be gathered for a wedding day.

In the slow wading
through thicket and frond
In the slow unfolding
of warmth
Is the slow unraveling
of what it meant to be mother and daughter
just the day before.

This meadow and this morning shared
silent transformation
among giggles and grins.
Familiar hands at work
synchronized, moments melting.
Both women shared a tender adulation
for the untamed beauty of the natural world
and spent many days and nights,
sunrises and sunsets enveloped within
its depths.

How does one choose from a field
of perfect flowers?

Scissors snipped as clock ticks
moments and memories layering
subtly and yet with unbelievable
strength
--the strength to pierce through darkness
in times of uncertainty.
Gathering
Delicate Queen Anne's Lace
Vibrant Ironweed
Pastel Milkweed
Subtle Sweetclover
Dainty Lady's Thumb
Captivating Goldenrod
Expressive Black-eyed Susans
Exquisite Aster
and arranging them all just so
in their raw and earthy elegance.

Wildflowers lend serenity on this day
as mother and father give daughter away.

Kailey Beck *is a high school English teacher who lives on a horse farm with a mountain view. In both her teaching and writing, she tries to incorporate as much of the natural world as possible. She likes to write from vivid memories and strives to help her students do the same. She's an active member of the Spartanburg Writing Project and is co-editor of the SWP newsletter.*