

***Nonfiction Literature Circle Strategy Adaptation:
Teacher Candidates' Reactions and Perceptions***

Dr. Judy Williams

Dr. Elsa Diego Medrano

Dr. Betty Coneway



Background of the Study

- Wilfong's (2009) research centered on literature circles using a science textbook
- Wilfong's (2009) research adapted literature circle strategies specifically for use with nonfiction text
- Study Findings - the students reported they better understood the material and the vocabulary.
- Study Conclusions - Collaboration with peers improved comprehension skills and enhanced vocabulary.

“The students were engaged from the moment they picked up their textbooks and role sheets until the bell rang” (Wilfong, 2009, p. 169).

Literature Circles

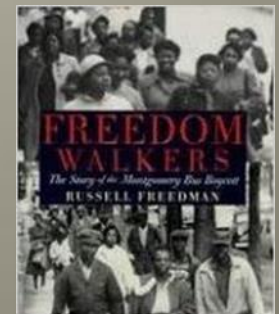
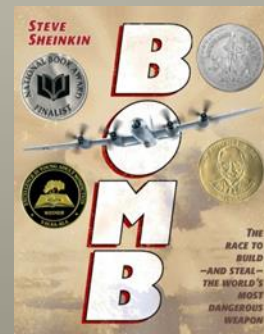
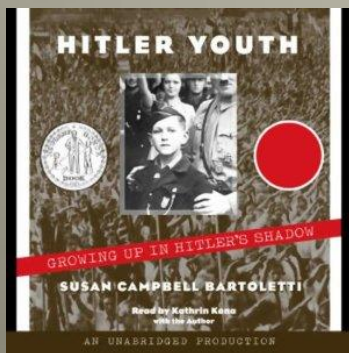
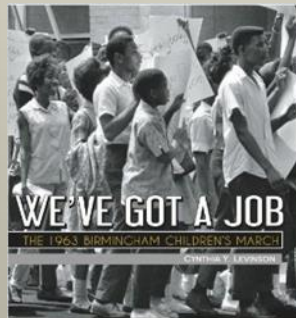
- **Student-led groups that discuss a text and are guided by a common reading interest**
- **Comprehension strategies: making connections, questioning, inferring, visualizing, determining importance, synthesizing, and monitoring**
- **Discussion enhances critical thinking skills**
- **Conversations move from a literal to a critical response level**
- **Transference of skills and strategies across the curriculum**

Premise of Our Study

- Previously, we used only fiction literature when teaching the Literature Circle strategy to our teacher candidates.
- Informational texts are being used more in classrooms and for assessment purposes
- Can teacher candidates utilize strategies learned for fiction texts and adapt them on their own to non-fiction texts?

Purpose of the Study

To ascertain the perceptions of teacher candidates regarding the academic and critical thinking value of taking literature circle strategies designed primarily for a fictional text and adapting those strategies for use with an expository text.



The Research Questions

- What are teacher candidates' perceptions regarding the academic value of adapting fiction related literature circle strategies to an expository text structure?
- How did adapting literature circle strategies designed for a fictional text to a nonfictional text affect teacher candidates' comprehension of the nonfiction text?
- What are teacher candidates' perceptions regarding the critical thinking value of adapting fiction related literature circle strategies to an expository text structure?

Methodology

Participants:

- The selection of participants was by convenience sampling (Merriam, 2009).
- Participants were approximately 100 students enrolled in three sections of a Children's Literature course

Procedures:

- Participants completed preliminary, mid-point and post surveys about their experiences with Literature Circles (LC)
- Participants were involved in a LC using a fictional text
- After group discussions, the participants responded to a quick write prompt
- The same procedures were followed for a second LC except the books used were non-fictional texts

Preliminary Findings

(1) Teacher Candidates' use of comprehension strategies



Reading Comprehension Strategies Used by Pre-Service Teachers

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Determined the meaning of an unknown word. * | Reread Passages to gain understanding | Made notes in the margin of the book or on sticky notes. | Mental visualization | Summarized the text |
| 49% | 49% | 26% | 16% | 12% |
| Made connections to the text. One text-to-text connection. All other connections were text-to-self | Sought another perspective from an online source or from someone they knew who had read the text | Used a questioning strategy ** | Prediction | Previewed the text looking at headings, bold words, graphics, etc. |
| 12% | 9% | 6% | 6% | 3% |
| Monitoring Reading sections of text aloud | Inference | Read ahead in the text to see if further information was provided | Relied on background knowledge | Text (story) structure |
| 3% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 2% |
| Synthesize known information with what is read | Test taking strategy of highlighting important information | Non-strategy: skipping an unknown word | Unaware of any comprehension strategies used | |
| 1% | 9% | 2% | 3% | |

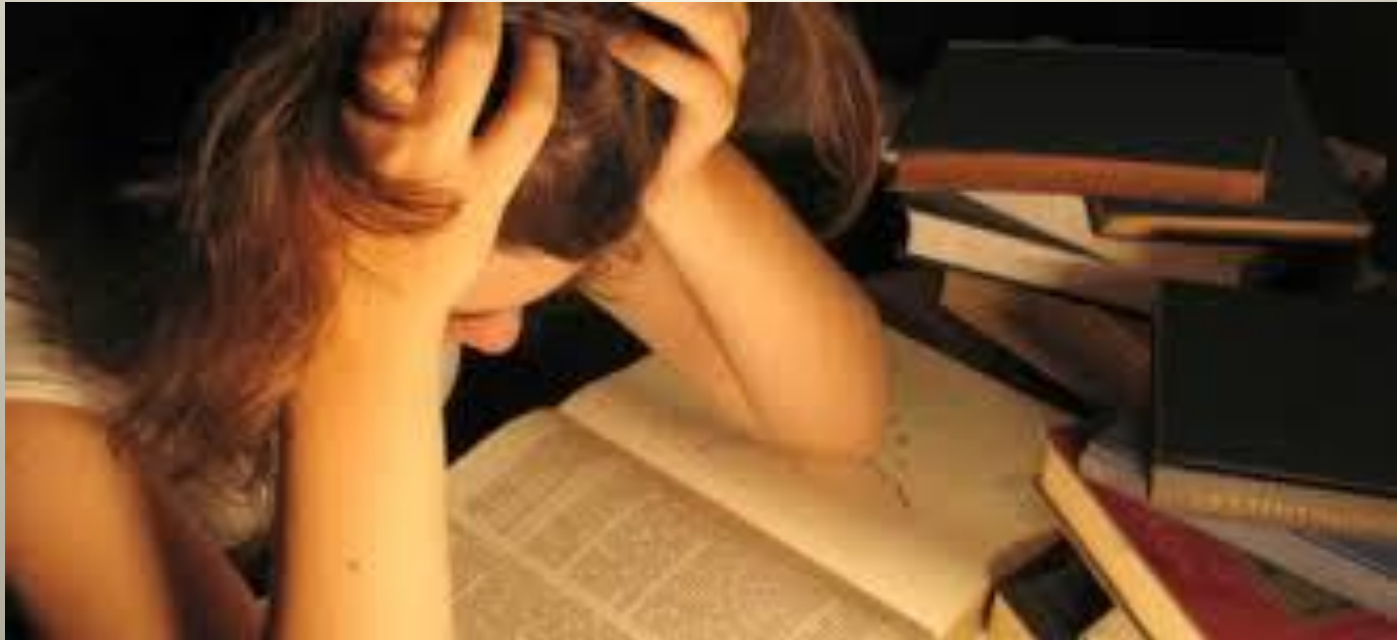
Number of Comprehension Strategies Used by Individual Students

| 0 Strategies | 1 Strategy | 2 Strategies | 3 Strategies | 4 Strategies | 5 Strategies | Undetermined |
|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 3% | 32% | 30% | 22% | 8% | 3% | 1% |

Most commonly used strategies:

- 1) Using an electronic dictionary for word definitions
- 2) Context Clues
- 3) Questioning techniques

Comprehension



- Teacher candidates seemed to have a weak understanding of their own comprehension strategy use
- They were novices in using comprehension strategies flexibly
- They exhibited limited knowledge of expository text structures

Preliminary Findings

(2) Teacher candidates were developing an understanding and gaining confidence in implementing the literature circle strategy in their future classrooms



“I am very happy we did this in class and I am very excited to try literature circles in my future classroom. I know I learned way more and heard many opinions with this discussion type setting than I would have on my own, and that is something that I am prepared to implement so my future students can learn and soak in just as much information”.

Understanding Literature Circles



- This experience was more helpful than just reading about literature circles in a textbook
- Participants valued the experience of discussing ideas with their peers
- The discussions led to deeper understanding of the texts and deeper peer connections in the classroom

Preliminary Findings

(3) Teacher Candidates valued the use of higher level thinking during Literature Circles.



“Literature Circles do not just build reading skills, but reading comprehension, vocabulary, enjoyment of reading, self-confidence and friendship”.

Adaptation



- Students did not really adapt strategies for nonfiction texts, but rather came to realizations about how the strategies developed better comprehension
- We intentionally did not model the task to find out how our students would problem-solve; we found that they did not adapt the strategies, but achieved deeper understanding of the material and the task

Conclusions

- Teacher candidates were unable to express adequate knowledge, understanding, and efficient use of multiple comprehension strategies.
- Not all teacher candidates possessed an adequate knowledge of expository text structure.
- Teacher candidates did not manifest the problem-solving skill necessary to adapt fiction text strategies to non-fiction text.



Call to Action

- The practical application of literature circle theory needs to be explicitly taught to teacher candidates so that effective implementation of the strategy occurs.
- It is not enough to teach teacher candidates comprehension strategies. University instructors must provide them with specific ways and means of teaching the “how” and “why” of strategies.



Call to Action

- Ensure that teacher candidates know how to design literature circle strategies and other comprehension strategies that include elements of critical thinking.
- Learning of comprehension strategies must progress from understanding to mastery level.

Summary

Teacher candidates must leave the teacher preparation program knowing:

- A strong foundational knowledge of text structure.
- A practical application of multiple comprehension strategies.
- How to design comprehension strategy instruction to include critical thinking elements.
- Multiple comprehension strategies at a mastery level.



References

- Abrams, L.M., Pedulla, J.J, & Madaus, G.F. (2003). Views from the classroom: Teachers' opinions of statewide testing programs', *Theory into Practice*, 42(1), 18-29. doi: 10.1207/s15430421tip4201_4
- Afflerbach, P. (2004, September). High stakes testing and reading assessment. *National reading conference policy brief*. Retrieved from [www.nrconline.org/./High Stakes Testing and Reading Assessment](http://www.nrconline.org/./High%20Stakes%20Testing%20and%20Reading%20Assessment)
- Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs & reading groups*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Daniels, H. & Steineke, N. (2004). *Mini-lessons for literature circles*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Day, J. P., Spiegel, D. L., McLellan, J., & Brown, V. B. (2002). *Moving forward with literature circles: How to plan, manage, and evaluate literature circles that deepen understanding and foster a love of reading*. New York: Scholastic.
- Harvey, S. & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.
- International Reading Association (1999, May). High-stakes assessments in reading. *A position statement of the international reading association*. Retrieved from <http://www.reading.org>
- Keene, E.O., & Zimmerman, S. (1997). *Mosaic of thought*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Lloyd, S. L. (2004). Using comprehension strategies as a springboard for student talk. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48, 2, 114-124.
- Long, T.W., Gove, M.K. (2003). How engagement strategies and literature circles promote critical response in a fourth-grade, urban classroom. *International Reading Association*, 350-361.
- U.S. Department of Education, No Child Left Behind Act (2001). Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2002). No child left behind: A desktop reference. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/>
- U. S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. (2010). *ESEA Blueprint for Reform*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint>
- Wilfong, L.G. (2009). Textmasters: Bringing literature circles to textbook reading across the curriculum. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult literacy*, 53, 2, 164-171.
- Zimmerman, S. & Hutchins, C. (2003). *7 keys to comprehension*. New York: Three Rivers Press.