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AEJ is an official publication of the Arkansas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (ACTELA).

ACTELA seeks a variety of submissions based on the issue theme. Submissions must be original, previously unpublished work. The AEJ is peer-reviewed by fellow teachers, ELA educators and professionals. The AEJ will publish a variety of articles and materials on subjects of interest to English teachers.

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Thoughts from the Editor...

Janine Chitty, Ph. D.

University of Arkansas at Fort Smith

Turning the Page. This is a time of innovation and change across education when stakeholders are actively generating and contributing new ideas and insights on the ways education shapes the future of all students. Everyday each of us turns a page – making tomorrow greater than today, writing new chapters for our students, parents, teachers, administrators, and schools' futures. The educational landscape is changing and now is the time to embrace the challenges as we turn the pages in education. Turning the page....



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Closing the Literacy Coaching Gap in Arkansas

Dr. Ryan Kelly, Arkansas State University

Intrinsic Benefit of Literacy Coaching and Direct Impact on Student Learning Within Schools and Districts

Literacy coaching as a practice has the roots of its moniker in the time tested ways of a knowledgeable mentor or guide pushing a group to rise to their best. To utilize the term with literacy as it relates to school improvement unlocks the door to a powerful pedagogical practice. A more modern policy-driven push to improve learning necessitated great professional leaps in schools, such as the recommendations of the National Reading Panel upon literacy (Vogt & Shearer, 2011). As a practice situated between classroom teaching and administration, literacy coaching is ideally suited to reach both ways (McKenna & Walpole, 2008). While some variation in the nature of literacy coaching may exist, it typically appears with common themes of direct support to teachers, a deeper theoretical background in literacy, the ability to explicitly guide teaching practice, and to guide professional development (Coskie, Robinson, Buly & Egawa, 2005). They may not be evaluators, supervisors, or directors of teachers, but literacy coaches are absolutely on the front lines of teachers' goal-setting, data collection, analysis, and even the construction of a long term vision (McKenna & Walpole, 2008; Vogt & Shearer, 2011). Literacy coaching as a practice is designed to bring about positive change for those schools and districts invested in change (Moxley & Taylor, 2006). More to the point, an investment by a school district in literacy coaching is an investment in curricular or pedagogical change, and a commitment to school or district improvement.

Literacy coaches practice a variety of approaches to their charge, often conceptualized in the form of various models that range from the more hands-on in the classroom, to the guiding and shaping of a larger vision (McKenna & Walpole, 2008). Literacy coaches do not exist to simply provide professional development on current practice. They serve to assist teachers in shaping their teaching practice to improve upon more clearly identified curricular areas of need; they may also dig deeper into student data in order to identify and support those best served by processes such as Response to Intervention (McKenna & Walpole, 2008; Puig & Froelich, 2011). Either way, for a school district under scrutiny, the need to improve learning (as typically measured by standardized testing) most often dictates changes made at those levels of curriculum design and classroom implementation that reach students directly—indeed, a school district's curriculum is the most crucial backdrop for literacy coaching (McKenna & Walpole, 2008). Yet, a literacy coach must ultimately possess the skills to work directly with teachers who work in the classroom, to build a direction of change collaboratively, to monitor the vision's implementation over the longer term, and ultimately keep the stakeholder support strong (Froelich & Puig, 2010; McKenna & Walpole, 2008; Vogt & Shearer, 2011). The presence of one expertly-trained literacy coach (with a solid administrative backing) in a school can, ultimately, transform the reality of literacy for an entire body of learners and set a school on a path toward improvement.

Can We Do This?

For years I have been dwelling upon what it would take to put at least one literacy coach (or reading specialist, etc.) in every school in Arkansas. The benefits to literacy and learning in our state are served incalculably by those currently in the practice; however, it is a fact that not every school in the Natural State has a professional devoted to this key literacy practice. It is also a fact that one cannot wave a magic wand or simply call district administrators with a request for a literacy coach, especially in an age of difficult budgetary decisions at every turn. While I would never suggest that lobbying and advocacy in support of adding these positions cease, I did feel that a closer look at the number of practicing and licensed professionals in Arkansas might offer clues as to what kind of hope exists for closing the literacy coaching gap in the state. What follows is my attempt to digest some relevant numbers from 2016 that illustrate the magnitude of injecting one literacy coach or reading specialist from the ground up in every school and, in turn, to explore the plausibility of increasing the number of literacy coaches by utilizing the number of licensed professionals currently on hand.

How Many Districts and Schools Are We Talking About Here?

The number of school districts and actual schools in a state is likely a number that is unfamiliar to many. We typically see our own schools and districts as players on a state-level team, but we don't often consider the depth of the team itself.

<i>Table 1</i> Total number of Arkansas school districts (according to the 2015-2016 Arkansas Department				
Public Districts	Charter Dis- tricts	Districts (Children with Disabilities)	Districts (Correctional Services)	Total School Districts
234	22	2	1	259

The larger Arkansas Department of Education website, and their more specific Data Request Center, offer a rather tremendous amount of public information, readily available, that brings these statewide numbers into focus. Taking into account charter districts, specialty districts for disabilities services, and the correctional system, the state has what we could consider a total of 259 school districts (see Table 1). These numbers further grow into an impressive 1,062 individual schools statewide (see Table 2).

<i>Table 2</i> Total number of Arkansas schools (according to the 2015-2016 Arkansas Department of Edu-				
Public Schools	Charter Schools	Schools (Children with Disabilities)	Schools (Correctional Services)	Total Schools
989	63	4	6	1062

Taking this number at face value, for the sake of this argument, we shall therefore consider our target goal of placing 1,062 literacy coaches in 1,062 schools in Arkansas.

What Do “They” Say We Make, and What Do We Actually Pay?

Before we delve too deep into what it might cost Arkansas to do this, it wouldn’t hurt to take a look at what professionals in this area are said to make across various employment and economic websites, as well as what we pay licensed educators at various levels in Arkansas. An examination of these websites yields one overall conclusion: a lack of clarity and consensus (see Table 3). While it may be unfortunate that no clear or definitive salary figure emerges, it is perhaps encouraging to see that the role of the literacy coach or reading specialist is known and publicized across various forums.

<i>Table 3</i>	
Example national reading specialist salaries (as stated by various employment websites in	
<i>Website</i>	<i>Salary</i>
Mastersintesol.net	<i>Arkansas Average: 36,000 National Average: 37,000</i>
Indeed.com	41,000
SimplyHired.com (on 3-29-16)	41,000
SimplyHired.com (on 9-9-16)	43,819
Careerbuilder.com	46,722
Payscale.com	49,908
Learn.org (Citing 2014 data)	50,345
Teachercertificationdegrees.com	<i>Working with students: 55,060</i>
Learningpath.org	<i>With 1-4 Years of Experience: 24,000-58,000 With 5-9 Years of Experience: 24,000-67,000</i>

Further complicating matters, some of these websites regurgitate the data of others, some cite older data, and some sites are even embedded in others.

It is a bit more sensible—and familiar—to look closer to home at our own state’s average teacher salaries (since 2006-2007), and at four well-known tiers of the pay scale (see Table 4). Several trends in Arkansas salaries emerge very quickly. First, average salaries in the state have grown since 2006; however, these average salaries have only grown by several hundred

dollars every year. Additionally, it is interesting to note that starting at a Master’s level is not nearly as advantageous as starting the teaching year at the BA-level, and building in that graduate level education after starting in the field. All arguments aside about how much these salaries should be, it is clear that the higher one’s level of education and experience, the greater the pay.

<i>School Year</i>	<i>BA-Level (Starting)</i>	<i>BA-Level (15 Years)</i>	<i>Master’s-Level (Starting)</i>	<i>Master’s Level (15 Years)</i>
2015-2016	33,645	41,649	37,517	46,009
2014-2015	33,291	41,405	37,117	45,614
2013-2014	32,841	40,737	36,648	45,062
2012-2013	32,679	40,608	36,473	44,946
2011-2012	32,465	40,371	37,646	44,712
2010-2011	32,236	40,152	36,054	44,496
2009-2010	31,929	39,768	35,736	44,034
2008-2009	31,631	39,455	35,419	43,759
2007-2008	31,326	39,161	35,098	43,403
2006-2007	30,525	38,315	34,252	42,541

What Might It Cost—From the Ground Up, or With Those We Have Instead?

Let us imagine for a moment that the concept of literacy coaching or the reading specialist had just been invented with a booming impetus for locating the funding to immediately place a brand new position in each of our 1,062 Arkansas schools. To pay for this particular endeavor at the 2015-2016 salary level across our four familiar tiers is a rather sobering number across all levels of educational training (see Table 5). While all four tiers are included for consideration, bear in mind that the appropriate training is offered at the graduate level.

	<i>BA-Level</i>	<i>BA-Level</i>	<i>Master’s-Level</i>	<i>Master’s Level</i>
One Literacy Coach per District (259)	8,714,055	10,787,091	9,716,903	11,916,331
One Literacy Coach per School (1062)	35,730,990	44,231,238	39,843,054	48,861,558

Clearly, it goes without saying that such a venture from the ground up would be unthinkable in the current age—and certainly miraculous, if even possible. From another perspective, these numbers underscore what is a goliath investment of only one licensed position in each Arkansas school, overall. And, given the required educational background and the incalculably precious value of experience held by practicing educators or literacy coaches or reading specialists, I would hope that we would never turn away from seeking the experienced and Master’s degree holders—yet, never eliminate consideration of initial talent and motivation of the newly graduated and licensed.

But, there is a massive beacon of hope in these numbers. *We do not need to build this from the ground up at such a massive cost.* Rather, in reality, there are a significant number of talented professionals in Arkansas who are already placed in these positions, and an even greater number of those in currently classroom teaching positions who are additionally qualified as reading specialists (via licensure requirements).

In Other Words, We Could Actually Do This!

So, after looking at a shockingly high financial figure, we come to a deeply optimistic beacon of hope in this discussion: *we could actually do this*, and very likely do this with licensed, practicing professionals that we currently employ in Arkansas. At the onset of this discussion the target goal was 1,062 literacy coaches or reading specialists. According to ADE’s Data Request Management System and their further assistance, the following currently active job designations exist which are precisely what we are looking for as a literacy coach or reading specialist, or are analogous enough (e.g. curriculum specialist, etc.) for the sake of this argument (see Table 6).

<i>Table 6</i>		
Number of Arkansas educators currently placed in or employed in similar reading or literacy roles (according to the Arkansas Department of Education Data Request Management System)		
<i>ADE Job Title</i>	<i>ADE Job Code</i>	<i>Number currently placed or</i>
Curriculum Supervisor	3010	52
Curriculum Supervisor (Secondary)	3020	9
Curriculum Supervisor (Elementary)	3030	18
Coach/Lead Teacher (Literacy)	7110	508
Title I Math/Reading	7180	38
Interventionist (Literacy)	7210	127
TOTAL LICENSED POSITIONS		752

Taken from our target goal of 1,062, this could very well mean that 752 of these positions we seek are already filled. Assuming for the moment that they are each in a unique school location (and this may not necessarily be the case), this leaves our new target goal of only 310 positions in 310 schools. While this does shave that mammoth financial number down a great deal, it would still be a tremendous financial request to expand by 310 positions across our four tiers; it is worth considering at the very least (see Table 7).

<i>Table 7</i>				
Total estimated cost of supporting one literacy coach at the per school level for the remaining				
	<i>BA-Level (Starting)</i>	<i>BA-Level (15 Years)</i>	<i>Master's-Level (Starting)</i>	<i>Master's Level (15 Years)</i>
One Literacy Coach per	10,429,950	12,911,190	11,630,270	14,262,790

Again, a large number, but thanks to the presence of 752 practicing literacy professionals, we have brought that number down tremendously.

Yet, that beacon of optimism shines even brighter when considering the overall number of those holding the current licensure elements for a reading specialist. It is these numbers, plus those 752 existing positions, which allows us to make the case for closing the literacy coaching gap without requesting the millions of dollars of additional funding to do so. The numbers of living license holders of these particular elements tells a story of historic changes in licensure, the need to consider retirement as a factor of course, and an even greater tale of the growth of a wealth of knowledge and practice. Ultimately, it shows that we have an utterly tremendous base of trained, licensed literacy professionals in our overall statewide school system right now (see Table 8).

While we currently have 2,206 licensed living professionals, I think it is reasonable to account for the likelihood that those with the “older codes,” likely lifetime license holders, may very well be retired. That leaves 1,487 currently employed, licensed, and trained educators in our school system right now that could occupy the 1,062 positions in our original target goal. Since we have identified 752 of these individuals already in place, which could very well leave 735 licensed teachers in Arkansas classrooms that carry the proper training and licensure to fill the remaining 310 positions needed. Overall, by the available numbers, we clearly have more than enough licensed and trained professionals to close that gap of what appears to be only 310 needed positions, and place one literacy coach or reading specialist in each of our 1,062 schools.

<i>Table 8</i>		
Number of living Arkansas educators currently holding a version of reading specialization (and the related licensure code) on their teaching license in 2016 (according to the Arkansas		
<i>Licensure Element</i>	<i>ADE Licensure Code</i>	<i>Number currently holding the licensure element on the Arkansas license</i>
Reading	051	712
<i>Note: This older code, still valid, did not require a Master's degree or Master's level program of study in Reading, and read simply as "Reading." Persons with this element are likely lifetime license holders, are not likely to be serving as literacy coaches, and may still be serving K-6 teachers if they are not yet retired.</i>		
Reading Specialist	453	7
<i>Note: This older code, also still valid, did require a Master's degree or Master's level program of study in Reading, read as "Reading Specialist," and was not offered for very long.</i>		
Reading Specialist P-8	297	1412
Reading Specialist 7-12	298	1312
<i>Note: These two codes were issued together, prior to the current licensure revision to Reading Specialist K-12. The difference of 100 between the two may be due to transfer/reciprocity from other state teaching licenses. The higher of the two (1412) is represented in the total below.</i>		
Reading Specialist K-12	287	75
<i>Note: This newer/current version of code 051 does require a Master's degree or Master's level program of study in Reading; it has been in place for roughly three years.</i>		
TOTAL LICENSED		2206
<i>Note: Due to the existence of the two "older codes" and lifetime license holders, this total likely includes a great deal of retired individuals.</i>		
TOTAL LICENSED (Adjusted, without the two		1487

Continued Advocacy and Professional Justification

Clearly, I wish I could be 100% precise in my numbers that I have digested in this discussion. I am confident, however, that the basic nature in the number is sound. I am also very glad that this argument lands on a much more optimistic note and allows us to shift the nature of the conversation away from the budget and back toward the professionals—which is where I prefer the conversation to be focused anyway. The problems and questions that remain are significant: why do we not have the remaining 310 positions filled with literacy coaches or reading specialists? Could we truly locate or adjust 310 positions in 310 schools that lack the presence of these roles? What would it take to convince schools and districts to make the personnel adjustments? And, I think most importantly, what incentive would be needed for those classroom

teachers who also hold the reading specialist licensure training to move into the literacy coaching or reading specialist position—if they are willing to move to the position at all?

It seems reasonable, given the nature of this discussion, that school districts in Arkansas should consider the following actions—and resulting follow-up actions, in order to grow the plausibility of a literacy coach or reading specialist in every school into a reality. First, all 259 total school districts must recognize not only the intrinsic value of a literacy coach or reading specialist to every building in their districts, but also *clearly* recognize the direct and positive impact of the presence of such a professional on the learning of the students in every school. The fate of these professionals in schools often rests upon the voices of their advocates. As practicing educators, both administrators and classroom teachers are therefore committed advocates of successful teaching and learning practices; thus, their advocacy for the presence of a literacy coach or reading specialist stands on sound logic. Secondly, school districts must decide if they will locate the proper funding to add the position to each school, or if they will locate the potential for the positional through an internal shuffle—and again, while it is possible that some districts may not have the appropriately licensed reading specialists on hand, it seems likely that these professionals are currently available. To achieve the full scope of a literacy coach or reading specialist in all 1062 Arkansas schools, districts must be prepared to logistically secure the position and provide for the proper compensation that will incentivize applicants or support an internal move. Finally, once districts have reached the point where they are able to make the commitment to secure the position in each of their schools, they will have to secure the long term fidelity of the position by shifting the advocacy that summoned the call for the position into an advocacy that supports the position for multiple years.

Ultimately, we land this conversation among the realm of professional advocacy and what I believe is the need to lay out a greater rationale and justification for these practicing roles statewide, at the district level, and within each of our 1,062 schools (even those with secure literacy coaches or reading specialists should always be encouraged to maintain their rationale and justification). In such an age of budgetary tension, it always behooves us to seek ways to make a highly effective case for the use of the resources (or, in this case, the available professional positions) that we have. And, as our trained educators are indeed a very powerful personnel resource, we must seek ways to encourage those who have trained for the roles of literacy coach or reading specialist to seek it out, embrace it, and even continue to advocate for it. We could easily close this literacy coaching gap in Arkansas with the stroke of a pen and a major budgetary investment, but this does not at all appear likely. What we can do, however, is close this literacy coaching gap in Arkansas with those we have trained to do so—as well as with those we are currently and continuing to train—but only so long as we all continue to advocate for these talented licensed professionals, these absolutely essential positions, and the tremendous work that these roles can accomplish.

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CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT COURSE: TURNING THE PAGE FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE

Dr. Carol Westcamp, University of Arkansas—Fort Smith



Concurrent enrollment courses have become very popular in recent years, as those classes allow high school students to earn not only high school credit but also college credit while they are still enrolled in high school. Additionally, students are allowed a sneak peek into the college classroom and gain confidence in their abilities to succeed in the college environment. I have been teaching the concurrent enrollment Freshman Composition I and II course at the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith (UAFS) for over a decade, and in that time I have seen many changes to the program. Most recently, the number of sections UAFS offers has increased and the delivery of those courses has moved to online. Although I was initially wary of the online format, it seems no matter the delivery method, concurrent enrollment courses are beneficial to the high school students.



Traditionally, students have taken high school courses during their high school years; then upon high school graduation, they turned the proverbial page from one chapter of the book of their life to the next: high school to college. The upcoming fall semester, those students enrolled in their first college class, beginning that new chapter of their lives. Some students took Advanced Placement classes in high school and perhaps passed the placement exam to earn college credit, but the traditional model has been most students do not graduate high school with any college credit having been earned.

However, within the last decade, that traditional model has changed. Concurrent enrollment programs, programs that allows high school students the opportunity to take courses for both high school and college credit, have become very popular across the nation. In fact, concurrent (sometimes called dual enrollment) has had an annual growth rate of more than 7 percent since the 2002-03 academic year (National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships [NACEP], 2017). The state of Arkansas has been no exception in following this trend. According to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (2015), concurrent enrollment saw an 8.1 percent increase from 2014 to 2015 (Smith). During that same time span, overall enrollment numbers for Arkansas colleges and universities remained relatively flat, but concurrent enrollment increased statewide.

The University of Arkansas at Fort Smith (UAFS) has seen a steady increase in concurrent enrollment as well. According to the Provost of UAFS, in 2008, 7.2 percent of the students enrolled in classes at UAFS were concurrent students. By 2016, that number had increased to 14.8 percent (Hale, 2017). Additionally, concurrent enrollment on the first day of classes for the fall 2017 semester was up from the previous year by 19 percent (Hale, 2017).

I have been teaching concurrent enrollment freshman English classes at the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith (UAFS) for well over a decade. As evidenced by the nationwide, statewide, and even UAFS statistics, over the past decade, concurrent enrollment has continually increased. When I first began teaching the concurrent class, it was offered as a compressed live video class to two or three high schools at the same time. Basically, I taught a handful of students at the UAFS campus who sat in the live traditional classroom and, while I taught the class, it was being broadcast to the other high schools where the dual-enrolled students sat at their local high schools, watching me on a large television screen. I also had a large television screen in my classroom from which I could see one concurrent class at a time, though I did have the capability of toggling between classes if need be.

As the concurrent enrollment program grew, the number of students enrolled grew as well, so that there was no need to fill the remainder of the class with students at UAFS. Therefore, I began to just teach to a TV screen, switching the camera view so that I could move my view to each of three high school classrooms. However as the years progressed and technological advancements increased, the compressed video technology became cumbersome, so the university and participating schools decided to move to online concurrent enrollment. This also allowed additional schools who did not have the technological resources to offer compressed video classes to participate. A couple of local high schools preferred that we send UAFS professors to the high school classroom and teach the class at the high school, and because enrollment in the concurrent classes at those high schools was high enough, UAFS did send the professors to the high schools to teach those sections of composition.

When the compressed video concurrent courses ended, I moved to teaching the online freshman English concurrent classes. The first semester I taught the class, we only offered one online section. We now offer three sections of the online concurrent class each semester, so two other faculty members also teach the course as well as myself. In all, for the fall 2017 semester, UAFS is offering six sections of Freshman Composition I for concurrent students.

During my time at UAFS, I have always been a supporter of concurrent enrollment classes, as it offers high school students many beneficial opportunities. The move to the online format did make me cautious at first, as I was concerned some of the advantages of the concurrent class may be lost in the new format. Nevertheless, I was still a strong believer in the concurrent program; therefore, I continued to teach a section of the course each semester. Research indicates that students can be successful in concurrent enrollment programs, but certain factors impact just how successful the students are. Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards and Belfield (2012) contend that a concurrent course should be as authentic of a college experience as possible: "A dual enrollment class should be perceived by students as an authentic college experience where they can 'try on' the college student role and view themselves as capable of doing college work" (p. 6). If the high school students see themselves as being capable of doing college work, they gain confidence in their abilities and are more likely to be successful in future college classes.

Aside from gaining confidence, concurrently-enrolled students often demonstrate more maturity, especially if they are in a classroom with traditional college students. As Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, and Belfield point out: “When dual enrollment students are mixed in classes with regular college students, they are likely to display greater maturity and feel their college experience is authentic” (Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, & Belfield, 2012, p. 6). When I taught the sections of composition in which I had traditional UAFL students on campus as well as the concurrent high school students attending via compressed video, I did see a maturity level in the concurrent students which matched the traditional college students. The concurrent students came to class having done their homework and having read the assigned readings. Those students participated in class discussions eagerly, and they submitted their assignments on time. If it were not for the fact that the students were not sitting in the seats in the classroom at UAFL but were instead sitting at a high school and being live-streamed via television to my classroom, I would not have known the students were not traditional college students.

Although Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, and Belfield (2012) argue that concurrent students are more likely to display maturity when they are enrolled in classes with traditional college students, I still saw a level of maturity in the concurrent students when the sections of UAFL composition concurrent courses moved to fully online and the concurrent students were no longer in the class with traditional UAFL students. For these online classes, the concurrent students are mixed in the online environment with students from other high schools. We may have lost some of the advantages of interaction with other college students by moving to this format, but the overall advantages of the concurrent enrollment are still felt. One concurrent student who completed the online section of the Freshman Composition II class that I taught in the spring 2016 semester wrote in his anonymous end-of-the-course evaluation, “This course drastically helped me. I would recommend this course to anyone taking concurrent credits!” Another student enrolled in the same course a year later stated in his course evaluation, “I think [the professor] did a great job of providing feedback to all of us and that really does help. It is so much easier and less stressful when you have a professor who will provide feedback and take the time to answer your questions (while not being rude about it) if you do not understand something. She does a great job of doing so and I have enjoyed taking this online course.” These students indicated the course helped them gain confidence in their writing and in their ability to do well in a college course.

The full online option does offer its advantages to the students, namely convenience. The biggest advantage is that concurrent enrollment program allows high school students to enroll in college courses and receive college credit while they are still in high school. Not only does this give students a jump-start to their college career by allowing them to leave high school with college credit, but it increases the chances that the students will continue their education and pursue a college degree. Hoffman, Vargas, and Santas (2009) said, “The research strongly suggests that dual enrollment can prepare high school students for college and give them momentum in completing a degree or credential. Moreover, it shows that these benefits extend to groups who are typically underrepresented in college” (p. 53). The Hoffman, Vargas and Santas study shows encouraging results that concurrent high school students will progress through their collegiate career and end with a four-year degree.

Additionally, another study conducted in 2013 by Berger et. al was just as promising. This study was the capstone project of the American Institutes for Research and its partner, SRI

International, who for more than a decade had investigated the impact of the Early College High School Initiative, launched by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2002. The study included 2,458 students from ten institutions and focused on two questions: “Do Early College students have better outcomes than they would have had at other high schools?” and “Does the impact of Early Colleges vary by student background characteristics (e.g., gender and family income)?” (Berger et al., 2013). The findings demonstrated that students who entered college early via the concurrent enrollment model were “significantly more likely to graduate from high school than comparison students” (Berger et al., 2013). In fact, 86 percent of concurrent enrollment students graduated from high school compared to the 81 percent of other students (Berger et al., 2013). As other studies have demonstrated, this study also showed that students enrolled in concurrent courses at their high school were “significantly more likely to enroll in college than comparison students” (Berger et al., 2013). 80 percent of the concurrent students enrolled in college after high school graduation, compared with 71 percent of others. Additionally, those students enrolled in the concurrent courses “were also more likely than comparison students to enroll in both two-year and in four-year colleges or universities” (Berger et al., 2013). And even more promising is the fact that these concurrent enrolled students were “significantly more likely to earn a college degree than comparison students” (Berger et al., 2013).

The findings of the study provide strong evidence for the positive impact of concurrent enrollment programs on students. The students who took college classes while in high school “had a greater opportunity than their peers to enroll in and graduate from college. They also appeared to be on a different academic trajectory, with [concurrent] students earning college degrees and enrolling in four-year institutions at higher rates than comparison students” (Berger et al., 2013). Although these studies only represent a sampling of various concurrent enrollment programs, research shows that overall, concurrent enrollment programs have a positive impact on the students.

For Arkansas students, these same advantages apply. The momentum and confidence they gain while in high school, carries them forth and gives them a head start in their college career. According to the Provost at UAFS, 40% of the concurrent students enrolled at UAFS in 2015 enrolled in additional courses in 2016 (Hale, 2017). No data on the number of students who were enrolled as concurrent students in 2015 and then went on to enroll at other state universities was available.

Although there are many reasons for attrition in college, one important factor is the lack of academic preparedness. Concurrent enrollment courses address that issue by helping students be prepared for their other college classes; additionally, these courses fill a second need, the students “need to become familiar and comfortable with the college environment” (Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, & Belfield, 2012, p.9). I see these advantages in my concurrent courses as well. The students become academically prepared for post-secondary coursework all while becoming comfortable with the college environment. Although the online course may not afford the students the chance to sit in a classroom on a college campus, the students are doing college work. The UAFS freshman English concurrent online classes require the students use the same textbooks and write the same essays as our traditional on-site composition courses. Although I do tailor the coursework for the online environment, the quality and rigor of coursework is the same.

Many of the students enrolled in my concurrent enrollment English classes are from rural areas and attend small high schools. As Hoffman, Vargas, and Santos (2009) explain, “An emerging body of research and practice suggests that providing college-level work in high school is one promising way to better prepare a wide range of young people for college success, including those who do not envision themselves as college material” (p. 43-44). Students in these rural areas who may not have thought of themselves as capable of college work are given the chance to attend a college class while still in high school and try out this coursework. According to a *New York Times* article (2017), “Just 20 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds in rural areas [of the nation] are enrolled in college, compared with 47 percent of their urban peers” (Pappano). Additionally, Ruiz and Perna (2017) argue that “rural youth face a host of social, economic, and spatial barriers that hinder postsecondary access and completion. They are more likely to have parents who lack a bachelor’s degree and who have lower expectations that their children will attain a four-year degree. Rural students also tend to have fewer financial resources to pay the costs of postsecondary education. Rural residents, on average, have lower household incomes and are more likely to live in poverty than urban residents” (Ruiz and Perna, 2017).

Thus, the students in rural areas of Arkansas may face many factors hindering their ability to enroll in and succeed in college courses. However, the concurrent courses can give them that much needed head start. If the students view themselves as not capable of doing college work before enrolling in the concurrent class, once they pass the class, they gain confidence. Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, and Belfield agree: “Dual enrollment ... show[s] [high school students] that they are indeed capable of doing college work” (2012, p. 9).

In fact, research shows that concurrent enrollment has many additional advantages besides academic preparedness and confidence. The college-level work required of the concurrent classes can “increase the pool of historically underserved students who are ready for college, ... improve motivation through high expectations and the promise of free courses, [and even] decrease the cost of postsecondary education by compressing the years of financial support needed” (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009, p. 44). Reaching more students, especially those who are typically underserved, increasing motivation to attend college, and making the cost of a college degree more manageable are all strong recommendations for the concurrent enrollment program.

Research indicates that students who enroll in concurrent programs are more likely to enroll in college classes the next year than their peers. Researchers from the Community College Research Center from Columbia University studied Florida’s large statewide program (Karp, Carlos, Hughes, Jeong & Bailey, 2007). They looked at 36,214 dual-enrollment participants from the high school graduating classes of 2000–2001 and 2001–2002. Their findings showed that students who participated in concurrent or dual enrollment programs and then went on to attend college were more likely to stay enrolled in college for a second semester, and they also had “significantly higher postsecondary grade point averages” (Karp, Carlos, Hughes, Jeong & Bailey, 2007, p. 4). Additionally, they were more likely to be enrolled in college two years after high school, with a GPA “significantly higher than their non-participating peers” (Karp, Carlos, Hughes, Jeong & Bailey, 2007, p. 4). The findings of the study showed an encouraging snapshot of the concurrent enrollment program as a way to encourage students to participate, persist, and succeed in postsecondary education. Although the study was not

definitive nor all-encompassing (it only looked at students enrolled in the Florida dual-enrollment program), the findings are promising for all concurrent programs. Although no long-term study for concurrently-enrolled students in Arkansas exists, it would be interesting to see the data of such a study.

Certainly research demonstrates advantage after advantage for the students; however, as with all programs, negatives do exist. One deterring factor is that concurrent enrollment programs are not necessarily easy to initiate. As Hoffman, Vargas, and Santos said, “Dual-enrollment pathways . . . require that high schools and colleges work in close partnership, negotiating financing across the two systems” (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009, p. 56). Additionally, “their differing academic calendars, course schedules, crediting systems, and organizational norms can make partnership difficult. Accelerated learning programs have the potential to reconcile these divisions but are also constrained by them” (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009, p. 56). Thankfully, the state of Arkansas has been proactive in addressing such issues. In December 2012, Arkansas legislature passed the Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing Concurrent College and High School Credit for Students Who Have Completed the Eighth Grade.

Despite the legislature ensuring credit will transfer across Arkansas colleges and universities, articulation to universities across the nation may be more cumbersome. Problems with transferring credits nationally has been the subject of several articles. In her 2016 article for *Education Week*, associate editor Catherine Gewertz addresses the problems of articulation. She says, “The popularity of dual-enrollment programs has soared nationally as high school students clamor to try college-level work. But the movement is dogged by questions about one of its key selling points: that students can get a jump-start on college by transferring those credits” (Gewertz, 2016). If students are lured into the concurrent enrollment programs by the promise of getting a head start in college, those students expect their concurrent courses to transfer. However, according to the Education Commission of the States, “Only half of the states have agreements that require public colleges and universities to accept dual-enrollment credits . . . and those agreements don't require the compliance of private institutions” (Gewertz, 2016). Students who enroll in the concurrent classes with the hope and expectation of attaining college credit are disappointed and disillusioned to learn that said credit will not transfer elsewhere. Because there is no national articulation agreement, such problems may be unavoidable. As Gewertz argues, though, “The dual-enrollment movement is having growing pains, as issues with credit transfer arise alongside its well-documented benefits. A lot is at stake for the students who invest time, hard work, hope, and in many cases, money, in the courses they're told will produce college credit.” (Gewertz, 2016).

Thankfully, Arkansas has articulation agreements in place. The freshman composition courses that I teach are classified as endorsed concurrent enrollment courses, which “is a course in math, English, science, and social studies offered at the high school (or in rare instances on the college campus), that meets specified quality components, and upon completion of which a student earns high school and postsecondary credit” (Zinth, 2017). Courses that are classified as endorsed concurrent enrollment courses will transfer to other public postsecondary institutions; said postsecondary institutions are required to accept the course for credit provided the course “is listed as a ‘comparable’ course in the Arkansas Department of Higher Education’s Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS)” and by definition all endorsed concurrent enrollment courses

“must be listed in ACTS” (Zinth, 2017).

Certainly some of the other concurrent programs may still have some issues to work out, especially with articulation. I still find merit to the old way of teaching the concurrent class via the compressed video, but I also see the value of the online delivery. No matter the delivery, the concurrent courses are beneficial to our students. As Hoffman, Vargas and Santos explain, “Despite these challenges, accelerated learning options are an important strategy for increasing the nation’s high school and college success rates because of their potential for bridging the secondary-postsecondary divide. Given their support of such programs, community colleges are well positioned to remain at the forefront of these efforts” (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, pp. 57). It certainly seems that these concurrent enrollment programs are a way to help the students turn the page from their high school career to their college career, and encourage them to continue their post-secondary education.

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REFLECTIVE WRITING PATHWAYS



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There is no wrong turn for improving teaching or learning when taking the path of reflection. Reflective writing has long been seen as an effective tool to solve problems and better understand not only ourselves, but also the world around us. Experientially, most movement toward self or organizational improvement is essentially down a path of reflection, both individually and collectively. Society and individuals gather information or data, think and reflect on it, and make personal and organizational decisions. Still there are times when looking at those decisions that societally we ask, “What were they thinking?”. It appears that the thinking and reflection section was skipped over. What some people seem to do naturally, others have arrived at that place through a process such as NBPTS, and still others have not yet begun to exercise reflective thinking. This points toward a multi-level approach needed to adequately teach reflection. For those students not demonstrating reflective thinking or writing at a level to greatly impact the quality of their decision-making or planning, there is the need for teaching reflection through prompts.

The Personal Pathway

As an individual involved in both the initial and renewal components of the national board certification process, the arduous task of responding to prompts in reflective writing has been some of the most reflective paths walked. The NBCT process initiated a lifelong love of and appreciation for practicing reflection such as is written here.

Beyond personal opportunities for reflecting on a year of instruction, this work offers other educators the option to consider a few strategies to utilize in measuring learning outcomes. It is not new to propose that reflection has guided some educators into thinking more deeply about personal and student learning and all the unintended and intended outcomes of instruction. This article is about the use of reflective writing prompts as teaching tools that will assist teacher and learner in becoming more metacognitive about, and therefore more effective in, teaching practices.

The Organizational Pathway

Bandura (2001) encouraged individuals to direct energies toward group change, and in social efforts to change lives for the better in support of core values and goals. In teacher education organizations or as teacher leaders, our common goal includes developing learners to meet high standards using reflective and metacognitive skills to monitor, evaluate, and plan future learning. This work highlighted areas of teaching in which reflection has been used for two

classroom purposes. Bandura (2001) further advocated that there is great value in reflecting on select information to manage problems,

Consciousness is the very substance of mental life that not only makes life personally manageable but worth living. A functional consciousness involves purposeful accessing and deliberative processing of information for selecting, constructing, regulating, and evaluating courses of action. People are not only agents of action but self-examiners of their own functioning. (p.3)

Reflective thinking and writing are the tools to self-examine our successful processing of information. Danielson's (2011) Framework also speaks to the value of reflective writing and how needful reflection is to continuing to learn and improve as educators.

Teachers take charge of their own growth and development as they reflect on making meaningful change. The path to improvement is through self-examination and engaging in the art of reflection. Expressive thought lends itself to reflective writing and prompts can guide that process as seen in the first example of teaching reflection in a freshman education class.

First Use of Prompts to Improve Reflection

There are authentic ways to encourage relevant, reflective writing through prompting. Just asking for reflection is for most students simply inadequate. Classroom experience has proven a low percentage of students write well reflectively and are able to clearly express their thinking in entry level education classes. The first model used in classes successfully was a strategy selected to build in leveled prompts and scaffold students in moving toward higher metacognition and better reflection. Teacher, professor, editor, blogger, and author Peter Pappas developed these prompts. Pappas (2010) created guiding questions, aligned with Blooms Taxonomy levels, designed to walk students down the reflective pathway. He verbalized the need for this purposeful scaffolding:

Reflection can be a challenging endeavor. It's not something that's fostered in school - typically someone else tells you how you're doing! At best, students can narrate what they did, but have trouble thinking abstractly about their learning - patterns, connections and progress.

Pappas' prompts were adapted to a learning task in a previous summative project with freshmen students considering a career in education:

#1 Remembering: Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from short or long-term memory. Pappas Reflection Questions- What did I do? What have I learned?

#2 Understanding: Constructing meaning from oral, written, or graphic messages.

Adapted Pappas Reflection- What was important about what I did? Did I meet my goals? What did I contribute to others in this class?

#3 Applying: Carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing. Extending the procedure to a new setting. Adapted Pappas Reflection- Where could I use this again? How will this learning transfer to other classes or in my future classroom?

#4 Analyzing: Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose.

Adapted Pappas Reflection- Do I see any patterns in what I did throughout the course? Did I change my performance throughout the semester? What did I do differently?

#5 Evaluating: Making judgments based on criteria and standards.

Adapted Pappas Reflection: How well did I do? What worked? What do I need to improve as a student in order to become a better teacher? How do I relate or compare to each of the conceptual frameworks and standards?

#6 Creating: Combining or reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure.

Pappas: What should I do next? What's my plan/design? How will change what was not working into a plan for success as a student and future teacher? Use the Conceptual Frameworks as your guide.

Students discussed and practiced this model, while receiving teacher feedback a number of times throughout the course and each time the prompts were adapted to work with a pre-scribed task. Overall, the reflections were more organized and thoughtful, showing trending improvement throughout the semester as written about in another publication on the use of the Pappas' model. The goal of reflection should not be that we may reflect; but rather noticing how reflection affected our deepest thinking to change or define our direction. Fullan & Quinn (2016) argued,

We must shift our focus to a deeper understanding of the process of *learning* and how we can influence it. We can shape how children connect with the world and with each other and create deep learners who are curious and committed. (p.79)

It is important to teach students to reflect deeply as reflective students will become better learners who are better able to think metacognitively and critically discuss problems to make appropriate decisions. Yet while we have this lofty goal to create deep, curious, and committed learners we also have known as educators and researched by Fullan (2016) that fifty-three percent of students have a startling lack of enthusiasm for school and learning. Some educators may consider that number to be even higher in the communities where they live. Fortunately, reflective thinking changes how to approach and improve teaching for both motivated and unmotivated students. This has been a personal and professional search for ways to change learning outcomes and improve teaching and learning conditions that better align theory with action. It has been doing more of what has been often preached as good teaching.

Second Use of Prompts With Guiding Questions

The most recent approach taken using reflective prompts was with application of action research strategies and reflective writing papers. Reflective writing was incorporated this past year to increase the rigor and relevance for the more advanced education teacher candidates' learning prior to internship. How could one teach a class in effective instructional strategies without fully incorporating the reflection that should take place as strategies are taught and practiced? In two semesters this year pre-service teacher candidates were paired by their strengths and weaknesses of multiple intelligence with the focus on intentionally internalizing how to differentiate learning by experience. The purpose for this task was presented on Black-Board content page of the course with this information as part of their guidance:

This task is organized around peer teachers with like-minded partners around your weaknesses. As the student, collect data on how the peer teachers conduct

their mini-lessons. In your note-taking record your observations on how the information is presented, ask questions after the lesson to clarify your findings, reflect on how their similar teaching styles affected your learning.

As student partners taught lessons on the K-6 content of their choice, other students participated in lessons and reflected on how these lessons were effective standards-based instruction; and if the pair successfully taught the “Successful Intelligence” (Sternberg and Grigorenko, 2007) component. Student partners reflected on the process of planning with someone else and determined how well the lesson objectives were met using specific multiple intelligence strengths and weaknesses and critical thinking skills. This has been authentic preparation for the grade level team planning that often takes place in K-6 schools.

Then, for two modules during the beginning and middle of the semester each student wrote an action research paper detailing the six to nine lessons using descriptive writing and focusing what they took away from the observations and their own teaching (with teacher providing feedback for the first module). Finally, the last module was primarily reflective writing with the use of prompts guiding students toward the deepest pathways of reflection on the process and product of learning and thinking. Again as Fullan (2016) recommended this as an attempt to influence and connect students with each other and their teacher in meaningful dialogue over important learning as seen in the prompts below:

The final paper on Action Research will be the most reflective of the module submissions. In this final write up you will continue to describe the skills you learned within the lessons taught and reflect on them.

HOWEVER, the *main emphasis* of this last section is to bring your own three experiences into the forefront. You are being asked to reflect and self-evaluate on your learning. Some guiding questions might be:

How did I plan and teach differently for the three experiences?

How did the learners respond to the three lessons I was a part of? Why do you think the way that you do about the learners? What evidence do you have?

Why did one way seem to work better than another? What were the variables other than the different m.i. and s.i. skills in the teaching and learning?

What did your students say that made you think about meeting their needs or the needs of your future students?

How did having this experience specifically change your way of thinking about differentiation?

How specifically will you or will you use the teaching of successful intelligence skills in your classroom? Why do you or do you not see this as a teaching tool?

Knowing what you know now, what would you do differently if you could teach your lessons over again or in your classroom?

How did this process work for you as a teacher and then as a learner? What was the value in this experience?

What would you do differently if you were conducting this research with another group of pre-service teacher candidates?

The results were generally more thoughtful and insightful student writing that included not only responses to the prompts but writing from a more metacognitive place. This

experiential project-based learning approach allowed students to handle sufficient rigorous and relevant content paired with deeply reflective thinking and writing. Tomlinson argued (as cited in Holloway, 2000, p. 82 & 83) goals for pre-service teachers should continue to hold teaching institutions responsible to:

Provide clear models for differentiated curriculum and differentiated instruction in action. Provide mentoring that helps teachers reflect on student needs and appropriate responses. Ensure teachers' comfort in implementing a growing range of instructional strategies that invite differentiation and facilitate its management.

These students participated in an exit interview around three open-ended prompts designed to gather specific information on what was taken away from the action research experience. These questions were tailored to allow the teacher to personally reflect on the process and make instructional decisions. The next exciting page will be partnering with the candidates who have experienced this learning, writing collective reflective take-aways, and presenting what we have learned in this action research at some level.

Turning to Self-Reflection

Any teacher could benefit from using prompts to guide their own reflection. Bandura (2001) turned reflective thinking toward what can personally be done to become a better teacher and to produce better teachers for, "To be an agent (of change) is to intentionally make things happen by one's actions" (p.2). Not just by writing about it or talking about it; but by doing something to improve oneself and others. For these growing pre-service teachers, new teachers, and even experienced teachers who will face more pressure to achieve and situations requiring an increased level of reflection. Danielson (2009) suggested these reflective prompts:

What worked in this lesson? How do I know?
What would I do the same or differently if I could reteach this lesson? Why?
What root cause might be prompting or perpetuating this student behavior?
What do I believe about how students learn? How does this belief influence my instruction?
What data do I need to make an informed decision about this problem?
Is this the most efficient way to accomplish this task?

In closing, it may be these kinds of pre-teaching experiences with differentiation and reflective writing that cement students' understanding in preparation to plan and develop more effective instruction. For this to happen, teachers may have to let go of the teaching reins a bit and allow students to apply, evaluate, and turn to their own paths of finding understanding that rely less on lecture and more on discovering meaning. The basis of this thought is in the belief that students are capable of finding deeper knowledge, processing information succinctly, and writing reflectively to demonstrate personal understanding, given learning has been properly scaffolded for this kind of reflection to occur. All paths come to the same end resulting in a new and better understanding much needed to solve problems that are both personal and organizational. Turn the page on more ways to encourage reflective teaching and thinking for 2017.

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FACULTY DEVELOPMENT VIA MOOCs

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As professors at both a four-year university and a community college, the authors have experienced the effects of tightening professional development funds first-hand, seeing individual travel funds greatly reduced in both cases or pooled to reduce access to those funds at the community college. Similar cutbacks have affected colleagues at other public institutions, as well, including those teaching K-12. At the same time, the limited travel funds that are available buy far fewer opportunities or fail to cover entirely the cost of a single conference, creating the expectation that faculty members will cover the remaining costs themselves. Frequently, faculty are encouraged by administrators to seek out local conferences, but discipline-specific conferences rarely meet locally or are absent altogether, particularly in rural areas. Other conferences are only available during the summer holidays when most teachers want to rest and recuperate. Nevertheless, the requirements for professional development remain an integral part of faculty assessment while ideas about what constitutes professional development remain entrenched in tradition. These circumstances, which are entirely understandable as educational funding declines, have prompted faculty members like us to “turn the page,” if you will, on traditional approaches to professional development.



Current Situation

Amit Mrig (2017) makes a strong case in his article, “Shifting from a Scarcity Mindset to an Opportunity Mindset,” that “[i]nstitutions have reduced spending, streamlined inefficient practices and shelved futuristic plans,” in effect, making do with much less, a situation which continues to challenge educators nationally. Mrig further argues that this situation, in too many cases, has created a passive and, at times, resistant response to finding creative answers to real and pressing issues concerning resource allocation and that, *most importantly*, successful outcomes in many areas, including professional development, will definitely not resemble how the

delivery of resources has been either administered or received in the past. Therefore, we are practicing what Mrig describes as “frugal innovation” as opposed to operating under a “scarcity mindset” by utilizing massive open online courses (MOOCs) available from open universities that teach through online distance education programs. MOOCs provide professional development to anyone with a computer, internet access, and a desire to invest in his or her scholarly acumen which then may be transferred to the classroom at any grade level. While there are options to buy certificates, many MOOCs are free, so the financial cost to both the institution and the individual disappears, leaving only the investment of time and interest. Faculty members can work on these classes at home or during office hours, as well, eliminating the need to miss classes for travel or to pay for substitutes. However, and, perhaps, most importantly, MOOCs, in general, capitalize on an affective learning model which “involves students’ attitudes, emotions, motivations, and feelings” (Li and Manturuk, 2017). In fact, taking these courses has led us to a different level of inquiry about how to use affective learning strategies in our own course offerings, particularly in the online classroom.

A Brief Sketch of MOOCs

MOOCs are an outgrowth of the distance learning phenomenon which began in the 1990s to meet a need for the alternate delivery of educational products to those unable to access traditional learning environments although the first MOOC only recently appeared in 2008 (Marquez, 2013). Fast forwarding to the present, there are MOOCs which offer courses for everyone; however, three MOOCs that are particularly appealing to us are FutureLearn, Coursera, and EdX, not only because of the quality of the coursework but also because the courses are free. These MOOCs offer courses taught by well-known, often world-renowned scholars who, offer the kinds of course information and materials that graduate students typically enjoy which are typically inaccessible to the teaching professional who, due to expense or, perhaps, the inability to travel, do not have time to complete difficult assignments while teaching a full-time load. These courses include video lectures, presentation of primary documents and artifacts related to the course, links to secondary materials and websites that we can use in our own courses, and a chance to communicate with other students around the world who have similar interests. For each of these platforms, students participate in discussions about the materials that have been created by the course instructors, and questions we pose are addressed by course mentors. Short, easy review quizzes are offered at the end of each unit. While no papers are required, the subjects certainly have led us down various avenues of research that have the potential to generate scholarly work.

A separate advantage of participating in these classes is seeing examples of effective and interesting presentation of material online in course management systems which are different from the ones we utilize in our courses or daily tasks. By seeing what works well and what does not from the student perspective, we have been able to improve the quality of our own course offerings, especially those we offer online. While we cannot attest to this utility for every MOOC, we can say with certainty that each of the following MOOCs “generate[s] affective learning through four pathways or mechanisms: sharing instructor enthusiasm, engaging with controversial topics, exposure to diversity, [and] experiencing innovative teaching approaches” (Marquez, 2013, Affective Learning Pathways in MOOCs section, para 1).

Sample of Courses

FutureLearn: <i>Agincourt 1415: Myth and Reality</i>, October 17-November 14, 2016	
<p>This 3-week, 3-hour per week, University of Southampton course supports the instructor/professor responsible for teaching English 4213: Shakespeare. This course is taught by Anne Curry, Professor of Medieval History and Dean of Humanities and author of <i>1415 Agincourt: A New History</i> (2015), University of Southampton, and Dan Spencer, Ph.D., a researcher specializing in the study of fifteenth century English firearms, also from the University of Southampton. The historical context of the 1415 Battle of Agincourt will be used to teach the political context of Shakespeare's staging of British and French politics as a means to support an emerging national literature for Britain, in general, and within the context of teaching <i>Henry V</i>, specifically.</p>	
FutureLearn: <i>Shakespeare and His World</i>, April 20-May 26, 2017	
<p>This 10-week, 5-hour per week, University of Warwick course supports teaching English 4213: Shakespeare and is taught by Jonathan Bate, Professor of English Literature, Oxford. Bate is the author of multiple books about the life and work of William Shakespeare. This course, a collaboration between Warwick University and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, examines Shakespeare's life, work, and times through the material collections within his home. Each 5-hour week is dedicated to a different play, some more well-known than others. Plays of particular interest to the secondary and post-secondary classrooms include <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, <i>Hamlet</i>, <i>Macbeth</i>, <i>Henry V</i>, <i>Othello</i>, and <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>. Another potential way to use this information would be to support discussions of on-campus productions of Shakespeare's plays that the student body attends.</p>	
FutureLearn: <i>Radical Spirituality: The Early History of the Quakers</i>, May 22-June 9, 2017	
<p>This 3-week, 3-hour per week, course is taught by Dr. Ben Pink Dandelion, Professor, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre; Dr. Hillary Hinds, Professor, 17th Century British Cultural Studies, Dr. Angus Winchester, 17th Century British History, Lancaster University; Dr. Betty Hagglund, Honorary Researcher and Project Development Officer for the Centre of Postgraduate Quaker Studies, and Dr. Stuart Masters, Senior Programme Leader, Woodbrooke Quaker Studies Centre, Birmingham. This study of seventeenth century religious politics, underwritten by Lancaster University, supports an ongoing professional investment in teaching Shakespeare as it reinforces the underlying Puritan sensibilities alive and well in <i>Twelfth Night</i>, for example, and which contributed to the closure of the Globe Theatre in 1642. The course provides important background information to the American Quaker movement covered in American Literature survey courses, as well.</p>	
FutureLearn: <i>Radical Spirituality: The Early History of the Quakers</i>, May 22-June 9, 2017	
<p>This course would offer background information to anyone teaching philosophy, introduction to world religions, or American history or literature survey courses that</p>	

FutureLearn: *Stereoscopy:*

An Introduction to Victorian Stereo Photography, December 5-19, 2016

This 2-week, 3-hour per week, University of Edinburgh course provides supplemental historical context for English 4903: Children’s Literature Illustrated, which will be offered Spring 2018 at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. The Stereoscopy course is taught by Christine McClean, Learning Manager, National Museums of Scotland, and Sheilla Masson, Photographer and Art Historian for the Scottish Society for the History of Photography. Specifically, course information about David Brewster, the inventor of the kaleidoscope and the lenticular stereoscope, will be used to discuss the importance of the imagination as a vehicle for developing and supporting literacy skills across the board. For the teacher who wishes to build his or her personal library, these courses offer access to amazing resources, as well, such as May and Vidal’s *A Village Lost and Found: An Annotated Tour of the 1850s Series of Stereo Photographs*, “Scenes in Our Village” by T. R. Williams (2010) which will be made available to students, along with an OWL stereoscope for viewing photographs in 3-D.

This course would be of interest to anyone teaching the second half of British literature survey, the history of photography, and/or popular culture. Dr. Brian May, whose PhD is in astrophysics and is the lead guitarist of the British rock band, Queen, has a lifelong interest in stereophotography. Dr. May offers several video lectures within this course.

FutureLearn: *WWI: Lessons and Legacies of the Great War, January 1-March 10, 2017*

This 6-week, 4-hour per week, University of New South Wales-Canberra course taught by Professor John Connor examines the mechanics and memory of the Great War on the Western Front. Information on the war poets will be incorporated into English 2323, Survey of British Literature and English 2341, Special Topics on War Literature. The connections between trauma and memory will also be covered in other courses where relevant.

This course would benefit anyone covering WWI, whether in a history or literature class.

FutureLearn: *WWI: Heroism: Through Art and Film, February 6-17, 2017*

This 2-week, 2-hour per week, course offered by the University of Leeds Open University provides and an excellent supplement to the previous course, examining how propaganda, visual and performing arts, and older and contemporary film presentations of WWI shape contemporary memory. The course provides numerous links to resources that can be used in English 2323, Survey of British Literature, and English 2341, Special topics on War Literature.

This course not only supports any class studying WWI, but also any course on art history, film as literature, visual rhetoric, and propaganda.

FutureLearn: *Propaganda and Ideology in Everyday Life*, June 12-July 30, 2017

This 5-week, 3-hour per week, course examines the building blocks of our political views—freedom, community, place, justice, and choice—and the ways in which propaganda and ideology can distort those building blocks. The course provides ample opportunities to analyze how propaganda subverts critical thinking, which is relevant to English Composition I and II classrooms, specifically units on logic and critical thinking and their relation to effective essay writing. The course is taught cooperatively by History Professor Maiken Umbach and Political Theory Professor Matthew Humphrey of the University of Nottingham and Ian Cooke, Head of Contemporary British Publications at the British Library.

This course offers a useful background to anyone trying to ground students in the application of logic and critical thinking.

EdX: *Women Have Always Worked*, Self-paced, open ongoing enrollment

Taught by Alice Kessler-Harris, the R. Gordon Hoxie Professor of American History at Columbia University, this course explores the history of women in America and introduces historians' work to uncover the place of women and gender in America's past. The course is taught in cooperation with the New York Historical Society, which offers relevant primary source material for examination, evaluation, and discussion.

Anyone interested in women's contributions to America, whether teaching literature, history, or politics, would benefit from this course.

Convenience of MOOCs

As an added benefit, this mode of learning provides ready access to effective source materials that have already been vetted by experts in the field of study unlike subject interest blogs that are readily available on the Internet. Especially in a situation where library and other research resources are becoming increasingly more restricted as a result of budget cuts, capitalizing on resources outside of individual institutions is a practical approach to address ongoing student needs. In so doing, faculty can make a huge difference in enhancing their students' learning environments. For those who teach writing, MOOCs make effective use of digital archives which can be moved into the digital platforms that support our own coursework. There is the added benefit, also, of learning while a specialist in the field models that critical process. Imagine, for a moment, being introduced to an artifact from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust that is not available to the public and then being given a scholarly explanation from Jonathan Bate for how that artifact figures into one or more of Shakespeare's plays, information which could then be taken directly into teachers' classrooms. Likewise, scholars and historians evaluate primary texts that are usually unavailable, such as letters from Puritan women that Alice Kessler-Harris examines with an archivist at the New York Historical Society. Course

participants are then given a second letter and asked to evaluate it *via* the discussion board in the class. These kinds of scholarly resources and pedagogical activities have immediate relevance to students with online access.

The courses listed in our table are not the only types that offer opportunities to learn about primary source material. Although there are thousands of MOOCs which do charge fees, FutureLearn, Coursera, EdX, and Kadenze provide free coursework in multiple disciplines at varying levels of expertise in the sciences, the liberal arts, and the humanities. A cursory review of the offerings on these websites illustrates how exhaustive the variety of courses truly is. Courses vary in length, as well, so the faculty who wants to engage in professional development can choose a course that best fits his or her personal schedule and topic of interest. Upcoming offerings are listed two to three months ahead, which makes planning and scheduling time for study easier. Also, there are open university courses designed especially for young learners that provide helpful models for teachers who are just beginning to use digital supplements.

Dwindling funds for professional travel coupled with the void on most campuses of active offices of professional development have created a pressing need for faculty who value lifelong learning to be creative in order to continue bringing fresh ideas into their classrooms. This is especially true for faculty who want to continue growing academically, to be reminded occasionally what it is like to balance study with work and family life, to model these behaviors for students, and to be in compliance with faculty assessment requirements. Although making this change to any campus climate will require a genuine leadership attitude to accomplish, the kinds of online activities outlined here are among some of the constituent pieces that make engaged faculty innovative, creative, diverse, and, thus, contributing members of their public institutions. Faculty can lead the way toward redefining “professional development” by sharing what they have learned in these classes with their colleagues and, most importantly, with their students. Also, faculty can bring their administrators along by demonstrating the value of the innovative educational experiences they pursue and the economic benefits to their respective institutions in the midst of significant, long-term budget shortfalls.

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AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND LIBRARIAN WORKING TOGETHER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Dr. Kay Walter, University of Arkansas at Monticello

Kathy Anderson, University of Arkansas at Monticello

Academic preparations should yield career readiness. Enabling college students to turn the academic page and anticipate the pleasures and predict the duties which await them in their professional futures is an essential part of mentoring them to success upon commencement. The nature of the classroom environment, however, limits opportunities to practice and develop professional skills simply because it is detached from the work environment. University composition teachers spend many long and lonely hours creating lessons, activities, and assignments meant to develop awareness of audiences and control of tones in artificial writing circumstances. Certainly, student need practice writing for a variety of audiences and under a variety of emotional states long before life demands an intelligent and coherent response to a professional challenge, but how can teachers best prepare students for such practice? Amid such struggles a teacher's strongest ally in turning the page may be a librarian. Collaboration with a librarian provides detached perspective, moves the learning physically beyond the walls of the classroom, and supports the students' efforts to master new knowledge in ways a classroom instructor alone cannot.

Because we hold these beliefs firmly, Kathy Anderson and I make a point of putting them in practice. We work together constantly to accelerate and ensure student success, and our collaboration makes our work more productive. We have agreed that a closer look at our efforts might serve as a model for successful collaborative ventures by others, so we want to explain how we put these ideas to use turning metaphorical pages. The following conversation will illuminate our efforts at collaborating on behalf of students and the benefits we see accumulating from our collaboration. To highlight the outcomes, we will tell our story by turns from a first-person perspective. Each change of voice will be marked by its author. In this way, readers can see how Kathy and I build on one another's ideas and how these ideas form a page-turning bigger than the sum of its parts. Neither of us could accomplish for our university what both of us working together can achieve.

KAY: As I develop assignments for my classes, I make a point of sitting down with Kathy to discuss, explain, and question each step. I want input on my approach to the assignment's goal, the details I require of a satisfactory response, and the resources my students will have available to accomplish the assignment. Together we predict student questions and curiosities. We imagine student responses. We search for pitfalls, obstacles, and detours they may encounter. Together we develop a sample answer to the assignment and research the opportunities to write about it before the students ever begin. If the assignment is a literary topic, as it often is in my course, Kathy is always eager to read an unfamiliar book, encounter a new author, or renew an acquaintance with an old friend. My students benefit greatly from the teacher-librarian collaboration before they ever face the academic task, but as a teacher I benefit too.

KATHY: [In order to assist the students at my university, I need them to recognize the library as an available and useful source. They must see librarians as approachable allies. I must encourage them to bring their questions and information needs to me. Collaborating with Kay allows me to initiate contact with students and present the library and its staff as a solution. It focuses student attention on seeking information and the problem solving skills they are developing.] My collaboration with Kay increases my visibility and impact with students. This task is accomplished in part by matching a face with a name. [All students know the library is a resource, but they often feel detached from it and in need of a humanizing connection.] Kay's students meet with me as a group, and we have one-on-one conversations. As a result, I have an opportunity to develop relationships which carry on into other classes and ultimately assist in their graduation. Kay's students recommend me to their friends and students in their other classes. [The impact multiplies.] I am able to reach many more students than I would if I were just waiting for them to come to the library.

KAY: The enthusiasm with which Kathy greets my developing ideas encourages me to turn pedagogical pages, experimenting with new means of assessing student learning. Current emphasis on high-stakes testing is widely touted as an interference with student learning. This is not a problem merely on the state level. Too often it is also a problem in my classrooms and in my gradebook. If students face a challenging exam with test anxiety, they are unlikely to demonstrate the extent of their mastery of material. If learning optimizes during multi-sensory input, demonstration of learning may be most readily judged in multi-modal expression. As a result of my growing awareness of the benefits of collaboration and public presentation of ideas, requirements in all my classes beyond the freshman level now include experiential learning in addition to formal academic writing. Presentations to a professional audience as well as service-learning opportunities for my students to earn grades are results from my interaction with the library which lend the assignments of my classroom direct relevance in student lives.

KATHY: My duties at the reference desk usually involve assisting students in finding a book or article about an author or topic. Pretty straightforward assignments, such as literary criticisms or evaluating a specific company. Kay's assignments involve connecting whatever they are reading, Ruskin for instance, to their own career ambitions. For example, how does Ruskin's life impact or connect with a student majoring in education or business? Kay encourages students to contact professional organizations, other academic institutions, and known experts to make a connection in their research. [Sometimes they need help identifying and

accessing such connections.] I help the student develop the critical thinking and information literacy skills to choose the best resources to showcase their awareness of a community larger than just their family and the campus. This personal connection to their coursework enables them to become successful students and lifelong learners.

KAY: Conference presentations provide a relevance for the information my students discover during the research process. Our university hosts an annual UAM Student Research and Scholarship Forum each spring, and my upperclassmen participate, displaying the results of their developing research projects. In the fall semesters students may choose to attend the Arkansas Curriculum Conference co-hosted by the Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts to present the results of their ongoing research during the Preservice Roundtable Session. Other conference presentations sometimes fulfill this requirement, and two of my sophomores recently made presentations at the University of Arkansas's Fourth Annual Graduate Students in English Conference. Their talks, initial professional presentations for each, were so graceful and poised that I was invited to bring undergraduates to speak at this event again next year. In order to be adequately prepared for these presentations, my students need a lot of support.

Responses to my writing assignments inevitably require critical thinking. Students rarely know where to begin their research efforts. Tasks which require more than a googled effort are mysterious and enigmatic to them, and the prospect of requesting help from a stranger is daunting. To assist my students in successfully beginning their responses, I schedule class meetings in the library. Students email their topics to me, and I forward them to Kathy. She compiles a list of general resources for each student. These sources provide fertile ground to grow student understanding.

KATHY: To provide support to these students I am able to provide a list of books, articles, and websites to start them off because of my initial meeting with Kay about the assignment before I meet with the students. [When Kay presents the assignment to her class, the students develop individual topics for their responses. Each student emails a topic to me,] and I read the assignment that Kay has provided for me to make sure I have a correct understanding of what the students are expected to do. If the assignment is about a particular book or article, I tried to read it or find a review or criticism about it if time doesn't allow for me to read the entire item. I contact her if I have questions. After that, I check our library's resources to see what books, ebooks, print references, and electronic articles are available. Finally, I do an internet search to find credible websites, professional organizations, or literary guilds that might be helpful to the students. I compile a list for each student specifically for their topic. When the class comes to the library, I explain to them the importance of creative and critical thinking skills. I usually bring a few reference books and journals to the class. I do a "show and tell" about the importance of evaluating the information they find, demonstrating what a peer reviewed article looks like, and I give each one a handout on what questions to ask when evaluating a book, journal article, or a website. This is also when I introduce them to other library personnel. [Then I present each one with an individualized handout of references to indicate the scope of the professional conversation surrounding the topic.] This initial meeting is crucial to helping the students reduce the anxiety they have about writing and presenting their first paper. My

goal as a librarian is to create an atmosphere that allows the students to visualize the context within which individual ideas or items exist—to see the big picture. It also turns a page in their ability to increase their critical thinking and information literacy skills.

KAY: Once students meet Kathy face to face, they can turn a page in their development because she is no longer a stranger. She introduces them to library resources as well as library staff members. When librarians become people with names and friendly faces, they become approachable. Students begin to see librarians as allies in a struggle to acquire knowledge. Following an initial class meeting in the library, I often find my students in private conversations with Kathy, sharing a computer screen in a quiet search, surrounded by books and ideas they are evaluating and documenting together. Thus, my students learn the benefit of collaboration through the example Kathy and I model for them. They not only hear about the benefits, but they see successful collaboration in action. We work together to benefit them.

KATHY: I believe it is important for each student to know all library personnel are dedicated to their success. At every opportunity, I introduce the students to not only the other librarians, but the circulation staff, ILL, and the Director. Modeling collaboration by introducing the other staff turns the page for the student, letting them know I rely on others to accomplish my work. The goal of this is to let each student know that it takes a team effort to provide excellent service and no one person can do it all. [Matching faces with library duties assures student access to assistance. It humanizes their research experience, and they become empowered to ask for help. For example, seeking information from a distant library becomes a matter of asking for assistance, and they now know whom to ask.]

KAY: I can help them develop the necessary mastery of content knowledge, but to understand the breadth of the professional conversation surrounding their topics and to prepare to engage in it, they need input from a willing and well-armed librarian. As Kathy provides them with a list of starting points researching their individual topics, I must teach them how to make wise use of these general sources to find sources which become more and more relevant to their specific work and lead to ideas they can present. Eventually, they find the focus of their search and have clever ideas to write about. Feedback from conference presentations often yields needed clarifications and assists in the development of the formal written response which still serves as a major portion of their course grade and becomes a head start on a paper they can rework for a future graduate course. Thus, collaborating with a librarian links students to initial steps along their professional path and forms the basis of networking opportunities for their future.

KATHY: The university library is a wealth of collected wisdom and helping students develop a familiarity with it is always a challenging goal. Librarians strive to help students identify connections between ideas that are not superficially related. [This task is fundamental to the pursuit of education, and Kay's students practice this skill in answering their writing assignments. When I can build a relationship of trust with them, they are more willing to ask questions, less embarrassed at not knowing, and more likely to succeed at learning.]

KAY: In addition to helping them find starting points for their research, Kathy teaches them about evaluating sources to determine authority and relevance. Too often they are

tempted to develop their ideas from the first sources they find rather than from the best sources available. Kathy knows I expect their ideas to be based on experts because the testimony of experts is what gives writers authority in the eyes of their readers. We collaborate to emphasize the need for scholarly opinions among their sources. Most usefully she echoes the instructions I give them in writing (in the assignment sheets) and orally in class discussions. Sometimes their need to hear guidance “in another voice” is literal. Just having the words come from another mouth increases the likelihood and opportunity for absorption. She can clarify, simplify, or simply reiterate the points which need emphasis. We have worked together long enough and often enough to complement one another’s style. She knows how to encourage them to take to heart the suggestions I make, and she works closely with them when she sees a need to press a point home. She understand my rubric for grading and can guide students toward a meaningful and rewarding research experience. Her enthusiasm for learning is contagious, and I know I can trust her with my students without need of oversight.

KATHY: Working with Kay allows me to gain unique insights into students which librarians unfortunately oftentimes rarely experience. Mainly we get to do one-shot instruction on a very limited and short reference desk interview. [Students come to us timidly and with vague understandings of their information needs.] Spending nearly a whole semester with a class allows me the privilege of seeing the light bulb go off when a student makes a personal connection to the author or work being discussed. [Sharing the joy of student learning and growth creates a bond of trust they carry with them throughout their course of study. Kay’s students are more likely to come back to the library even after her course with them ends. They are more likely to ask for help rather than be conquered by frustration in a search for information. They are more likely to be successful learners as a result, and they are more likely to come to the library and tell us about their victories.] Being a part of the student’s learning process in this manner motivates me to continue to learn all that I can to help students succeed.

KAY: The result of our collaboration is a model for student success. Students see the pleasures of professional colleagues interacting and experience the victories concomitant with that work environment. This establishes the benefits of working well and interactively with peers as they turn pages in their own professional careers. They are introduced to networking opportunities which form a foundation of future success in their work when they meet others and see the success which grows from interdisciplinary collaboration. An understanding of the need for ongoing research springs from the feedback they receive as they make the results of their efforts public, and often a genuine and ongoing interest in the project results. Fresh from their initial conference experience, my students produce their term papers for the course.

They also write reflectively about the research experience. I asked them to comment on their journey into professionalism, and their responses were published in *The English Pub: ACTELA Newsletter*. The ideas in print focused on the outcomes of their experience, which resulted from productive collaboration. Their testimonies to our success become a clarion call to English and language arts teachers as well as other literacy advocates across the state. The words of the students encourage, challenge, and champion our work. They encourage us to have faith in the future of our profession. They challenge us to find more opportunities to collaborate in search of their optimal success. They champion our efforts by validating

the verity that victories are surer when we stand united in their causes.

KATHY: I approached Kay about writing this article because I know that a collaboration like ours is rare. [Too often library personnel are limited in their sphere of influence within the boundaries of the library walls. We wait for people to come to us and ask for our help. We need opportunities to collaborate with those responsible for developing the questions we are eager to search for answers to. An opportunity to collaborate is rare.] It is rare, but it should not be. [The benefits of collaboration such as Kay and I enjoy are not limited to the university library.] I believe all librarians, in academic, school, public, and special libraries, have the opportunity to form collaborations with their colleagues to the betterment of our students and our community. [When we work together, we can be a more powerful force for good. We can spread information literacy where it is most needed and challenge others to help in our efforts. Our goal, ultimately, is saturation of information literacy throughout the communities in which we live and work.] The collaboration turns a page for us also and not just for the students.

KAY: The direct result of my collaboration with the library is a lightening of my teaching load as I direct students through their term paper assignment. Certainly I get better papers to grade than I would without the library's help, but the benefits of our collaboration are much bigger than that. My students learn the library is the stronghold of an ally. They see library work as an intermediate step to a completed term paper, and working with a librarian becomes a habituated part of their writing process. Together, the librarians and I turn pages, mentoring young scholars into graduates ready for the rigors of graduate coursework and budding careers. They become practiced at investigating professional conversations, developing responses, and making public presentations of their findings. They grow familiar with the process of seeking and engaging experts in their efforts, and they take pride in the results. They see their reflections in print and develop a vision of themselves as young professionals with a bright future. Our collaborations yield students ready to turn pages in their lives and anticipate success in their professional careers. They are strong ambassadors of our university and excellent representatives of our success. We are proud to claim them as fellow alumni of our *alma mater*. Most importantly, they are all practiced page turners and sure advocates of the process of collaboration.





Dr. Kay Walter took her PhD from Texas A&M University and her MA at UCA. Her teaching experience includes preschool students, graduate students, and everyone between in several states as well as Central America at both public and private institutions. She is currently a tenured Professor of English at University of Arkansas at Monticello, her undergraduate *alma mater*, where she serves as the British Literature Generalist. Her excitement about all things John Ruskin is reflected in her membership among the Friends of Brantwood, and she visits Ruskin's Lake District home with her students each summer. She is also a Companion of the Guild of St George. Closer to home, she is a longstanding board member of Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts and editor of *The English Pub: ACTELA Newsletter*, which won a 2017 Newsletter of Excellence Award from NCTE. Her most recent publications include articles and reviews in *The Companion*, a blog post on Literacy & NCTE: The Official Blog of the National Council of Teachers of English, articles in *Friends of Brantwood Newsletter*, and a co-authored article in *Arkansas Libraries*. She has a busy schedule of conference presentations in Critical Thinking, Sermon Studies, and Editing planned for the end of the year. She enjoys collaborating with colleagues, mentoring early career teachers, designing travel courses to Europe, and helping others find success in ELA professions.

Kathy Anderson holds a Master of Science in Information Science from the University of North Texas at Denton and a Master of Education in Learning Systems Technology from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She is currently a tenured Associate Librarian at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, her undergraduate *alma mater*, where she serves as the Acquisitions and Student Success Librarian. She teaches a Critical Reading Skills course at the university for the School of Arts & Humanities. She also serves as the liaison to the School of Education and Chair of the Education Portal Committee of the Council of University of Arkansas College & Research Libraries. She is very interested in researching how first year and non-traditional, minority students motivate themselves to learn and what, if any, role technology plays in the process. She is also interested in researching how literacy skills affect the success of students in online environments.

Ghost

Sunny Styles-Foster, University of Central Arkansas

There is something special about being a part of a team that can make an individual approach every decision with a new perspective. Maybe that is why Jason Reynolds decided to focus his young adult novel, *Ghost*, around a young man who finds that being a part of a track team can be more than just an individual endeavor and could quite possibly change his life.

A 2016 National Book Award Finalist, *Ghost* takes place in an urban setting and highlights the struggles of a young African American adolescent growing up in poverty with a single mom. Castle Crenshaw, the main character, has experienced more than any human being should have to face, especially since he is only in junior high school. Throughout the novel, Reynolds gives the reader a glimpse into Castle's daily life and the decisions that he makes. Reynolds allows the reader to not only gain perspective regarding what it is like to live with secrets, but what it truly takes to make the right choices, even when they seem to be the most difficult ones to make.

Castle learned early on that, while he loved basketball, running was his strong suit. This realization came three years prior when Castle and his mom had to literally run for their lives when Castle's father, in a drunken rage, began to shoot at them in the middle of the night. It was from this experience that Castle gave himself the nickname Ghost and why he has been running from facing his anger ever since. When Castle finds a local track team practicing one afternoon after school, he is drawn to challenge one of the runners, as well as himself. He has never been a part of a team, but it is clear that he has a desire to belong to something bigger. When Castle proves that he has potential, Coach Brody decides to give him a chance. Coach Brody senses that Castle has struggles in his life, especially when he takes him home after the first practice and sees that he lives in one of the poorest and toughest neighborhoods in the city. Coach Brody becomes a positive male role model in Castle's life, which is something that many young adolescents are looking for, whether they realize it or not. *Ghost* shows students that it is okay to let down your guard and to trust others, especially when you are facing difficult situations in life.

What I like about *Ghost* is that it is real, real in the sense that Castle, a.k.a. Ghost, faces situations that many young readers can relate to: Ghost is bullied at school because of the clothes he wears, he is afraid to share his past with anyone, even his closest friends, and he wants so badly to fit in that he makes a few bad choices along the way. The novel *Ghost* is a perfect way to not just expose our students to situations that require difficult decisions to be made, but to provide them with examples of how they may overcome their own difficult situations. Teachers can use this novel to help students see how their life, however difficult, is not a hopeless endeavor. Reynolds presents the story from Ghost's point of view, allowing the reader to not only see the story unfold, but to also gain a deeper understanding of why Ghost makes certain choices. For instance, just before he makes the decision to steal a pair of shiny new high tops from the sporting goods store, Ghost states the following:

At first I wasn't going to do it. I mean, when I went into the store, it was a thought, but only a thought. Not even like a real, *real* thought either, because I knew that I could just ask my mother to get them for me, and she would because she felt like this track thing was gonna keep me out of trouble. But when I saw how much they cost...I just couldn't ask her for them. I just couldn't. (Reynolds, 2016, p. 86)

Ghost knows that the decision he is about to make is not the right one, but he also doesn't want to burden his mother, as he knows they can't really afford to buy such an expensive pair of shoes. Another situation occurs earlier in the novel when Ghost gets suspended from school for getting in a fight with another student. However, the reason Ghost gets into the fight is because he is the one being bullied and he has finally had enough. While getting bullied does not justify Ghost's actions, it does help the reader to understand why he is making certain decisions. This can be a valuable lesson for the students reading this book, as well as for the teachers who choose to use it in their own classrooms. Understanding perspective is critical to understanding an individual and their actions, and Reynolds does an excellent job of helping the reader recognize how living in poverty can force individuals to make certain decisions that many would never even have to consider.

While Ghost Crenshaw makes some very bad decisions on his journey to finding his place in life and on the track team, you will still find yourself rooting for him at every turn. This is because Jason Reynolds has created a true underdog in the character of Ghost. Ghost is young and it is clear that he could go down the wrong path in life at any time. Instead of giving up on Ghost, Coach pushes him where it counts: on the track. As a reader, I could literally feel myself running out of breath as Coach pushed Ghost to the brink of breaking, knowing exactly what he could handle. Even though Ghost wanted to quit, he knew that he had to stick it out, making his character even more likeable. It is also clear that Ghost doesn't want to give up on himself. He knows that he has potential and that he just needs someone like Coach to help him harness it for good. He also knows that he must learn to trust his teammates, just as he is learning to trust Coach. Castle understands that if he doesn't let down his guard, he will continue to run from his past, instead of running for his future.

One point that should be made about the novel is that Ghost's mother is never really present in the book. It is made clear that she works long hours to support her and Ghost, but she is not involved in any of the conversations about the situations that Ghost gets himself into. However, Reynolds is a very purposeful writer. Perhaps not having the mother in the picture is a true reflection of what life is like for those who are trying to make ends meet. Her lack of presence does not mean that she doesn't care, but that she simply has too much on her plate and that Ghost has to learn life lessons without her always being there to help him. This is definitely another perspective to consider.

Reading this novel will make you feel like you are running right alongside Ghost, and you will not want to stop until you know what happens next. With that being said, the story did come to an abrupt end. Spoiler alert, we never know how well Ghost does in his first track event! The good news is that this is supposedly the first book in a series of "Track" books by Jason Reynolds. Therefore, I am hopeful that the next book in the series will follow Ghost and his adventures on the track team and with Coach Brody.

So, for any teacher looking to engage their middle grade students, *Ghost* is a great place to start. With the main character reflecting a racially diverse background and challenging

upbringing, this novel has the potential to reach many reluctant and disengaged readers, especially young male students. With themes such as bullying and acceptance of self and others, *Ghost* is sure to inspire both teacher and student alike. This school year, I encourage you to turn the page and introduce this fantastic young adult novel to your students and colleagues. It is definitely worth running to.

Reference

Reynolds, J. (2016). *Ghost*. New York, NY: Anthenum Books for Young Readers.



Sunny Styles-Foster has been an educator for ten years. She is currently in her fourth year as a Clinical Instructor in the College of Education, Teaching and Learning Department, at the University of Central Arkansas. Sunny is also a doctoral student at Texas Tech University, pursuing a PhD in Language, Diversity, and Literacy Studies. Sunny resides in Russellville, Arkansas with her husband Eric and their two fur babies.

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