



The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin

International Journal for Professional Educators

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Generational Issues for Educators

The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin

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The *Bulletin*, an official publication of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, promotes professional and personal growth of members through publication of their writings. Three online issues per year, subtitled *International Journal for Professional Educators*, focus on research-based and documented works—applied and data-based research, position papers, program descriptions, reviews of literature, and other articles on announced themes or other topics of interest to educators. Two print issues, subtitled *Collegial Exchange*, focus on articles based on practice and experience related to education, the Society, women, and children, as well as personal reflections and creative works. All five issues include book and technology reviews, letters to the editor, poetry, and graphic arts.

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*The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International
promotes professional and personal growth of women
educators and excellence in education.*

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Call for Submissions

Members are encouraged to submit manuscripts for consideration by the *Bulletin* Editorial Board. The Delta Kappa Gamma *Bulletin: Journal* accepts research-based articles including Action/Classroom Research, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Reviews of Literature, Program Descriptions, Position Papers, and Book/Technology Reviews. The Delta Kappa Gamma *Bulletin: Collegial Exchange* accepts articles of a more practical, personal nature, including Classroom and DKG Practices/Programs, Viewpoints on Current Issues, Personal Reflections or Anecdotes, Inspirational Pieces, Biographies and Interviews, Book and Technology Reviews, and Creative Writing.

Submissions should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise, and appropriate for Bulletin readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable, and free from gender, political, patriotic, or religious bias. For more detailed information, please refer to the Submission Guidelines on page 63 and the Submission Grids on page 64.

Listed below are the deadlines and, where appropriate, themes. Although there is a suggested theme for each issue of the *Bulletin: Journal*, manuscripts on all topics are welcome. The *Bulletin: Collegial Exchange* is not theme-based.

Journal: Accountability (84-3; Online)

(Postmark deadline is October 1, 2017)

Professionalism • Tenure • National-State-Local Policies •
Student Learning • School Improvement

Collegial Exchange (84-4; Print)

(Postmark deadline is December 15, 2017)

No designated theme

Journal: Disruptive Innovation (84-5; Online)

(Postmark deadline is March 1, 2018)

Change • Collaborative Innovation • Systemic Change •
Different Models of Leadership •
Challenge-driven Innovation • Problem Solving

Journal: Schools and Societal Issues (85-1; Online)

(Postmark deadline is May 15, 2018)

Immigrants • Refugees • Poverty • Bullying • LGBT • Transgender

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From the Editor

Educator, author, and businessman Stephen Covey once offered this provocative thought about perception:

Each of us tends to think we see things as they are, that we are objective. But this is not the case. We see the world, not as it is, but as we are—or, as we are conditioned to see it. When we open our mouths to describe what we see, we in effect describe ourselves, our perceptions, our paradigms (*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 2004, p. 28).

Included in the “conditioning” that shapes one’s perceptions—that, in effect, shapes one’s sense of self—are factors associated with the era in which one comes of age. The power of such generational identity and the relationships between and among generations have been the subject of literature ranging from Shakespeare’s dramatic *Romeo and Juliet* to the humorous musical, *Bye Bye Birdie*; in both, the older generation essentially frets and muses about the younger—“Why can’t they be like we were?”—and those in the younger generation, in turn, wonder why they must conform to the outdated ways of their elders.

As educators, DKG members naturally interact with those in younger generations—as well as with colleagues and community members who may represent still other age groups, each replete with its own experiences and perceptions. Clearly, an understanding of generational issues is thus important for educators and serves as the theme for the first two articles in this issue. Editorial Board member Perry-Sheldon provides an overview of the significance of generational issues in a variety of fields and then reviews two recent books on the topic. In a limited but interesting case study, Lozinak endeavors to determine whether educators across generations are more alike than different.

Although not specifically focused on generational issues, other articles provide insight to working with students at varied levels. Reporting on an action research project, Curtis explores the value of modeling in impacting teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about teaching writing at the kindergarten level. Benediktsdottir discusses a program that promotes democracy and citizen awareness among students at a grade school in Iceland, and Nappi argues for the importance of questioning in developing critical thinking skills at all levels. Indicating that use of technology is important to widely disparate generations, Lilienthal, Potthoff, and Anderson share the structure, benefits, and challenges of an online practicum course for graduate students, and Johns, Troncale, Trucks, Calhoun, and Alvidrez promote the benefits of student engagement via use of specific online tools.

Delta Kappa Gamma includes members from diverse generations, working together to achieve the mission of promoting professional and personal growth and excellence in education. Each carries her own perceptions regarding education—views that are often shaped by the lens of generation. May the articles in this issue help readers to embrace the challenges of being educators of all generations collaborating toward the common goal of excellence in education for new generations of learners.

Judith R. Merz, EdD
Editor

Food for Thought: Learning More about Generations

By Barbara Perry-Sheldon

This article continues a series initiated by members of the Bulletin's editorial board. The goal of the series is to provide insight on a topic related to the theme of the issue. Here, editorial board member Perry-Sheldon provides an overview of the significance of generational issues in a variety of fields and then reviews two recent books on the topic.

"Every generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it." George Orwell

The construct of generation and related issues are explored in many books and professional publications. Interest in the topic has grown because this is the first time that so many generations are employed together (Franksen, 2009). Authors and publishers differ in names for the generations, their positions on the traits of the different generations, and whether a combination of generations makes a difference in the work environment. What is written comes from diverse fields such as business, government, and all areas of education, from medical schools, universities, and public libraries to K-12 settings. The following sampling of ideas from the diverse fields sets the stage for brief reviews of two books on the topic.

A Sampling of Relevant Quotations

Libraries. Park, Scott, and Schnabel (2014) concluded from their research, "As we have explored the literature and analyzed the survey results, our eyes have been opened to the importance of generational issues in the workplace. Generational differences, whether perceived or real, have huge implications for library services and administration" (np).

Medical Fields. "Medical educators face many of the same challenges as other faculty in trying to communicate with a generation they may not fully understand" (Twenge, 2009, p. 403).

"This is the first time in American history that four different generations have worked together in the workplace. For that reason, it is vital to examine what divides the distinct generations and what is important to each of them" (Frandsen, 2009, p. 34).

Higher Education. "The current workforce composition of the academy is comprised of multiple generational cohorts: Traditionalists, Leading Edge Boomers, Trailing Edge Boomers, Generation Xers and Millennials. These [research] results draw attention to the value of knowing the generational composition of a higher education institution in order to take into account the unique needs of each generational cohort when planning ways to improve recruitment, retention, and productivity of administrators, faculty and staff"

(Kleinhans, Chakradhar, Muller, & Waddill, 2015, p. 89).

K-12 Schools

In a 2016 *Kappan* position paper, Ferguson related generational issues to the current challenge in many states of how to attract millennials to the profession to replace the veteran teachers who are retiring. She cited polls suggesting millennials have “lackluster feelings about teaching. The data bear this out as enrollment numbers for both education schools and the once sought-after Teach for America program are on a downward trajectory” (p. 74). Ferguson further indicated that lack of time and support are two key issues causing millennials to leave the classroom.

Lovely and Lancaster (2010), in an article in *School Administrator*, noted that administrators must work to build a community within a school with diverse generations:

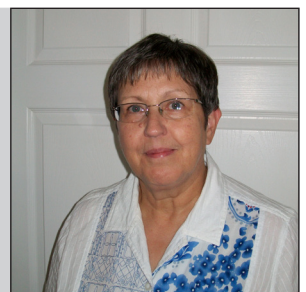
The intergenerational dialogue so vital to the development of strong learning communities doesn’t come naturally to educators. But when age-based differences are factored in to professional development, hiring practices and staff assignments, it sets the stage for a collaborative outcome. On the other hand, if we ignore such differences, culture wars will obstruct progress. The wider the divide becomes, the harder it is to bridge. Knowing what binds staff together or pulls them apart allows you to bring out the best in your people. (“Unnatural Dialogue,” para. 3)

The article built on ideas presented in the 2007 book, *Generations at School*, co-authored by Lovely.

Political and Economic Policy Makers

Rather than focusing on the workplace, Taylor (2016) explored the impact of generations on America’s political and economic future in his book, *The Next America: Boomers, Millennials, and the Looming Generational Showdown*. He cited numerous statistics gathered by the Pew Research Foundation. In a chapter titled “Battle of the Ages,” Turner wrote, “If ever there was a moment to gird for a generation war, now would seem to be it. The unsparing arithmetic of a graying population is about to force political leaders to rewrite the social contract between young and old” (p. 79). He posited, “Young and old in America are poles apart. Demographically, politically, economically, socially, and technologically, the generations are more different from each other now than at any time in living memory” (p. 61). In his book, Taylor outlined his views on the coming “reckoning” within generations in America, asking, for example, what will happen to safety nets such as Social Security and Medicare and taxes? He noted the challenges of generational equity: “At the end of the day, though, this is a challenge that can only be overcome by presidential leadership. What’s needed is someone who can use the bully pulpit to educate the public about the inequities in the status quo” (p. 235). The book is a great read for those interested in a different perspective on generations, supported by data and implications for policy.

Dr. Barbara Perry-Sheldon is retired from North Carolina Wesleyan College, where she directed the teacher education program. A member of Alpha Gamma Chapter, she serves as Executive Secretary for North Carolina State Organization and is a member (2014-2018) of the editorial board for DKG. bpsheldon@aol.com



Businesses

The quote from George Orwell about generations cited at the head of this article is used by Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2013) to open a chapter on cross-generational workplaces in their book, *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Boomers, GenXers, and Gen Yers in the Workplace*. They noted,

There is a problem in the workplace—a problem of values, ambitions, views, mind sets, demographics, and generations in conflict. The workplace we inhabit today is awash with the conflicting voices and views of the most age- and value-diverse workforce the world has known. (p. 11)

The authors updated their first edition that focused on awareness of the generational differences and added more on ways “to tap the potential of workers from all the generations” (p. 3). The second edition gives facts and myths about each generation and offers suggestions for handling the clash of generations in the workplace; many of the suggestions would work in school settings.

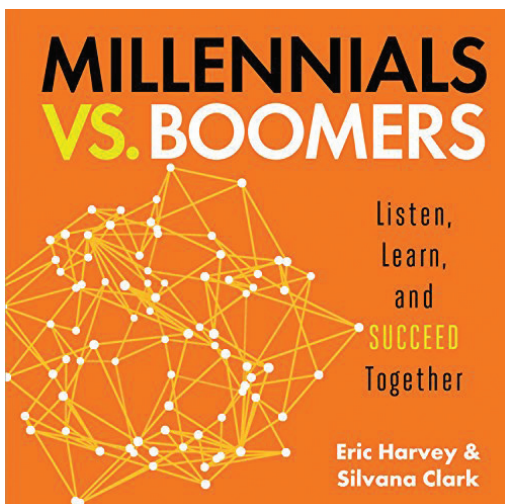
Bollan and Lopes (2014) presented a contrasting view for business leaders. Based on their review of generation literature and their own research, they concluded that the construct of generation is important in families and not “significant for work” (p. 255), but they argued that other characteristics, especially age, are more important than the traditional, popular way of looking at generations as “worthwhile descriptor(s)” for managing people (p. 237).

Suggested Further Reading

In a foreword to a book by Lancaster and Stillman (2002), well-known businessman and journalist Harvey MacKay argued that reading, knowing, and understanding the generation gap and differences is something every leader needs. He further said that understanding the generations is a “key to understanding yourself, your family, and your friends better” (xix). If interested in reading more about generational differences, consider the two newer books briefly reviewed below.

Harvey, E., & Clark, S. (2016). *Millennials vs. boomers: Listen, learn and succeed together*. Naperville, IL: Simple Truths, an imprint of Sourcebooks.

Depending on which way this small, square book is held, the title is either *Millennials vs. Boomers* or *Boomers vs. Millennials*. In one direction, Harvey presents the views of



Boomers, and when the book is flipped back to front, Clark presents the Millennial perspective. Written in a friendly, first-person style with many personal examples, the book contrasts 12 workplace areas ranging from job loyalty, diversity, and decision-making to personal growth. This book's brevity, dual perspectives, and interesting format make it a quick introduction to two generations and useful for discussions of the topic.

The book is filled with humorous sayings, such as “Life was much simpler when Apple and Blackberry were simply fruits” (p. 62–63). As the writers meet in the middle of the book, both conclude, “With more understanding and greater appreciation we can meet in the middle and succeed together” (p. 107).

Grubb, V. (2017). *Clash of the generations: Managing the new workplace reality*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Although the title reflects much of the literature in viewing clashes among generations, the author presents a positive set of principles for building on differences for the common good. A lack of trust within corporations and demographic changes demand a new set of leadership skills according to Grubb. She writes that “letting go of old habits and instead thinking about motivation and engagement in a new light—a task that isn’t easy to accomplish” (p. 5) is a key to reducing turnover and lack of engagement in an organization. Grubb presents the typical characteristics of generations in a table.

Although *Clash of the Generations* is primarily a book for corporate managers, many of the suggestions made are quite relevant to educators and leaders in educational organizations. Grubb’s descriptions of effective feedback (be specific, identify actions, state what worked or didn’t, suggest different options, and give follow up) and effective coaching (encouragement, active listening, questions, shared perspectives, shared ownership; pp. 49-51) are good practices in school settings as well as in businesses. Her chapter on delegating and mentoring provides insights on promoting growth for individuals from all generations. Grubb suggests that reverse mentoring, when the younger person coaches the older, is helpful at times.

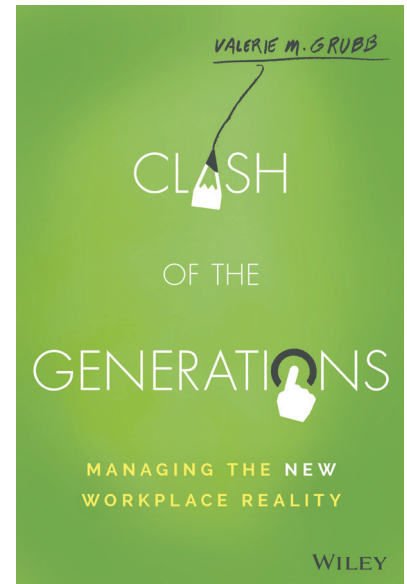
Other insights for educators can be found in the six short business cases that conclude the book. In a case study on leadership, Grubb notes that mentoring is “one of the best ways to improve leadership” (p. 157) and is most successful when viewed as a partnership and not a top-down model. Another case describes building cohorts for new employees, or what is called “onboarding,” as a key for successfully integrating newer generations and helping them make connections to the culture of the workplace, an idea similar to what some schools do for beginning teachers. It is a strategy that would work in an education organization.

In Conclusion

Generational differences are discussed and studied across disciplines, often in denigrating terms such as “clash” and “conflict.” But most individuals do recognize generational differences and acknowledge that whether age, life histories, or changing cultures add to the differences, encouraging generations to work together is important for the success of the workplace.

Johnson and Anderson (2016) wrote, “The best way to overcome and prevent conflict between generations in the workplace is to get past generational stereotypes and address the underlying issues of communication, cooperation, and a positive work culture” (para. 8). They encouraged the use of perspective-taking skills as a way to bridge perceived or real conflicts among generations. Perspective-taking skills

can help bridge cultural divides within the workplace, including divides between younger and older workers. They also can help build understanding between employees and customers, resulting in improved customer satisfaction and increased sales...Adopting perspective-taking skills will result in a workforce that hires and retains the best available talent regardless of age group and cultural background. Organizations with such a workforce are then better able to engage



with customers of all ages, and are best equipped for success in an increasingly global and diverse economy. (para. 10)

Although Johnson and Anderson wrote of business workplaces, their points still apply to schools and organizations in an increasingly diverse, global environment. Continuing to learn and broaden perspectives will result in providing students with a quality education while building trust, understanding, collaboration, and support among educators from all generations.

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Teaching Side by Side by Side: An Intergenerational Case Study

By Kathleen Lozinak

*A*bundant research exists in the area of generational differences. The author explores that research from her perspective as the middle individual within three generations of professional educators. Her research is built on a small case study and is centered on one basic question: Are educators across generations more alike than different?

Introduction

Your new administrator is years younger, and the majority of your interactions with this leader take place using technology. The paraprofessional assigned to your class is coming out of retirement for the third time. You feel a need to reflect on articles you have read concerning the impact of generational differences on the work environment. Do you have cause for concern? Or are all the identified characteristics for each generation just stereotypes? The result of educators—and workers in general—living longer and working longer will create a number of issues in the twenty-first-century society and economy. One interesting phenomenon will be that up to five generations will be employed together (Knight, 2014). Will they thrive or struggle?

I wondered whether a small case study within my own family that includes three generations of educators could provide insight to this issue. My mother, Arlene, is well on her way to being 100 and shows few signs of slowing down. My daughter, Emily, is considered an early-career educator and exhibits all the qualities of a master teacher. And I am forever in the middle.

Problem

In *The 100 Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity*, Gratton and Scott (2016) calculated approximately how long people will work if they are living longer. That age increases with each subsequent generation. Predictably, workers of very different ages will be working together in many fields, including education. So what will that mean? Are the generational stereotypes accurate, and will they impact how effectively people can work together?

Background

A generation is defined as a group of people who share birth years, age, and common historical and significant events at given stages of development (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Each generation is influenced by multiple forces, including popular culture, economic events, media, peers, and parents. These forces help to impact a generation's value system and outlook on life. Researchers are currently working with labels for five generations and a

variety of traits associated with them, but they are quick to point out that their data reveal common characteristics and not stereotypes (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Those studying this issue believe they are providing general comparisons between groups and acknowledge that there are similarities as well as differences.

Burke (2004) grouped generations into four categories based on “values and experiences common to each generation” (p. v). The Veterans or Traditionalists grew up during the depression and war years. Anyone born before 1945 is considered a Traditionalist. The Early Boomers, on the other hand, grew up as products of post-war optimism. Their birth years include 1946 through 1964. Several social issues impacted their development, including Vietnam War protests, Woodstock, Kent State killings, Watergate, and the impeachment of a president. Later Boomers experienced declining economic prosperity. Generation X members were born between 1961 and 1976. They grew up during an era of failing marriages, latch-key kids, and MTV. X’ers tended to date cautiously and marry late because they grew up during the AIDS scare. They are said to be entrepreneurial and technologically savvy. Following them are GenNext, born between 1977 and 1995 and seen as needing a solid work-family balance. They are characterized as more conventional and very close to their families. They are used to getting information immediately and from multiple sources. They do not know of a time when computers or Internet did not exist. They consider Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, and YouTube trusted sources of information. Although all of these generations may be currently in a given workplace, my focus was on the experiences and perceptions of three generations within my own family of educators, spanning from a Traditionalist to a Millennial/Nexter.

Research Question

The purpose of this mini-research project was to examine the validity of characteristics assigned to varying generations as they apply to teachers in the workforce. I also wanted to explore if and how these characteristics might impact relationships among multigenerational educators. Thus, my key research question was “To what extent do generational differences impact educators in the workforce?”

Research Method and Participants

The research method was structured as a case study using information from three generations of one family. To formalize this highly personal investigation, I first conducted an informal review of the writings available related to generational differences. I then created a list of interview questions (Appendix A) based on themes uncovered during my reading. I included questions related to generational stereotypes as well as some directly relating to current educational issues.

I interviewed my mother, Arlene, and daughter, Emily, and answered the questions myself. I was interested to see if the characteristics associated with each generation applied to us. Because this research was originally intended to quench my own curiosity, I also took



Dr. Kathleen Lozinak serves as first vice president of Connecticut State Organization and president of Omicron Chapter. She was a 2016 Golden Gift Leadership Management Seminar participant. Selected as a recipient of a DKG international scholarship, Dr. Lozinak earned a doctorate in educational leadership from Capella University. She works as a teacher and mentor in Stratford, CT. Lozinak's mother is an active DKG member, as is her daughter, Emily. kathleenlozinak@yahoo.com

the opportunity to look for similarities regarding why we became teachers and a variety of topics that might impact how we teach. Several patterns and themes emerged related to the importance of strong teacher preparation programs and mentoring, but I was surprised to find that topics I would have thought to be influential in certain generations did not present as impactful.

My mother turned 86 in November 2016. She completed her teacher preparation program at Hunter College in New York City at the age of 19 and began her teaching career in Long Island, New York. As a newlywed, she went on to teach in East St. Louis, Illinois, where one of the interviewers felt the need to ask her how she felt about teaching Black children. My mother responded that “children are children.” Years later, she reflects on a career that includes several states, teaching children with special needs, a variety of administrative positions, public school, private school, and work for a university as a supervisor of student teachers. My mother is currently working in the public schools assisting students with special needs.

My road to fulltime employment as a certified teacher was a long and winding one. I worked as a tutor and daycare provider to children with special needs while earning my bachelor’s degree and teaching certificate—a journey that took 10 years. My field experiences and student teaching were all in my hometown. I student taught at the high school I had attended, working with students with learning disabilities and emotional issues that impacted their learning. My first position was in an integrated preschool, and my second position was back in my own high school. Currently, I am loving every minute with my Grade 4 students and am mentoring colleagues younger than my youngest child.

Emily earned her bachelor’s degree in a non-education field and entered the New York City (NYC) Teaching Fellows through St. John’s University. After completing an intensive summer training program, she was assigned to teach Grade 6 mathematics in a middle school in Flushing, Queens, NYC. She earned a master’s degree in secondary mathematics education by attending classes at night. Emily currently teaches freshmen algebra in a technical high school. She is piloting a mastery-based learning program in which each student spends the majority of his or her class time completing independent assignments on a digital device. Like her grandmother and mother, she holds degrees in special education and administration. My daughter also currently holds leadership positions in several teacher organizations

Results: Common Characteristics

The participants were presented with a list of characteristics drawn from all four currently working generations (Traditionalists, Boomer, Gen X, and Millennials; Burke, 2004) and were asked to choose the five that best described themselves in a work setting. From the 19 workplace characteristics most commonly associated with the four working generations presented (Appendix B), all three professional educators placed the “need for structure” in their top five characteristics. All also chose “ability to multitask” to describe themselves. Three other characteristics shared by varying combinations of respondents may have had more to do with varying life stages. My mother and I responded we needed a “work life balance,” while Emily and I saw ourselves as “giving maximum effort.” Emily’s last two traits were “tech savvy” and “process driven.” My mother’s final two characteristics were “asking for help when needed” and “accepting authority.” My last choice was “staying with an organization over time.” These differences may be attributed to the fact that, as educators, we were at markedly dissimilar stages of our lives and careers.

Results: Vocation

It was interesting to see that three generations of women chose teaching as a career for similar reasons. Responses from all of us indicated a desire to make a difference. We all also referenced teachers who had made a difference for us. My mother, from the Traditional Generation, also talked about loving school as a child, while Emily referenced the need to choose a career where she could impact the future while minimizing student loan debt.

When asked about teacher preparation programs and early-career experiences, all three mentioned the importance of quality field work experiences and strong mentors. Administrators were also seen as factors who impacted the teaching experience for my mother and me. We all stated that we continue to use strategies and tips learned from our cooperating teachers. We also all discussed the importance of a mentor. Emily and I believed that, although our first official mentors were not extremely helpful, subsequent mentors and many professional educators and administrators were willing to help and support us early in our careers.

The stories shared from those early careers returned to memories of impacting children's lives. Across generations, we three teachers saw our ability to make a difference as the foundation for our work. Regardless of our specific generation, we could recall the names of students from our first years of teaching and the relationships we built with them.

Results: Non-Issues

The interviewees were asked about the impact of any technological advances on their teaching. The characteristics associated with Millennials had led me to believe that this would be important to my daughter. We all listed varying forms of technology available and

our ability to implement them, but none believed technology had a huge impact on how she taught.

Additionally, I presumed that historically significant events would impact teachers and their teaching. I expected the participants to list wars or school shootings as having a noticeable impact on their teaching. But none of us, as professional educators, reported thoughts and feelings about teaching being changed by global issues, no matter how near or how far. Furthermore, the question relating to legislative impacts on educational careers resulted in discussion about what is taught and how it is taught—but not as an impact on the art and science of teaching and working with children. Some reference to No Child Left

The purpose of this investigation was to explore to what extent, if any, generational differences impact educators in the work force.

Behind and laws relating to where students with special needs can be taught, as well as union issues, were shared by all.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study was highly personal in nature and thus limited by sample size, it does provide a starting point for organizations interested in uncovering the many commonalities of their intergenerational membership or workforce. Organizational leaders and human resource personnel should take the time to investigate the varying strengths of each person with whom they are associated and encourage individuals to share the stories that have made them the unique individuals they are.

Conclusion

The purpose of this investigation was to explore to what extent, if any, generational differences impact educators in the work force. Clearly, learning about the characteristics commonly associated with the four working generations is beneficial on many levels. Understanding that different people have different values has always been helpful to leaders and managers in all fields. Knowledge of generational characteristics may help in attracting and retaining the best candidates for a position or members for an organization. Finding that we are more alike than different across generations can help to put our minds at ease when we are met with that worker who is coming out of retirement for a third time or an administrator who is less than half our age. Ultimately, one can come to feel blessed if she has the honor of working side by side with educators from varied generations.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What factors influenced your decision to become a teacher?
2. Describe your teacher education program.
3. Share some interesting stories from your time as an early-career educator.
4. Discuss the impact of any formal or informal mentoring that occurred.
5. What technological advances were newly implemented in the early years of your career?
6. How did that technology impact your teaching?
7. What legislation has had the greatest impact on your work in education?
8. Please discuss any significant/historic events that occurred during your teaching career that impacted how you taught or your feelings about teaching.
9. Please review the descriptions provided on these cards [Workplace trait cards]. Which card most closely describes your attitudes toward work?

Appendix B

Workplace Traits

- ✦ Accept authority figures in the workplace
- ✦ Ask for help when needed
- ✦ Embrace diversity
- ✦ Give maximum effort
- ✦ Good at multitasking
- ✦ Learn quickly
- ✦ Like informality
- ✦ Like structure
- ✦ Need supervision
- ✦ Prefer to work alone
- ✦ Prefer to work in teams
- ✦ Process driven
- ✦ Respectful of organizational hierarchy
- ✦ Results driven
- ✦ Retain what you learn
- ✦ Technology savvy
- ✦ Seek work life balance
- ✦ Stays with organization over long term
- ✦ Willing to deal with work related politics

Adapted from Burke, M. E. (2004). Generational differences survey report.

The Impact of Teacher Efficacy and Beliefs on Writing Instruction

By Ginnie Curtis

The purpose of this author's research was to investigate how the modeling of effective writing strategies impacted kindergarten teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes toward the teaching of writing. One's knowledge base plays an important role in the efficacy of a writing teacher. Teachers must understand the writing process themselves before they can share with students and develop each student's skills as a writer. Teachers must feel confident in their delivery of writing instruction through an effective, systematic process. Their beliefs and attitudes can potentially impact students in the writing process and overall achievement. Through a mixed methods approach, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the research question. The findings suggested that the modeling of specific writing strategies does impact teachers' ability as writing instructors. Confidence and efficacy are outcomes implied through this investigation.

Introduction

Writing is a difficult skill for educators to instruct and students to master. It is a complex, multifaceted skill that requires explicit instruction by a trained teacher. Bifuh-Ambe (2013) stated that "teachers must feel competent as writers and writing teachers in order to provide the kind of instruction and modeling that will help students develop into proficient writers" (p. 137). At least part of this inattention to writing instruction stems from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which resulted in writing being greatly ignored as a focus on high-stakes testing preoccupied educators and students in American classrooms (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Unfortunately, more recent research has also identified a lack of time or teacher ability in providing quality writing instruction (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013).

For kindergarten teachers, teaching writing to young children who are also learning to read can be overwhelming. Kindergarten teachers bear much of the responsibility for the foundational skills of these early learners. Many times, their writing instruction centers on handwriting, sentence structure, and spelling (traditional writing instruction) without much explicit instruction in writing itself (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Teachers must find an effective balance between writing instruction that focuses on process and content and on traditional writing instruction.

Perhaps this disparity is a direct result of lack of training on effective writing instruction. The National Commission on Writing (2003) recommended the improvement of teacher preparation as one of four findings in its study. In their 2011 article, *A Year in the Writing Workshop* (2011), Troia, Lin, Cohen, and Monroe examined how teachers' beliefs about

themselves as writing teachers influenced their teaching of writing. They concluded that teachers who felt inadequate and poorly trained typically did not spend as much time as needed delivering writing instruction. On the other hand, teachers who had received adequate training felt empowered in their writing abilities and the delivery of instruction, thus impacting students' writing development in the early grades.

This article is based on a small case study with two kindergarten teachers who received direct modeling of writing strategies. The researcher sought to answer one key research question: "What is the effect of the modeling of specific writing strategies on teacher knowledge, attitude, and capacity regarding writing instruction?"

Review of Literature

The complexity of writing instruction has left many teachers feeling inadequate and poorly trained to teach writing skills. In this day of high-stakes testing, writing instruction has taken a back burner to areas such as mathematics and reading, creating a large fissure between teacher ability and consistency of instruction. In an examination of teachers' perceptions of effective writing strategies, White and Hall (2014) argued for strong instructional support for teachers in writing instruction. In their research, 21% of participants indicated a lack of preparation for teaching writing, either through professional development or other training, thus affecting their ability as effective writing instructors. Addressing this gap, Bifuh-Ambe (2013) noted, "Professional development can foster teachers' writing proficiency and in turn improve students' writing achievements" (p. 137). Ultimately, students who have been taught by a trained writing teacher outperform students of untrained teachers.

Teachers' competency in teaching specific writing skills can be increased through professional development in areas such as explicit prewriting activities, specific feedback, and effective collaboration between teachers and students. Such competence also allows the teacher to implement new writing strategies, including student-centered activities (Troia et al., 2011). Cutler and Graham (2008) noted that teacher efficacy is an area where improvement is desperately needed. Teachers cannot teach effectively what they do not know or understand. Professional development can build teacher capacity in writing and, hence, in writing instruction.

Teachers' perceptions or attitudes toward writing instruction play an imperative role in their work. Not only do teachers' beliefs affect writing instruction, but they can also influence attitudes toward students and student behavior (Troia et al., 2011). Bifuh-Ambe (2013) provided insight into the teaching of writing based on teachers' attitudes and perceptions of their own ability as writers and as teachers of writing. In her study, teachers generally felt more positive about writing after professional development and perceived themselves as "good writers" (p. 145). Furthermore, when teachers perceived themselves as competent writing teachers, they were able to deal with outside factors that might influence learning, such as classroom behavior (Troia et al., 2011). The work of Bifuh-Ambe (2013) and of



Ginnie Curtis, a member of Alpha Rho Chapter in Mississippi State Organization and National Board Certified Teacher in Literacy, serves as the Lamar County School District Literacy Coach. She recently earned her specialist degree in instructional leadership from William Carey University. She provides professional development to teachers in the five components of effective reading instruction and writing in response to text. Working with professional learning communities and individual teachers throughout the district, Curtis promotes literacy instruction based on explicit, direct instruction through whole and small group activities. ginnie.curtis@lamarcountyschools.org

Troia et al. (2011) confirmed teachers' beliefs and the role they play in teaching writing as barriers that must be overcome. Feeling confident and qualified as a teacher empowers the teacher in the delivery of instruction and positively impacts student achievement.

Discussing writing instruction in the primary grades, Cutler and Graham (2008) drove home the importance of effective writing instruction in the early grades as the basis of students' future success as writers. Writing instruction at that level should be geared toward the writing process and focus less on isolated skills in language and conventions (Troia et al., 2011). Teaching skills through the context of the writing process and not in isolation is essential in developing proficient writers and must start in kindergarten and build throughout the elementary grades. Cutler and Graham (2008) and Troia et al. (2011) both addressed the importance of writing instruction in kindergarten to help early learners see reading and writing as reciprocal processes and to lay the foundation for future learning.

Description of the Population

The study was conducted at a public kindergarten-through-Grade 8 school located in a small, urban community of south Mississippi. One principal, a lead teacher, a counselor, a part-time district literacy coach, and 18 teachers were on staff at the school servicing approximately 300 students. The overall population was 98% Caucasian and 2% African American. Based on the school's student demographic data, 80% of students were considered economically disadvantaged. In response to this information, a prekindergarten class was housed at the school 2 years ago to provide early childhood education.

Participants in this study were two kindergarten teachers serving 14 students each and sharing an assistant. The two classes were originally one, but due to an increase in enrollment, the school administrators divided the class after the first semester. The initial teacher was a seasoned veteran of 15 years and had been at the school for 3 years. She was an older individual who had taken some time off from teaching to raise her own children. The other teacher had been practicing for 3 years with only 1 month at this current school. Prior to obtaining her teaching licensure, she had served as a teacher's assistant for 10 years at another school within the district. Both of these teachers had worked only in kindergarten through Grade 2 during their teaching careers.

Procedure

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of the modeling of specific writing strategies by the district's literacy coach on teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and capacity relevant to writing instruction. This 7-week plan was designed specifically for the two teachers based upon conversations held during Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and through e-mail dialogue throughout the first semester of the 2016-2017 school year.

Three weeks prior to the onset of the study, teachers and the literacy coach engaged in specific dialogue regarding the teaching of writing in their classrooms and their feelings of inadequacy. From this informal conversation, a computerized pre-survey (see Table) was designed by the literacy coach and administered to both teachers. The data from this survey set a baseline against which to gauge a change in teachers' perceptions of themselves as writing instructors.

Prior to the modeled lessons, the teachers and the literacy coach met and discussed the upcoming lessons on writing opinion papers. Based on the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) scaffolding

documents, teachers determined what students must be able to do to demonstrate mastery of the first writing standard. Teachers also viewed the rubric designed by kindergarten teachers across the district to assess students' mastery of skills. Based on the resources, students needed to write about a topic or book and share their opinion through drawing, dictating, or writing.

During the 3 weeks of intervention, the literacy coach created sentence prompts and writing paper on large chart paper so that effective modeling could be conducted for a large group. Books were selected, both fiction and nonfiction, so students could have multiple exposures to different texts. The writing centers for small groups were organized to include writing paper, copies of the text, and writing utensils for students to use in the teacher-led center. Easels were also placed at the center so the charts created in whole group could be relocated to this center.

“Teachers’ competency in teaching specific writing skills can be increased through professional development in areas such as explicit prewriting activities, specific feedback, and effective collaboration between teachers and students.”

For each of the six intervention sessions (two each week), the literacy coach demonstrated writing lessons for the whole group. Each session followed the same format: beginning with the reading of a text; modeling of opinion writing and informative writing using the sentence prompts and chart paper; and ending with the students creating their own work at the small-group writing center. During the final four sessions, the assistant teacher observed so that she could facilitate the writing center in the future.

At the conclusion of each intervention session, the teachers reflected on the modeled lesson and responded to questions provided by the literacy coach. These questions gauged teachers' understanding of the strategy modeled as well as questions or concerns that needed to be addressed in order for the intervention to be successful. The literacy coach kept a journal notating all of the

sessions and dialogue with the teachers.

After the 3 weeks of modeled writing instruction, the teachers were administered the computerized post-survey form. Teachers were also asked to reflect upon the entire process, sharing their reflections through e-mail with the literacy coach. Student work samples were also collected to determine growth over the 3-week intervention period.

Analysis of Results

The purpose of this study was to determine if the modeling of effective writing strategies would affect teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and capacity relevant to writing instruction in two kindergarten classrooms. The research question explored in the study was based upon collaborative discussions between the literacy coach and kindergarten teachers regarding writing. A writing survey created for the study was administered as a pre-survey and post-survey to measure to what extent the two teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge of writing were affected through the modeling of effective opinion and informational writing strategies.

The survey was divided into four sections that focused on beliefs about writing, beliefs about teaching language in writing, group writing and frequency of writing, and teacher

attitude toward writing. Both teachers took the pre-survey and post-survey via an online tool. As shown in the Table, quantitative data were collected to compare the pre-survey and the post-survey information.

The analysis revealed an overall improvement in teachers' attitudes toward writing after the intervention of modeling effective writing strategies. The composite pre-survey mean was 1.76; the composite post-survey mean was 2.2, an increase of 25%. The mean was calculated for each subcategory in order to analyze specific areas for improvement. No change was observed in group writing and frequency of writing, but a slight increase was noted for beliefs about writing (9%). As displayed in the Figure, meaningful increases were observed in beliefs about teaching language in writing (75%) and teacher attitude in writing (37%). These subcategories indicated that the intervention, modeling of writing strategies, effectively improved teachers' attitudes about writing.

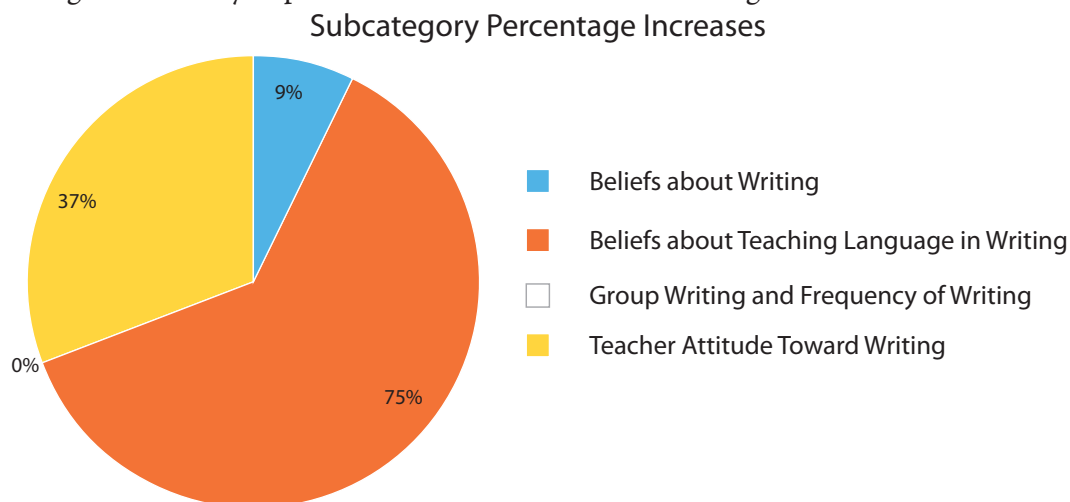


Figure. Percentage increases from pre- to post-intervention responses in subcategories of surveys.

Qualitative data were collected through teacher observation notes, the researcher's log, and student work samples. During initial meetings and e-mails, participating teachers expressed concerns about teaching writing in their classrooms. Coinciding with the pre-survey and post-survey results, teachers agreed that additional training in writing was needed for them to be successful writing teachers. During the modeling of writing lessons, the teachers scripted notes of the procedures used and how they could implement those in their classrooms. A reoccurring theme existed in each teacher's observation notes. As they observed the modeled lessons, they noted high levels of student engagement and enthusiasm by the writing presenter and the impact on students' achievement. One of the teachers stated in her observation notes, "Overall I feel much more confident and less stressed that I can teach kindergarten students to write. I can do this, and the students are going to benefit from this writing. They need lots of guidance and support."

The researcher's log revealed a shift in teachers' attitudes regarding writing. Initially, teachers were very hesitant to embrace writing in their small-group instruction time due to a sense of incompetence. In the final few demonstration lessons, teachers were more open and enthusiastic regarding writing instruction. Teachers were observed participating with the students during the lessons, repeating hand motions and chants involved in the writing strategies. During two different sessions, other school personnel attended the demonstration lessons due to the excitement of the participating teachers. The presence of these additional people did not, however, hamper the intended intervention in any way.

Table*Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey Results*

Modeling of Writing Instruction Intervention	Pre-Survey Results			Post-Survey Results		
	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (1)	Disagree (0)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (1)	Disagree (0)
Beliefs about Writing	Mean= 2.2			Mean=2.4		
1. Writing is more inborn than learned.			2			2
2. Writing requires practice.	2			2		
3. Writing requires critical thinking.	2			2		
4. Writing is more difficult to teach than other language skills such as listening, speaking, and reading.	1	1		2		
5. Teaching writing requires more effort than teaching grammar, vocabulary, and other language skills. Therefore, I do not teach writing.			2			2
Beliefs about Teaching Language in Writing	Mean= 1			Mean= 1.75		
6. Students should not be made to write in English before they master the grammar of English.			2			2
7. Students should not be made to write in English before they master the vocabulary of the language.			2			2
8. Writing is not as important as oral language development and phonics for students.		1	1	1	1	
9. At the kindergarten level, it is not necessary to teach writing because students can learn it in the other grades.			2		1	1
10. In teaching writing at the kindergarten level, more focus should be given to spelling and sentence structure.		1	1	1	1	
11. During writing time, more focus should be given to making students practice writing error free sentences.	1		1		2	
12. If students are allowed to make mistakes while writing, it will be difficult to make them write correctly later on.	1		1	1	1	
13. Teaching writing is as important as teaching reading.	1		1	1		1

Table continues

Modeling of Writing Instruction Intervention	Pre-Survey Results			Post-Survey Results		
	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (1)	Disagree (0)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (1)	Disagree (0)
Group Writing and Frequency of Writing	Mean= 2.33			Mean= 2.33		
14. I usually encourage group writing.		2		1	1	
15. I make my students reflect on and correct their own writing.		2		1	1	
16. I make students correct each other's written work.		2				2
17. Students in my class write daily.	1		1	1	1	
18. I model writing and the writing process on a regular basis.	1		1	1		1
19. My students and I write interactively on a regular basis.	2			1	1	
Teacher Attitude Toward Writing	Mean= 1.83			Mean= 1.83		
20. Writing is a difficult process to teach.	1		1	1	1	
21. I prefer to teach other subjects over writing.			2	1		1
22. I need additional training in order to teach writing.	1	1			2	
23. Writing was addressed in my undergraduate program.		1	1	1		1
24. My insecurities about writing keep me from teaching writing effectively.	1	1		1	1	
25. With additional support, I can effectively teach writing.	1		1	1	1	
	Pre-Survey Mean= 1.76			Post-Survey Mean= 2.2		

The ultimate goal in building teacher capacity is to impact student achievement. Student work samples were collected throughout the study to gauge the impact on students' writing development. At the onset of the study, students were writing isolated sentences not connected directly to a text during their writing center. For example, the teachers provided words written on sentence strips. Students manipulated the words to form a complete sentence and then wrote the sentence. After the intervention, students were writing four-to-five-sentence paragraphs with a big idea sentence and details from the text. This correlated with the kindergarten state writing standards and the purpose of this study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research question asked if the modeling of specific writing strategies by the literacy coach would impact teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and capacity regarding writing instruction. Throughout the action research, self-study process, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed. The results from these data indicated that

modeling specific writing strategies over a period of time did have a positive impact on teachers and their ability to teach writing. Teacher participants provided positive feedback in the form of conversations, reflections, and observation notes, as well as through the post-survey administered at the conclusion of the modeled instruction. Both teachers indicated that the use of specific, systematic writing instruction benefited them and increased their capacity to teach writing. In addition, teacher participants indicated a need for more instruction on the different modes of writing in the future to continue to build their capacity in this area.

Another result of this study was affirmation of the power of student engagement. Although this was not an intended outcome, future research could be conducted to consider the impact of teacher efficacy on both students' writing ability and motivation to write. Based on the students' writing samples and the district scoring rubric, growth was observed for all students. Teacher participants reflected multiple times during the course of the study on the high levels of student engagement and enthusiasm shown by the presenter. This study could be extended to an entire school or at least a larger school with multiple sections of kindergarten classrooms over a longer period of time. Additional study could consider the increased ability of teachers to implement the writing strategies after the initial period of modeled instruction.

Certain questions might arise from the original study in an effort to duplicate the study. What specific strategies were implemented for this study? How long were the modeled lessons? Was the student growth impacted by the modeled lessons or through the student engagement factor? How effective was the transfer of the modeled lessons to the implementation of writing strategies by the classroom teachers? These questions could be answered in future research as this study is highly applicable to writing teachers in multiple grades. Ultimately, because writing has become a central focus of students' readiness for college and careers, as Cutler and Graham (2008) emphasized, "teachers need to be better prepared to teach writing" (p. 909).

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Creating Schools that Emphasize Democracy and Citizenship

By Jóna Benediktsdóttir

The author, Assistant Head at a school in Iceland, describes a program to promote democracy and citizen awareness among students. At its core is a conference in which students reflect on and develop potential solutions to key issues that affect their learning and the functioning of the school.

The Icelandic National Curriculum delineates the educational principles for all Icelandic primary and secondary schools. This curriculum is based on six main areas of education: (a) literacy, (b) sustainability, (c) health and welfare, (d) democracy and human rights, (e) equality, and (f) creativity (Iceland Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2011). These six areas overlap to a certain extent, and most school work can be adapted to include them. The project being discussed here initially focused on the development of democracy and citizen awareness within a school in rural Iceland, but clearly teachers at the school also used the principles in teaching other subjects within the school's curriculum.

What is Democracy?

The concept of democracy can have different connotations, but for the purpose of this article, the term is used according to John Dewey's theories. Dewey (1976) considered democracy a way of life that enables active participation within society. Applied to a school setting, Dewey's idea of democracy demands that students actively participate in their studies and create solutions to their academic challenges. Working collaboratively toward the most conducive solutions prepares them for participation in a democratic society.

On this basis, the educators at Grunnskólinn a Ísafirði, a public school for children ages 6-16 in the town of Ísafjörður, consider it important to empower all students in discussions on how to create an educational society that best serves their needs. Dewey's theories of democracy contain the idea that people's experiences effect change because the experiences contain opportunities for learning (Dewey, 2000). This is the kind of democracy educators at Grunnskólinn a Ísafirði want to foster.

How Can a Vision of Democracy Permeate a School's Curriculum?

Educators at the school decided to base the project first and foremost on Basil Bernstein's ideas of what elements are essential in order to bring democratic ideas into effect. Bernstein (1996) considered two elements to be especially important for schools that wish to create an atmosphere supportive of democratic development and enhance students' democratic awareness. First, people need to feel they belong as participants of that society. This does not just mean that they have certain rights from which they benefit,

but also that they contribute to the society. Students need to feel that they are participants in both receiving and contributing. Second, people need to have trust in the actions that are taken within the society. Students need to understand that educational decisions are made to the greatest extent possible in their interest and should be given clear reasons for actions taken. Bernstein also maintained that for such participation and trust to be realized within the classroom, educators must emphasize each student's right to participate. Specifically, he meant students need the right to participate in shaping, maintaining, and amending values in an organized manner. The conditions mentioned here are in accordance with Dewey's ideas about the importance of interpreting and learning from experience and the importance of students participating in shaping their learning environment.

Realizing Democratic Work Methods in Schools

These approaches emphasized by Bernstein (1996) and Dewey (1976) are linked to teaching democracy within schools by giving students a chance to participate in discussions that aid them in developing fresh views about their role in their education. When such discussions help them realize that they can have an effect on what and how they learn, then they learn concomitantly about democracy in action. New ideas alight from fertile discussion, and the process of reaching an agreement about what is most important takes on a value of its own, irrespective of the conclusion.

The discussions must have real meaning in a democratic context to be considered a lesson in democracy. They must also relate to a subject close to the students' hearts and meaningful to them, such as their communications, obligations, or rights. Grunnskolinna Ísafirði is a Restitution School: "through extensive collaboration and innovation Restitution Instructors address discipline by focusing on how young people can correct their mistakes emphasizing positive solutions" (Restitution Discipline, 2017, para. 1). Accordingly, for a number of years, students have constructed class social contracts that replace class rules. As they develop these contracts, students learn about democratic working processes because such work demands that everyone participates and that everyone's opinion is respected. Democratic ways of working are therefore not alien to our students, but we wanted to move their participation to a more "coherent level" in connection with shaping the school's curriculum to the principles outlined by the national curriculum.

The project had four aims:

1. to give students a chance to participate in a democratic discussion on the issues affecting their daily life and organization of their school;
2. to enhance students' awareness of their influence within the school;
3. to elicit students' points of view regarding the role of those who affect the school community;
4. to obtain suggestions from students about what each and every person can do to influence positively the daily workings of the school.



Jóna Benediktsdóttir is Assistant Head at Grunnskolinna Ísafirði, Iceland. She is a member of Iota Chapter in Iceland State Organization. jonabene@icloud.com

To meet these aims, we decided to have a conference in the style of a national conference that had taken place earlier—focused on creating a new constitution—in which people from all spheres of Icelandic society were urged to participate. Students from Years 6 to 10 formed mixed-age discussion groups. Each group had a leader from Years 9 or 10 who had received preparation ahead of the conference to make it easier to preside over the discussions. Older students were otherwise spread randomly among groups, but we ensured that the younger students would have at least one co-student in their group whom they felt they could trust; siblings, however, were not permitted to be part of the same group.

Three items were topics for student discussion:

1. What groups of people form the school community? Students had 20 minutes to discuss who can influence the school community.

2. What could the groups that form our school community do to make it better and more effective? Students had 60 minutes to put forward suggestions on what each of those group members could do to influence the school positively. When the group leaders considered that all suggestions had been gathered, a group vote by students determined the three most important suggestions for each group.

3. What would the member groups of the school community “gain” from everyone doing his or her best? The discussion of this question was executed in the same manner as item 2.

The group discussions, which took place in one school day, went well in general, and the students were interested in the questions. They identified the member groups of our school community, from the students to the town council and the minister of education. They also put forward many useful suggestions for what each of the member groups could do to enhance our school. For example, many groups mentioned the importance of students being listened to and that everyone should be allowed to participate.

Following the conference, students received three questions to answer, which were used to assess to what extent this process had resulted in their feeling more empowered to affect the school’s work using discussions of this type. The school principals gathered conclusions from all the student groups about what each group that makes up a school can do to influence the school work positively and how this will benefit students’ education. These conclusions were then discussed further within students’ individual classes. Within each class, discussion groups were formed

that prioritized the items and provided supporting arguments. Then a new group was formed that put together conclusions from each grade level or year. Those conclusions were put forward to the school’s student council, which is a group of elected officials from Years 8 to 10. They refined the conclusions and determined similarities, and the most common priorities were put forward as the main emphasis of the student council. The student leaders then designed a poster and presented that to every class within the school, ensuring that a copy of the poster is displayed in every teaching area of the school. The



Students at the conference practice democratic thought and action by brainstorming ideas and collaboratively processing solutions to the problem at hand.

main ideas emphasized by the students were (a) in our school, we shall not accept bullying, because bullying is bad for everyone; (b) students and staff should show respect for each other every time; and (c) everyone should take responsibility for their own learning and do their best in all classes.

The students' ideas also formed a part of the school's internal assessment. A list of students' suggestions about approaches to teaching was compiled for the teachers and discussed with each teacher individually during his or her annual review meeting. The purpose was to emphasize that what students considered important should be an integral part of teachers' work methods. All staff members were also asked to keep in mind the things that students considered to be most important whenever communicating with the young people. These communication items are displayed in the staff room and will also be covered during annual review meetings.

“If students are willing to take responsibility for their own behavior and practice, they will do better in every aspect of their lives.”

The same work method was applied to students. At the start of the school year, the items that they considered would improve our school

community were reviewed, and students discussed and decided what needed to happen so that this could become reality. During parent-teacher meetings in the autumn, the effectiveness of this approach to school work methods was discussed.

Assessment of the Project

Students answered a survey about the conference and its conclusions. Asked if they had found the conference interesting, 54% said they had found it so. Also, 60% of the students thought the conference had impacted the workings of the school. A considerable difference existed among students, however, in their attitude toward this project depending on age. The younger students tended to be more positive.

Every member of the staff evaluated his or her performance regarding the items the students found most important for them to emphasize in their work. These items were discussed during annual staff performance reviews in the spring.

Continuation and Results of the Project

The students' suggestions were taken into consideration when planning the following school term and the following year. Another student conference was held the following spring in which students discussed gender equality and what students, staff, and the whole community could do to increase it. Those discussions also went well, and students brought many propositions for consideration; we are now working on these suggestions.

Although this project first and foremost supports the basic elements of democracy and equality within the National Curriculum, it is easy to link it with all of the principal elements of the national curriculum. During this process, students are active participants in forging their own understanding and receive an opportunity to react in a personal and creative manner that falls under literacy. They are part of creating a co-responsible community, having an opportunity to increase their impact and attitude to equality. They also learn to tackle matters of opinion because not everyone always agrees within the groups; these elements are covered by the element of sustainability. Realizing the symbiotic

relationship of an individual with his or her environment and how one can contribute as an individual to improve his or her surroundings and social situation falls under the element of health and welfare. When children and teenagers sense the point of a project, their creativity increases, which in turn affects their interest in studying. Creativity also entails capturing the imagination and musing on possibilities, asking “what if” questions. The discussion element of this project entails creative work where students bring forward new suggestions. They also reflect on their own behavior and have an opportunity to show initiative.

Conclusion

The main core of the educational system is to provide good education for every student. If students are willing to take responsibility for their own behavior and practice, they will do better in every aspect of their lives. Measuring all aspects of education is complicated, and no standard instruments have been developed to do that. Thus, we, like educators in other schools, have to use the standard measurements that are available to compare our students with students in other schools. Our school's results in the Programme for International Assessment (PISA) 2015, the international, standardized, educational achievement tests developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), were better than ever before, among the best in Iceland, and above the OECD average in all three subjects that were tested. Of course, we cannot point at one certain factor to explain the improvements, but we believe the democratic conversations surely helped.

Our aim is to make the student conference a regular part of our school's work, and in autumn 2017 the students will discuss the pros and cons of using social media in schools. We hope that our students become familiar with using democratic, communal discussions in which everyone participates to lead to the best possible solution for the whole community.

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The Importance of Questioning in Developing Critical Thinking Skills

By Judith S. Nappi

According to the Cambridge English Dictionary (2016), a question is a word or words used to find out information. Questioning is an important component of the teaching/learning process and is embedded in quality instruction and strategic thinking. Questions are used to teach as well as to assess student understanding, and thus questioning plays a critical role in the overall success of a classroom. Teachers pose up to 400 questions a day when in the classroom, with 60-80% of the questions requiring recall (Cotton, 1988; Tienken, Goldberg, & DiRocco, 2010; Saeed et al., 2012). Accordingly, with more than 60,000 questions being asked in one classroom on a yearly basis, approximately 12,000 encourage students to engage in higher order thinking. For questioning to be effective, teachers need to plan for structured, higher level interactions. This article examines the relationship between higher level questioning and the development of critical thinking, which is a higher order thinking skill.

Observe any classroom, and one will most likely see continuous discourse between students and the classroom teacher, with much of the dialogue being composed of questions and answers. Questioning is an essential element of efficacious teaching (Hannel, 2009). Teachers and students will both benefit from questions that are purposefully designed (Peterson & Taylor, 2012) as students will acquire the ability to make connections to prior learning as well as make meaning of the world around them. Through the planning and implementation of questions that require high level thinking, educators foster the kind of engagement and critical thinking skills that students will need to process and address new situations. Higher level questioning requires students to further examine the concept(s) under study through the use of application, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis while lower level questioning simply requires students to gather and recall information. Lower level questions are easier for teachers to produce but do not encourage students to engage in higher level or higher order thinking (Tienken et al., 2010).

Literature Review

Questioning cannot be discussed without referring to the work of Socrates, a Greek philosopher, dating back more than 2000 years. Socrates spent most of his life asking deliberate and organized questions about people's beliefs and values and examining the same. Through questioning, Socrates encouraged his students to explore prior-held beliefs and subsequently to build stronger and more scholarly views. What we now refer to as the Socratic approach involves posing a succession of systematic and prearranged questions

designed to help students to reflect and therefore improve their thinking and gain a better understanding of their own beliefs and ideas.

An instructor using the Socratic approach is not looking for a specific correct answer but is, in fact, inspiring students to reflect on their thinking. Socrates respected the experiences, understandings, and knowledge that individuals had gained through life experiences and believed that, through questioning, previously attained knowledge could be used to develop thinking supported by rationales and logic (Byrne, 2011).

Tienken, Goldberg, and DiRocco (2009) focused on the procedures of questioning and cited a distinction in the cognitive processes used when asked recall or lower level questions as opposed to higher level questions that required students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. Higher level questioning that requires students to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, categorize, and/or apply information has been found to be particularly advantageous to student learning, yet higher level questions are rarely used (Peterson & Taylor, 2012; Tienken, et al., 2010). Generally, higher level questions do not have one correct answer but encourage students to engage in critical thinking. Lundy (2008) found that addressing higher level questions is essential to student learning. In addition, Lewis (2015) found that asking higher level questions presents teachers with more information in relation to student understanding. The implications are that teachers need to plan questions strategically to encourage students to investigate further the concepts under study to obtain a deeper understanding.

A seminal study conducted by Glaser (1941) identified the following three characteristics of critical thinking:

- (1) an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experience; (2) knowledge of the methods of logical enquiry and reasoning; and (3) some skill in applying those methods. Critical thinking calls for a persistent effort to examine any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence that supports it and the further conclusions to which it tends. (Glaser, 1941, p. 5)

To exercise the components of critical thinking as identified by Glaser, students must develop the ability to recognize problems, collect information that will enable them to address the problems logically, weigh the issues against beliefs, and make accurate decisions.

Bloom's contributions

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom worked with a group of educational psychologists to organize the levels of cognition identified as important in learning. The levels of cognition are understood to be consecutive, so that one level must be achieved before the next level can be attained. The classification that Bloom and his colleagues created focused on the levels of questions that were observed in a variety of educational settings. Through his observations, Bloom noted that more than 95% of the assessment questions that were posed to students at the college level only required recall, the lowest level of thinking.

Dr. Judith S. Nappi is currently an assistant professor of educational leadership at Rider University in New Jersey. Previously, she was the Assistant Superintendent/Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Manchester Township School District in Ocean County, New Jersey. A member of Omicron Chapter in New Jersey State Organization, Dr. Nappi has also held positions as a principal, grade-level administrator, and teacher. She has degrees in psychology, social sciences, educational administration, and administrative policy and urban education. jstegmaier@rider.edu



Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956) developed a taxonomy that provides an important framework for teachers to use when developing questions of all levels (Figure 1). The taxonomy is represented as a pyramid with higher order thinking (cognition) at the top. The taxonomy developed by Bloom et al. (1956) classifies educational objectives into three domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The cognitive domain involves the development of knowledge and intellectual skills (Bloom et al., 1956), the affective domain includes the manner in which individuals deal with things emotionally (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1973), and the psychomotor domain (Bloom et al., 1956) involves physical movement and motor skills. Although all of the identified domains are important, the cognitive domain is the focus of this article.

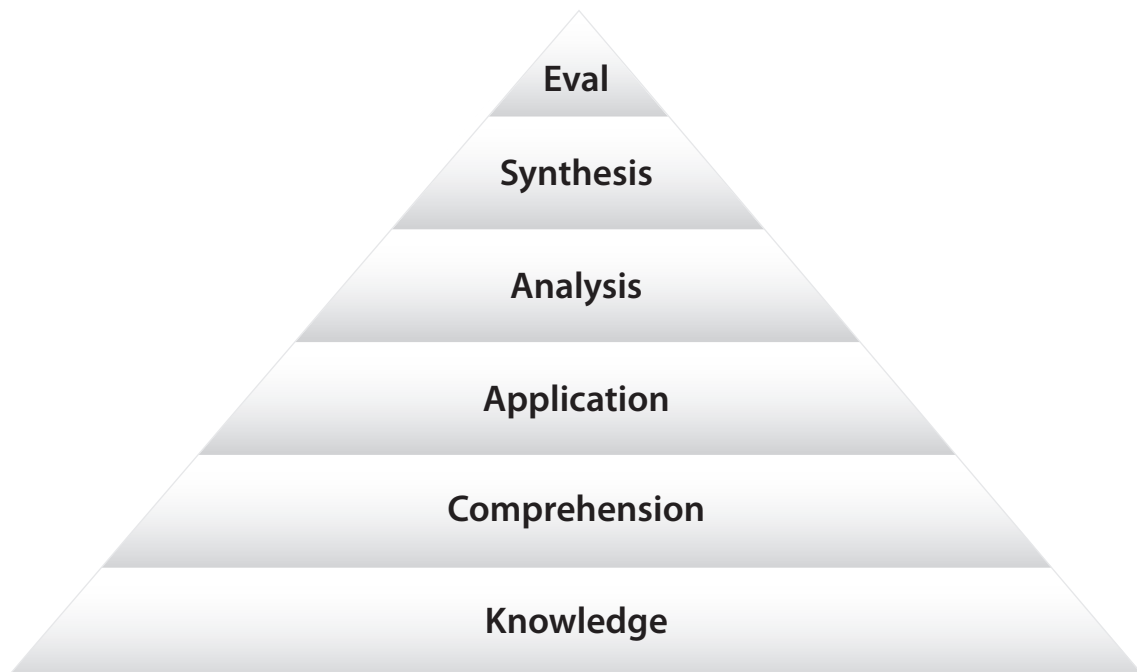


Figure 1. Bloom et al. (1956) Taxonomy

The taxonomy developed by Bloom et al. (1956) provides a scaffold for asking questions that become progressively more challenging and provides a structure for teachers to model complex thinking that, ultimately, can guide students to become independent thinkers who can develop their own viewpoints. Figure 2 presents the taxonomy with examples of verbs and student behaviors or outcomes (Huitt, 2011).

Bloom's original framework was modified by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) to fit outcome-based educational objectives. This involved retaining the original number of categories with changes such as switching the names of some levels from nouns to verbs and reversing the order of the highest two levels (Krathwohl, 2002). The two highest levels of Bloom's taxonomy, synthesis and evaluation, were reversed in the Anderson and Krathwohl model and renamed *evaluating* and *creating* (2001).

LEVEL	DEFINITION	SAMPLE VERBS	SAMPLE BEHAVIORS
KNOWLEDGE	Student recalls or recognizes information, ideas, and principles in the approximate form in which they were learned.	Write List Label Name State Define	The student will define the 6 levels of Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain.
COMPREHENSION	Student translates, comprehends, or interprets information based on prior learning.	Explain Summarize Paraphrase Describe Illustrate	The student will explain the purpose of Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain.
APPLICATION	Student selects, transfers, and uses data and principles to complete a problem or task with a minimum of direction.	Use Compute Solve Demonstrate Apply Construct	The student will write an instructional objective for each level of Bloom's taxonomy.
ANALYSIS	Student distinguishes, classifies, and relates the assumptions, hypotheses, evidence, or structure of a statement or question.	Analyze Categorize Compare Contrast Separate	The student will compare and contrast the cognitive and affective domains.
SYNTHESIS	Student originates, integrates, and combines ideas into a product, plan or proposal that is new to him or her.	Create Design Hypothesize Invent Develop	The student will design a classification scheme for writing educational objectives that combines the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.
EVALUATION	Student appraises, assesses, or critiques on a basis of specific standards and criteria.	Judge Recommend Critique Justify	The student will judge the effectiveness of writing objectives using Bloom's taxonomy.

Figure 2. Bloom et al. (1956) taxonomy with illustrated verbs and student behaviors.

Research has indicated that the first four levels of both taxonomies (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom et al., 1956) are hierarchical in nature; however, controversy exists regarding the two highest levels (Hummel & Huitt, 1994). Krathwohl proposed that evaluation is less difficult than synthesis, while Lutz and Huitt (2003) proposed that evaluation and synthesis are equally difficult but are processed differently. Huitt (1992) suggested that evaluation is critical thinking while synthesis is creative thinking...and both are required to problem solve.

In addition to revising the taxonomy, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) added a knowledge dimension. The knowledge dimension illustrates where each of the cognitive processing dimensions is used (Figure 3). Both frameworks (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom et al., 1956) were constructed to assist teachers in developing questions that will allow students to respond at all stages of the thinking process (low level and high level), ranging from recall of fact to processes that call upon students to engage in critical thinking. Although low level questions that are posed by teachers do not require students to engage in deep thinking, it has been argued that low level questions lay the groundwork for higher level cognition (Tienken et al., 2010).

Knowledge	Cognitive Processes					
	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Facts						
Concepts						
Procedures						
Metacognitive						

Figure 3. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) revision of Bloom et al. Taxonomy (1956). Adapted from <http://peter.baumgartner.name/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Anderson-Krathwohl-Taxonomy.png>

Other Research Regarding Cognition

Bloom conducted the earliest work on levels of cognition (Bloom et al., 1956). Since that time, however, others have applied various theories to cognition and learning and are worthy of consideration.

In a seminal and comprehensive meta-analysis of studies of instructional methods, Redfield and Rousseau (1981) noted a positive correlation between the prevalent use of higher level questions during instruction and student achievement on assessments of both memorization of facts (recall) and application of thinking skills. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) also identified higher level questions as a component of meaningful learning. Therefore, if deeper learning is to take place, teachers must purposely plan to present more high level questions than recall (lower level) questions when designing lessons. Higher order questions will help students to make connections between previous learning experiences and new material. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), retention and transfer are two important educational goals. Retention involves students remembering what they have learned and transfer requires students to make connections and use the information that they have learned.

Questioning Circles. Christenbury and Kelly (1983) designed the Questioning Circles model (Figure 4) to classify or evaluate the level of questioning in the classroom. Three intersecting circles represent different fields of cognition in this model, which does not follow a hierarchical approach but suggests interconnectedness. Christenbury

and Kelly identified three aspects of cognition, each represented by a circle: The Subject Matter, Personal Response, and External Environment or Reality. The subject matter is the material under study. The personal response is the student's reaction to the subject matter under study. The external environment or reality is how the subject matter relates to other disciplines. Questioning Circles is a teaching strategy that guides students from perfunctory replies to a richer dialogue on the subject matter. According to Christenbury and Kelly, instructors should plan questions that represent each of the separate circles as well as questions that overlap areas of the circles. Questions that encompass all three circles represent the most important questions and require the deepest thinking on the part of the students (Meyers, 2002).

Christenbury and Kelly (1983) used the work of Mark Twain to illustrate the Questioning Circles technique in practice.

Text: What does Huck say when he decides not to turn Jim in to the authorities?

Reader: When would you support a friend when everyone else thought he/she was wrong?

World: What was the responsibility of persons finding runaway slaves?

Text/Reader: In what situations might someone be less than willing to take the consequences for his or her actions?

Reader/World: Given the social and political circumstances, to what extent would you have done as Huck did?

Text/World: What were the issues during that time which caused both Huck's and Jim's actions to be viewed as wrong?

Dense Question: When is it right to go against the social/political structures of the time as Huck did when he refused to turn Jim in to authorities?" (p. 16)

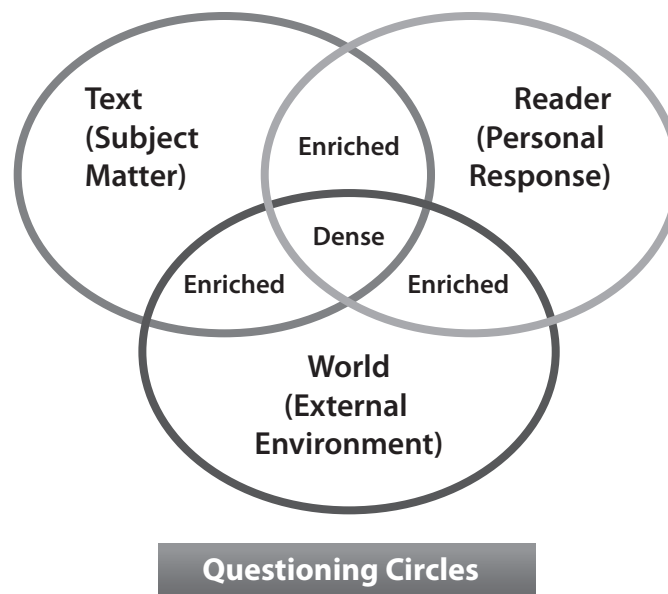


Figure 4. Questioning Circles Model, Christenbury and Kelly (1983).

Depth of Knowledge. While Bloom et al. (1956) focused on educational goals and objectives or what educators want students to know and be able to do, Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge (1997) model outlined the manner in which students interact with content. Webb's model centered on classifying tasks according to the difficulty of thinking required to complete the tasks with success. Constructing lessons, activities, and assessment utilizing Webb's Depth of Knowledge requires students to delve into the thinking process

in order to deepen their learning. For this reason, Webb's model has been utilized in a number of states to construct educational materials and performance assessments as well as alignment between standards and assessments (Hess, 2008).

Webb's Depth of Knowledge (Figure 5; 1997) analyzed the thought processes that the educational standards, approved by each state independently, require students to master. The model provides educators with a method and measure for analyzing the alignment between standards, assessments, and curriculum. Depth of Knowledge is centered on the supposition that parts of the curriculum can be classified by the cognitive requirements necessary for an acceptable response.

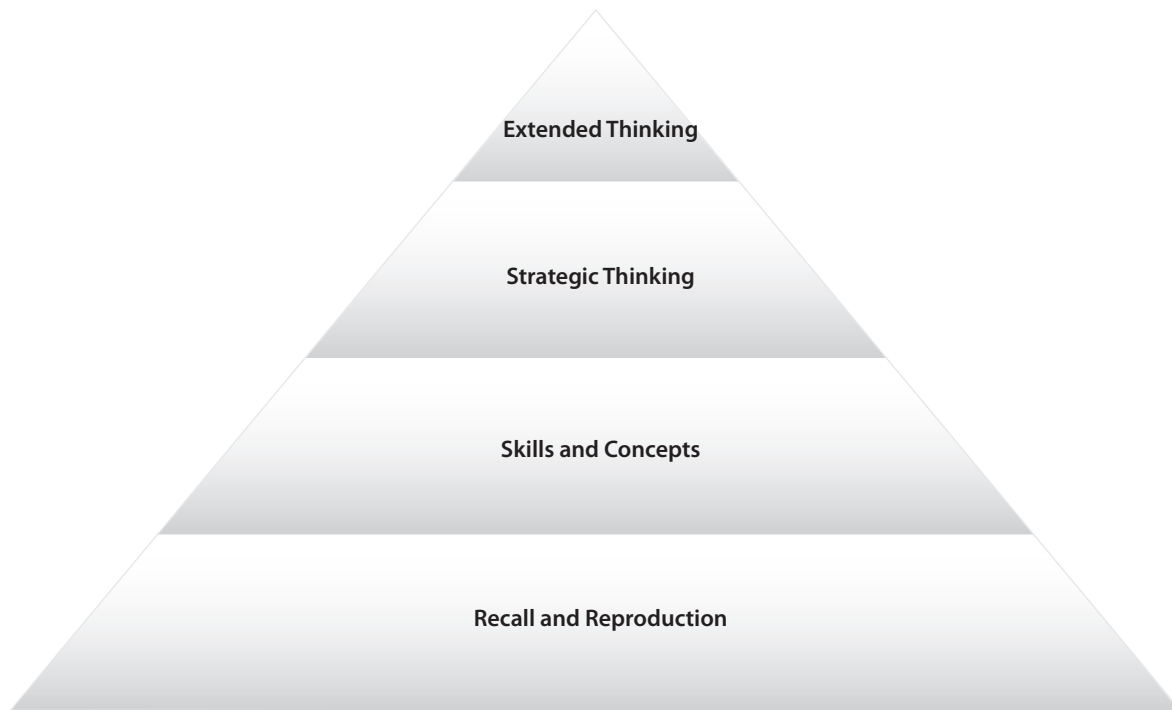


Figure 5. Webb's Depth of Knowledge (1997).

Models for Questioning

The connection between questioning and the cognitive processes involved has been widely studied, as indicated by the number of theories and taxonomies discussed thus far. In examining the relationship between Socratic questioning and critical thinking skills, Elder and Paul (2007) developed a taxonomy (Figure 6) designed to cultivate and assess quality thinking. The taxonomy provides a framework of the intellectual standards that evaluate thinking by well-informed individuals. According to Paul and Elder (2009), questions are what stimulates the thinking process, and unless the answers generate more questions, the thought process will be brought to a halt. For an individual to be a proficient thinker, he or she must be proficient in developing questions. Good questioning techniques need to be modeled in order for students to become skilled in both thinking and questioning. Because questioning leads to problem solving, quality questions will lead to quality decisions.

Elder and Paul (2007) stated that, ultimately, educators should model Socratic questioning to allow students to internalize and apply the concepts of self-directed, disciplined questioning themselves. Their taxonomy appears in Figure 6.

1. Questioning clarity – No thought is completely understood other than to the degree an individual can explain, demonstrate or give an example.
2. Questioning precision – Thinking is not always clear cut or completely understood other than to the degree that an individual can provide details.
3. Questioning accuracy – Thoughts are only assessed to the extent that an individual has determined the accuracy of facts and data.
4. Questioning relevance – Thinking is only relevant to the extent that supporting arguments have been examined and applied.
5. Questioning depth – Thoughts are only as deep as the considered complexities involved.

Figure 6. Elder & Paul (2007). Socratic Questioning Taxonomy.

An examination of the cognitive taxonomies discussed above will reveal that the ultimate teaching goal is providing students with the ability to apply knowledge and skills to new situations. Learning for recall is important when new information is being presented; however, higher order thinking is required for students to be successful in life, because life outside of the classroom can be described as a chain of applying knowledge to new circumstances as opposed to recalling information.

Engaging Students in Metacognition

Cognitive theory examines the process through which one acquires knowledge and understanding. Metacognition involves the awareness of one's thinking or thinking about thinking. Acquiring knowledge about one's own cognitive system, or thinking about one's thinking, is an essential skill that needs to be honed to recognize how one learns.

When teachers design quality, scaffolded questions for instruction, students are more inclined to engage in metacognition, i.e., to think about their own thinking. Questions that are effective promote inquiry, student self-assessment, and creativity even as they stimulate critical thinking (Gose, 2009). Effective questions can be a means to engage students in the learning process and enable them to take charge of their own learning. Caram and Davis (2005) found that effective questions increased student interest and student motivation (Lorent Deegan, 2010). According to Walsh and Sattes (2010), when a culture of inquiry is developed through quality questioning, student engagement and achievement will be stimulated.

Metacognition is a skill that teachers can model by stopping periodically, explaining their thought processes, and posing higher level questions (Fordham, 2006). Teachers who model and explain the different types of questions provide their students with the skills necessary to discriminate between questions that require reasoning and questions that require recall. Strategies that teachers can use include

- having students make predictions based on readings and/or classroom activities;
- having students relate information previously learned to new situations;

- ♦ having students develop and ask questions of themselves and others; and
- ♦ having students explain how they have attempted to solve problems independently.

Students who are able to apply metacognitive skills to the learning process can increase their level of comprehension as they are better prepared to make connections to prior experiences (Gunn, 2008; Kängsepp, 2011). Research on the relationship between reading comprehension and achievement has indicated that higher level questioning correlates positively to increased student understanding (Lundy, 2008). Probing questions that challenge students to think strategically about their reading (an aspect of metacognition) appear to increase comprehension (Fordham, 2006; Kängsepp, 2011). Carefully planned, quality questioning will allow students to make connections between the readings under study and their experiences.

Students who are exposed to teaching that models questioning techniques demonstrate the ability to ask more complex questions when learning new material (Lewin, 2010). Metacognition involves having the capacity to ask and respond to questions such as

- ♦ What do I already know about this subject or issue?
- ♦ Do I have enough information?
- ♦ Do I know where to get additional information?
- ♦ What strategies can I employ to learn this information?
- ♦ Will I be able to determine errors?

In addition to increasing the potential of student achievement, higher level questioning

“*Designing higher order questions is not an innate skill. Developing questions that are scaffolded—beginning with recall and working up to analysis, synthesis, and creation—requires careful planning.*”

has also been found to have a positive impact on the work of teachers. Planning higher order questions requires teachers to reflect upon their practice and often involves collaboration among colleagues (Peterson & Taylor, 2012). Peterson and Taylor (2012) found that collaboration and peer observations increased the value of teacher reflection and the implementation of higher level questioning. Collaborating and observing peers allows teachers to engage in conversations that will build upon their own ideas, consider new ideas, test their thoughts, weigh the value of different viewpoints, and ultimately develop questions that are designed to engage students in problem solving. Unfortunately, as important as strategic questioning is, questioning is often a characteristic of good teaching that is not developed in teacher education and teacher training programs (Caram & Davis, 2005).

Critical thinking activities can be implemented in the classroom to hone thoughtful reasoning. A recent study conducted by McCollister and Sayler (2010) suggested that teachers use questioning techniques that allow students to engage in metacognition and develop activities that require students to evaluate information through collecting and analyzing data rather than memorizing and recalling facts. According to various studies (McCollister & Sayler, 2010; Tsai, Chen, Chang, & Chang, 2013), when students view the acquisition of information as a process, they are developing problem-solving skills that have been found to have a positive impact on student performance.

Once teachers model the thinking process, asking questions that are similar in nature to the following will help students improve their metacognitive abilities or how they think about thinking as the questions encourage reflection:

- ✦ How would you describe the metacognitive strategies you used in this learning situation?

- ✦ How did thinking as part of a team impact your completing of the assignment?
- ✦ In what other situations could this knowledge be applied?
- ✦ What were you thinking about as you were reading?
- ✦ What did you do when you or your group encountered a problem?

Other strategies that can be implemented to improve student thinking include:

- ✦ Ask students to clarify or give evidence to support their answers.
- ✦ Ask open-ended questions that have more than one answer.
- ✦ Sequence questions and tasks using a cognitive taxonomy.
- ✦ Model the thinking that is required.
- ✦ Implement activities that challenge previously held beliefs.
- ✦ Design lessons that engage students and require them to process information as opposed to recall information.

- ✦ Allow for student-to student-interaction so students are more likely to take educational risks.

Designing higher order questions is not an innate skill. Developing questions that are scaffolded—beginning with recall and working up to analysis, synthesis, and creation—requires careful planning. Collaborating with colleagues will provide support for teachers as they strive to master questioning techniques that will encourage their students to engage in thinking critically and with reason.

Summary

Classroom teachers frequently pose questions that require lower order thinking or basic recall. Questions that are limited to asking students to recall information obstruct the promotion of higher order, critical thinking that is necessary for students to be successful in life. Careful planning of questions utilizing the various cognitive taxonomies will help teachers to develop a wider range of questions that include recall of information as well as require students to analyze, apply, and create. Teaching students how to think about their thinking, or metacognition, can lead students to deeper understanding. Questions are among the most powerful teaching tools, and when teachers increase their repertoire of questioning techniques, the quality of instruction can be significantly improved.

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The Development of an Online, Graduate Practicum Course

By Linda K. Lilienthal, Dennis Potthoff, and Kenneth E. Anderson

As universities offer more programs completely online, requirements for teacher education program accreditation with CAEP (formerly NCATE) are a consideration for online courses, just as they are for face-to-face courses; however, particular challenges exist in creating a quality online practicum that differ from those of creating face-to-face practicums with onsite supervision. The researchers completed an action research study that addressed the development of an online practicum course for the Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Program at their university. To facilitate an online graduate practicum for inservice teachers, the researchers revised the main assignment in the practicum course by adding a unit lesson plan assignment with a template that included a pre-and-post assessment of P-12 students' learning. Because the Curriculum and Instruction Program is unique, with concentrations in many areas, the unit lesson plan template was important for overall student guidance in multiple educational concentration areas and grade levels. Another important component of the online graduate practicum was a VoiceThread video of one of the unit lessons. The video provided a component of online teaching supervision to the unit lesson plan assignment. Of the 14 students enrolled in the spring 2017 course, 10 completed course evaluations. The average score was 4.65 on a 5-point scale, indicating that most students viewed the online practicum course favorably.

An increasing number of university courses and programs are now available online both nationally and internationally. Contributing to this availability are changes associated with wider access, as well as developments in communication and information technologies (Conceicao, 2006). Additionally, one of the most salient reasons for the increase in online course and program development is the professional growth opportunities that they provide for students, especially for inservice teachers in isolated geographical areas (Frey, 2008). This is indicative of the situation in the researchers' largely rural state.

As online courses and programs become increasingly available, concerns exist about the quality of some of the online courses being offered. One type of online course about which concern may be expressed is the graduate practicum field experience or internship in education (Dotson & Bian, 2013; Frey, 2008; Perry, 2012). Simpson (2006) pointed out that "despite the increasing inclusion of online course delivery in teacher education programs, relatively little research has been done on the effectiveness [of] facilitating the practicum component of teacher education online" (as cited in Frey, 2008, p. 182). In 2017, this statement continues to be relevant. Little research exists on the development of online graduate practicum courses, and what one can find is often not in the field of teacher education.

The graduate practicum field experience is an integral part of teacher education programs and is usually a summative assessment course that allows inservice teachers

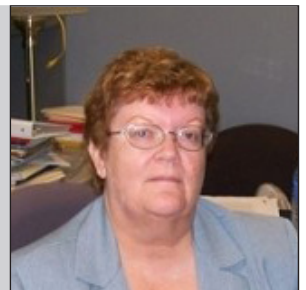
to apply what they have learned in their graduate program. Dotson and Bian (2013) commented that the graduate practicum

is a crucial, culminating link between theory and practice. This complex activity provides the means by which individuals may become critically conscious of themselves as professionals, applying theory gained in coursework in the totality of a real-life experience (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991). (p. 52).

All three authors have taught the Master of Arts in Education (MAED) Curriculum and Instruction (CI) Program practicum course at various stages of the online course development at their university. Utilizing action research to study their own practice in order to improve it (West, 2011), they began to revise the existing MAED: CI online practicum course due to changes expected in the movement from accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). In fact, the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning (NCATE, 2010, November) recommended the use of action research that “focuses candidates and their mentors on efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms and schools” (p. 11).

The authors collected data on an existing practicum lesson plan assignment with accreditation purposes in mind. As a result of the limited data from this initial process, they decided to improve the graduate practicum course by revising and changing the assignments. Consequently, the research question became the following: How can we revise and develop the Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Program online practicum course to facilitate inservice teachers’ learning during the practicum experience?

Dr. Linda K. Lilienthal is an assistant professor of teacher education/literacy at the University of Nebraska Kearney, where she is the Director of the Master of Education in Reading program. She is a current member of Alpha Kappa Chapter in Nebraska State Organization. lilienthalLK@unk.edu



Dr. Dennis Potthoff currently serves as Dean of the School of Education at Nevada State College. Prior educational experiences include a decade of teaching middle and high school students in Nebraska and Canada and stints of college level work at Wichita State University and the University of Nebraska Kearney. Dennis.Potthoff@nsc.edu



Dr. Kenneth E. Anderson has extensive experience in P-12 education, where he worked as a school psychologist, as a special education director, and as a superintendent of schools. He served as Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Nebraska at Kearney from 2012-2015. andersonke@unk.edu



The purpose of this article is to explain the development of the online MAED: CI Program practicum course, the summative unit assignment template (see Appendix), and the VoiceThread video assignment used in the graduate practicum teacher education course. The unit assignment developed from the original MAED: CI practicum lesson plan assignment into a four-lesson unit assignment on a topic of the graduate student's choice. The unit assignment template assisted instructors with communicating course requirements to graduate students and was designed to be applied across the multiple subject concentration areas of the MAED: CI Program online practicum. As such, the template could easily be used for P-12 unit and individual lesson planning by graduate students in the online practicum course. The template also assisted instructors and university program administrators with the collection of data to document the impact of graduate level, advanced teacher candidate teaching on P-12 student learning, thus providing evidence of P-12 student learning for the purpose of CAEP accreditation for the university.

Related Research

The importance of practical field experiences, also referred to as internships or clinical experiences, has long been recognized in educator-preparation programs (Dotson & Bian, 2013; Frey, 2008). In recent years, the relevance of these experiences has been confirmed. At the same time, the criteria used to assess the quality of advanced teacher candidate performance and the quality of programs have been reconceived. The importance of P-12 student learning has moved to the forefront. Two key events illustrated the centrality of the practicum clinical experience and also elevated the importance given to P-12 student learning.

The Blue Ribbon Panel

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010, November) boldly declared that teacher preparation programs needed to be turned upside down. One crucial recommendation proposed that educator preparation programs shift from focusing on classroom lectures and course work to practical, hands-on experience. Ten design principles for clinical preparation were set forth. The first three principles illustrated the importance assigned to clinical experiences:

- ♦ Principle 1: (P-12) Student learning is the focus. P-12 student learning must serve as the focal point for the design and implementation of clinically based teacher preparation, and for the assessment of newly minted teachers and the programs that have prepared them.
- ♦ Principle 2. Clinical preparation is integrated throughout every facet of teacher education in a dynamic way. The core experience in teacher preparation is clinical practice. Content and pedagogy are woven around clinical experiences throughout preparation, in course work, in laboratory-based experiences, and in school-embedded practice.
- ♦ Principle 3. A candidate's progress and the elements of a preparation program are continuously judged on the basis of data. Candidates' practice must be directly linked to ... [P-12] students' outcome data. (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010, November, p. 5)

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

On the heels of the Blue Ribbon Report, CAEP was born, effective July 1, 2013. On this date, two former national-level accrediting bodies—NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC)—merged to form CAEP. As noted in the second iteration of the *CAEP Evidence Guide* (CAEP, 2015, January), CAEP is the new sole accreditor for Education Preparation Providers (EPPs). The *CAEP Evidence Guide* contains information related to two main topics: (a) the use of data in educator preparation and accreditation, as well as (b) protocols and instructions related to data quality, data collection, and data analysis.

Like the Blue Ribbon Report, the first iteration of CAEP Standards (CAEP, 2013) was replete with language that emphasized the critical importance of the clinical component of educator preparation programs. The expectations set forth in Standards 2 and 5 were particularly relevant. Standard 2 (Clinical Partnerships and Practice) mandated that mutually beneficial school and university partnerships be forged and that the quality of candidate performance be closely aligned with P-12 student performance. The importance of the impact on P-12 learning was reiterated and further elaborated in Standard 4 (Program Impact). The enactment of new standards by national accrediting bodies, as well as individual state requirements, further increased the importance of and need for a quality graduate practicum experience in the online MAED: CI Teacher Education Program that focuses on the advanced candidate's impact on P-12 student learning.

Online Graduate Practicum Field Experiences

Although Frey (2008) pointed out that little research exists on how to create or support an effective online field experience, researchers are beginning to consider better ways to facilitate and develop such an experience. He conducted a study that was an online-facilitated practicum with a project-based practicum design. Frey's study provided structured opportunities for teachers to apply course concepts in classroom settings. In addition, Helfrich and Smith (2012) developed an online graduate reading program with the focus of maintaining program rigor and meeting standards in the online format. To monitor field experiences, they had graduate students record themselves working in different scenarios and post the videos online. Students could then access and comment on each other's videos, and instructors could critique student work. Helfrich and Smith also commented that critiquing students' work via video eliminated both the need to travel to various schools for student observations and the need to rely on field supervisors to provide feedback. They reported that they were able to maintain International Reading Association (now International Literacy Association) and NCATE standards through the use of online video tools. Helfrich and Smith explained that

as part of their coursework, students are often required to submit lesson plans. We can verify through these plans and their videotaped lessons that graduate students are meeting such IRA [International Reading Association; now International Literacy Association] standards as using appropriate and varied instructional approaches, using a wide range of texts, using assessments appropriately, and modeling the appropriate use of literacy strategies for teachers and other educators. (Helfrich & Smith, 2012, p. 116)

Similarly, Perry (2012) conducted an investigation of the phenomenological experience of both graduate students enrolled in an online clinical training program and their onsite supervisors. An interesting aspect of his study was the assumption that the participants were already experts in their own experience, and he wanted to discover if they considered their

online clinical training effective. The online clinical training program had both an online component and a more traditional, in-person component. Interns met in person with their onsite supervisors and online weekly with peers and the clinical training director. Graduate students in Perry's study believed their professional growth to be positive compared to their peers in other programs, and onsite supervisors made similar conclusions. The onsite supervisors, most of whom had supervised students in more traditional, face-to-face clinical programs, found the online students to be at least as capable and well prepared as students in the more traditional, face-to-face programs. Perry concluded from the study that "there is no reason to be suspicious of online supervision. Indeed, the participants in this study cited some real advantages to it" (2012, p. 65). He found that one of the main advantages to an online practicum was the opportunity for students' exposure to multicultural learning contexts and more diverse participants.

In addition, Dotson and Bian (2013) studied their online graduate internship in library science with the intent "to gather data to improve the program's clinical experience, the professional internship, specifically a distance learning facilitated internship" (p. 52). The goal of the study was to understand the perspectives of onsite supervisors of students enrolled in an online-supported internship. Dotson and Bian reported that good technology skills and communication skills on the part of both the intern and the onsite supervisor contributed to a successful internship as part of the online graduate practicum course. The researchers also found that "clarity of expectation from the university was the only significant factor influencing success of the on-site internship" (p. 57).

Regardless of the program area, the above studies of graduate field experiences found similar results: that online field experiences, practicums, and clinical internships were considered to be successful by students, online instructors or supervisors, and onsite supervisors. As summarized by Helfrich and Smith (2012), "It is possible to maintain rigor with an online program" (p. 116).

Development of the MAED: CI Online Practicum Course and Unit Project Assignment Template

The MAED: CI Program at the researchers' university is a totally online program. It was first offered online about 5 years ago when the teacher education department began developing several online graduate programs to meet the needs of graduate students seeking to continue their education but unable to attend face-to-face courses on campus.

An important issue related to the online graduate program is the delivery of a high quality practicum experience. The initial online practicum course design was a preliminary design drawn from face-to-face practicum requirements. It included two main assignments—an analysis of the teaching context and a lesson plan. During the spring 2013 semester, the researchers, who had all previously taught the practicum course, first reviewed the College of Education NCATE common assessment plan for all advanced programs. The goal was that, by the end of the 2013-2014 academic year, all advanced program faculty within the NCATE unit would be doing the common assessments for their program.

The researchers then met to discuss course assignment revisions to improve student learning and assist with the implementation of a common assessment for NCATE accreditation. Instead of two distinct assignments regarding analysis of the teaching and learning context and lesson planning the researchers combined the two assignments into one larger unit assignment. The new unit assignment focused on developing advanced teacher candidates' critical thinking skills. It incorporated four lesson plans, a description of the teaching and learning context as it impacted P-12 student instruction

and learning, an analysis and use of P-12 student assessment data to design instruction and instructional modifications, and a unit analysis and reflection on teaching and student learning throughout the unit (Appendix). The unit assignment is the main assignment for the online graduate practicum and was submitted to Taskstream, the data collection program selected to gather student learning data for the NCATE common assessment and for program accountability purposes.

During the 2013 fall semester, advanced teacher candidates were required to submit their MAED: CI common assessment unit assignment to the Taskstream data collection program for the first time. In order to facilitate communication and student understanding of the new unit assignment, the researchers developed an assignment template (Appendix). One of the difficulties with the MAED: CI practicum is that, in addition to the CI core courses, graduate students have concentrations in a variety of areas, such as early childhood, elementary education, reading and special education, English as a second language, and instructional effectiveness, as well as secondary education concentrations that include such diverse areas as math, English, business, speech, journalism, and various sciences. Providing students from multiple concentration areas with a guiding template for the unit assignment assisted them with organization and direction and contributed to the delivery of a high quality practicum in the online program of study. The unit assignment required a minimum of four quality lessons developed and taught by the advanced teacher candidates following the unit template.

Discussion and Student Feedback on the Assignments, Assignment Template, and the Online Course

The unit project assignment and assignment template have been required parts of the practicum course for about 3 years. Advanced teacher candidate student-discussion-board comments from the past few semesters referred to the usefulness of the unit assignment and the template guide. For example, advanced teacher candidates from various content areas and grade levels reported the value of the pre-and-post assessment for understanding what their P-12 students already knew, what they needed to learn, and what needed to be retaught. Some advanced teacher candidates commented that they planned to use the unit template for all units they taught because it was like a check and balance system for them. Others stated that they planned to share the template with their grade-level or subject team and with other grade-level colleagues, department heads, or principals. Advanced teacher candidates also reported the value of the reflection piece in the template for the analysis of P-12 student learning and for their own teacher performance and professional development. End-of-semester student course evaluation surveys and comments similarly corroborated favorable feedback from advanced teacher candidates about the online course and unit project template. For example, one student commented on a 2016 course evaluation, "I like that you had templates for us to follow and detailed information on how to complete the assignments," indicating that the unit template was a helpful guide for this student.

Although the researchers found little information concerning online graduate practicum courses, these courses seem to follow one of two prevalent models evident in the literature: supervision of advanced teacher candidates or interns provided totally online by faculty instructors (Frey, 2008; Helfrich & Smith, 2012), as the MAED: CI Program practicum course is designed; or supervision of advanced teacher candidates provided by some combination of online and onsite supervision (Dotson & Bian, 2013; Perry, 2012).

Based on the results of the MAED: CI online practicum course, including graduate students' comments from discussion boards and course evaluations, the researchers found that they were able to support the online graduate practicum learning experience successfully with a totally online supervision model, as did Frey (2008) and Helfrich and Smith (2012). The researchers utilized available Blackboard technology to facilitate and support a new unit project assignment that included an assignment template to communicate clear assignment requirements to online students. As Frey noted, "Using project-based tasks to integrate field experience into online courses and [to] support teachers in their professional experimentation holds great promise" (2008, p. 201).

Accordingly, the online supervision model worked well for the researchers' MAED: CI program, as most of their students were in schools physically isolated from fellow students because of geographical location. Possibilities for volunteer onsite supervisors were limited for the same reason. The researchers' recommendation is for continued implementation and development of online graduate practicum courses so that all graduate students, whatever their geographical location, have the opportunity to further their education and their enhancement of P-12 student learning.

Future Recommendations: The VoiceThread Video Assignment

A future recommendation for the online supervision model within the researchers' course was a new assignment initiated in spring 2017. This assignment included the submission of a VoiceThread video (voicethread.com) of the advanced teaching candidate delivering one of the lessons in the candidate's unit assignment. Advanced teacher candidates used a course wiki to sign up in their online Blackboard course for peer evaluations. This ensured that each advanced teacher candidate had two peers evaluating his or her video. Most advanced teacher candidates evaluated peers in their subject area, such as language arts or English, or by grade level, such as preschool or high school, although some did not.

The student teaching videos were then submitted to the VoiceThread class group on the VoiceThread Web site for peer evaluation. Students used an instructor-provided rubric for the peer video evaluations. They posted a reflection on their own VoiceThread teaching video to an online discussion board and provided feedback to at least two peers in the discussion board forum. They also uploaded copies of the scored rubrics for each peer evaluation.

There were 14 students in the online practicum course during the spring 2017 semester. Of those 14, 2 taught preschool; 5 taught kindergarten; 1 taught Grade 4; 1 taught elementary special education; 1 taught middle school math and social studies; 1 taught middle school English Language Arts; 1 taught high school life skills; 1 taught high school English; and 1 was not currently teaching. Of the 14 students enrolled in the course, 10 completed course evaluations. The course student evaluation average score was 4.65 on a 5 point scale, indicating that most students viewed the online practicum course favorably. Two students made positive remarks about the instructor's teaching on the course student evaluation form, and a third student reported that "the primary assignment was a good experience." One student reported on the course student evaluation form that both "Taskstream and VoiceThread are bad tools." That was the only negative comment made by students on the course student evaluation forms.

Thirteen of the 14 students enrolled responded favorably regarding the practicum course, the unit assignment, and the video recording of their teaching. Comments from students' reflections included some of the following: they "enjoyed the process of creating the unit"; they plan to "utilize data more to drive instruction"; several intend to "use more

pre-assessments and post-assessments” to see their students’ growth; and “planning, teaching, recording, and documenting” during the practicum was a useful process.

As instructors of the online practicum course, the authors found that the unit template was a useful outline of assignment expectations regardless of the advanced candidate’s teaching area. A Frequently Asked Questions folder was developed from past course semester questions, and advanced teacher candidates also had access to an ungraded discussion board forum where they could post any questions about the course or assignments. These two resources resulted in fewer questions about the unit assignment, but the VoiceThread component resulted in many questions from students because it was a new assignment component for instructors as well as for students.

Students found the video teaching and peer evaluation experience valuable in many ways. Three of 14 graduate students reported that they had never been videotaped while teaching and that they learned much about themselves as teachers by watching the videos and evaluating peers. Some teachers noticed things they did well and of which they were not aware, and of course, they also noticed some things they could improve. Others mentioned that they had gained some good ideas from watching their peers teach, such as classroom management strategies, uses of technology, and varied ways to interact with students. In regards to the research question, the authors consider the course student evaluations and the above student comments to be indicative of a successfully revised and developed Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Program online practicum course that facilitates inservice teacher learning during the practicum.

Other possible online supervisions of a unit lesson could be completed through the use of real-time webcams via Zoom or Skype or the submission of lesson video clips through YouTube. This would allow the instructor to provide actual classroom teaching supervision and detailed feedback of advanced teacher candidate classroom instruction. Similarly, peer review of student unit assignment projects through Blackboard discussion boards with assignments submitted as attachments could also be utilized as a means of providing peer feedback for unit projects and teaching videos or video clips.

Conclusion

Graduate practicum students are usually inservice teachers who have several years of experience in their content areas. As advanced teacher candidates, they are already experts in their fields who are pursuing another degree or endorsement to continue to improve their knowledge and skills. Providing graduate practicum students with a template for their unit assignment project increases assignment clarity, communicates expectations, and provides guidelines for the project, increasing advanced candidate learning and probability for successful completion of the online practicum course. When completed, the unit project is submitted to Taskstream to provide evidence of P-12 student learning for CAEP program accountability purposes. It has presented no interface problems with Taskstream because it is submitted as an attachment.

With the increasing availability of online university courses and programs, entire programs are being moved online. Even at traditional face-to-face universities, some programs are now offered only online, which is the case of the MAED: CI Program at the researchers’ university. Moving teacher education graduate programs completely online necessitates offering the graduate practicum as an online course. The fact that graduate practicum courses are being effectively taught as online courses underscores Perry’s (2012) comment that “the discussion of whether online supervisions can be effective is really a conversation about competing cultures” (p. 68), the culture of those who are comfortable

with technology and aware of its capability for teaching and learning, and the culture of those who are not as comfortable with technology. With the movement of more programs and courses online, opportunities exist to embrace online graduate practicum course development and instruction that will facilitate student learning (Lilienthal, 2014). The new generations are increasingly tech savvy, and teaching and learning need to adapt to new ways of offering courses and programs.

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Appendix
MAED: CI Program
TE 816A: Practicum in Education
Case Study of a Unit Common Assessment Template
(CAEP STANDARDS 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.3, 4.1)
Unit Plan Topic: (To be determined by each advanced teaching candidate)

Unit Plan Grade Level:

Unit Plan should include the following components:

1. Identify the unit objectives for the P-12 students (3 to 4 unit objectives and 3 to 4 objectives per lesson) aligned with state or common core standards:
 - a. Aligned with appropriate standards, school improvement goals, IEP goal, etc.
(CAEP STANDARDS 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4)
 - b. Developmentally appropriate for unit and individual lessons
(CAEP STANDARD 1.1)
 - c. Individual lesson standards and objectives are aligned and are appropriate for the lesson.
(CAEP STANDARDS 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4)

For example, identify three to four Unit Objectives. Then plan to develop four lessons. Decide which of the four lessons will address which unit objectives.

2. Context: Thoroughly describe the classroom context as it affects your lesson planning (number of students, diversity of students, students who are ELL students, special needs students, descriptions of special programs in the school or district, etc.).
(CAEP STANDARDS 1.1, 1.4, 2.3)

3. Unit Assessment Strategies:
 - a. Include pre-assessment, formative assessment, and post-assessment.
 - b. Consider whether you will use both formal and/or informal assessment strategies.
 - c. Remember that assessment should be consistent with objectives, teaching methodology, and should be developmentally appropriate.
(CAEP STANDARDS 1.2, 1.3, 1.4)

Each lesson should include some form of pre-assessment, formative assessment, and post-assessment. Identify the assessment used for each category in each lesson as it occurs.

Provide evidence and an analysis of unit assessment data to determine success of all P-12 students, such as a table comparing students' pre-assessment and post-assessment score results as provided below:
(CAEP STANDARDS 1.2, 2.3, 4.1)

	Pre-assessment Score	Post-assessment score	+Gain/-Loss
Student 1			
Student 2			

Replicate the number of rows as needed for the number of the students participating in the classroom unit. (For qualitative measures, such as a checklist, provide the number of completed checklist items for the pre-assessment and post-assessment instead of a test score.)

In paragraph form, double-spaced, provide a detailed explanation and analysis of the results shown above in the pre-and-post matrix.

4. Instructional Procedures and Activities: Consider all of the following for the instructional procedures and activities identified in each lesson on the matrix:
 - a. Activities are linked to objectives.
 - b. There is active involvement or hands-on learning of students.
 - c. There is a variety of instructional strategies or methods.
 - d. There are questions that promote higher level thinking.
 - e. Differentiations for special needs and cultural considerations are identified by student need.
 - f. Instructional procedures and activities are based on or adjusted according to unit pre-assessment data and lesson pre-assessment and formative assessment data.
5. Needed Materials, Resources, and Technology are identified for each lesson:
 - a. Materials and resources are appropriate for the learning objectives.
 - b. Appropriate use of technology is included when possible and appropriate to enhance the learning of all students.
 - c. There is effective management of materials and time.
 (CAEP STANDARD 1.5)
6. Final Unit Analysis and Reflection: Address each of the following items in your unit analysis and reflection:
 - a. Provide a thorough self-analysis of your teaching performance after the unit is taught. What went well, what did not go as well, what would you do differently the next time you teach this unit, etc.?
 - b. Were there any instances where you were monitoring P-12 student learning and you adjusted your teaching or the lesson plan as a result?
 - c. What recommendations do you have to promote future student learning? For example, are there any areas of the lessons or unit that may need to be retaught or reviewed to improve P-12 student learning?
 - d. What recommendations do you have to promote the future learning of students? and
 - e. What plans do you have to continue your own teacher professional development? (CAEP STANDARDS 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.3, 4.1)

Cool Tools for School: Twenty-First-Century Tools for Student Engagement

By Kyoko Johns, Jennifer Troncale, Christi Trucks, Christie Calhoun, and Michael Alvidrez

The authors discuss the benefits of student engagement and provide useful tips for using four specific apps or programs to boost student engagement in the elementary classroom. Fakebook, Google Classroom, Educreations, and Seesaw are free programs or apps that support students with various learning styles and help keep them actively participating in the learning process.

Introduction

Why is student engagement such a daunting issue for many teachers? Furthermore, what can be done about it? In this article, we first focus on the benefits of keeping students engaged in learning. After this brief but beneficial information is provided, our focus shifts to sharing four specific digital tools that can be easily incorporated into the elementary classroom to engage students in the processes of active and meaningful learning, while taking advantage of the digital platforms students use in their daily interactions.

Engagement as Key to Classroom Management

Engaging students in learning is a motivational tool for effective classroom teachers. “Motivation and active learning work together synergistically, and as they interact, they contribute incrementally to increase engagement” (Barkley, 2010, p. 7). Motivation is why people do the things they do. Students are able to be motivated based on the activities conducted in the classroom and how the teacher presents the activities (Good & Brophy, 2008).

Of course, motivating children to learn can be a difficult task, as children often reach an age where they begin to disengage from school-related tasks and learning experiences (Turner, Christensen, Kackar-Cam, Trucano, & Fulmer, 2014). Despite the difficulty in keeping students motivated to learn, educators have found that students who are engaged feel more connected to the teacher and to the lesson, thus increasing their achievement scores (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012). In addition to increasing student achievement, student engagement also helps transform student thinking within the context of learning. Engaging students in active learning requires them to think more deeply about a concept, skill, or topic (Newmann, 1992).

An engaged classroom can be accomplished with a little planning and consideration of the following principles: (a) teachers should strive to create a learning atmosphere in which the goals and educational purposes are clearly articulated to students; (b) children

should be allowed opportunities for choice; (c) learning activities should be well-planned and meaningful; (d) children should be provided prompt, clear feedback; and (e) children should be provided multiple opportunities for collaboration (Newmann, 1992; Turner et al., 2014). These considerations are simply a starting point for teachers, but they can be addressed with the digital tools presented in this article.

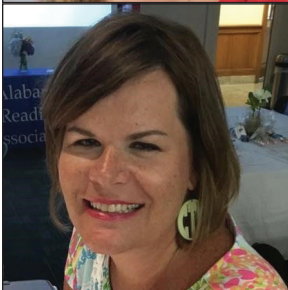
In twenty-first-century classrooms, teachers often struggle to compete with handheld devices, gaming systems, social media, and other entertainment distractions. Keeping students actively engaged in learning can be challenging. Although incorporating engagement techniques to keep students active in the learning experience may take extra



Dr. Kyoko Johns, an associate professor of mathematics education, teaches elementary mathematics methods at the credential level and supervises practicum teachers at Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama. Her areas of interest include examining students' thinking processes when solving mathematical problems, investigating social and cultural effects on mathematics education, and exploring ways to incorporate technology in the classroom. She is a member of Alpha Iota Chapter in Alabama State Organization. kjohns@jsu.edu



Dr. Jennifer M. Troncale is Assistant Professor of Elementary Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Jacksonville State University. She received her BS, MA, EdS, and PhD in early childhood and elementary education from the University of Alabama. Dr. Troncale teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses for pre- and inservice educators in elementary education. Her teaching interests include integrating STEM into practice, using digital tools to enhance science lessons, providing active learning opportunities to promote student engagement, and fostering meaningful discourse in the classroom. jtroncal@jsu.edu



Dr. Christi Trucks is Assistant Professor in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Jacksonville State University. Dr. Trucks teaches Early Literacy in the Early Childhood Block and graduate level technology and reading classes. She also serves as the Early Childhood Program Chair and Coordinator of Practicum Experiences for the Early Childhood Block. Her teaching interests include integrating literacy and technology in the content areas. She is a two-time graduate of the University of Alabama, earning both her bachelor's degree in early childhood and elementary education and her PhD in instructional leadership and technology. She also has a master's degree in early childhood education from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. ctrucks@jsu.edu



Christie Calhoun is an instructor in language and literacy courses for undergraduate and graduate studies in elementary education at Jacksonville State University. Calhoun is a three-time graduate of Jacksonville State University, earning her bachelor's degree, master's degree, and educational specialist degree, all in the field of elementary education. She is currently working on completing the requirements to receive her doctorate of education from the University of Alabama. cfcalhoun@jsu.edu



Dr. Michael Alvidrez is Assistant Professor of Elementary Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Jacksonville State University. He received his BA in elementary education from Arizona State University, and his MA and PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from New Mexico State University. Dr. Alvidrez teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses for pre- and inservice educators in elementary education. His teaching interests include assessment in the elementary classroom, digital tools and writing, and helping students develop an in-depth knowledge of mathematics. He also studies how classroom engagement can help all students in the classroom succeed. malvidrez@jsu.edu

planning and preparation, doing so is an essential component of classroom management. In the remainder of this article, we introduce four twenty-first-century tools that can be easily incorporated into instruction to engage learners in daily classroom experiences.

Four Technology Tools to Promote Student Engagement

Fakebook: Classtools.net. Social media are effective tools for enhancing instruction. Given the wide range of possibilities involved in using different applications and Web sites, social media provide educators with the opportunity to design a student-active approach to learning (Poore, 2013). Students are ensured of discussion, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity when offered assignments that rely on social media for completion (McMeans, 2015). They are able to take a familiar setting with which they are comfortable—such as Facebook or Twitter—and create a platform for learning (Abe & Jordan, 2013). A primary concern among educators regarding social media relates to the multitude of privacy issues that ensue and thus prevent their use in the classroom (Poore, 2013). Classtools.net, however, allows educators to use tools modeled after social media applications safely with students.

Classtools.net is a free Web site that allows users to create personalized versions of many different social and news-based tools. Users can opt to write their own breaking news alert, newspaper headline, Twitter feed, word generators, or diagram and puzzle templates. Fakebook is also a tool available on Classtools.net. A replica of Facebook, Fakebook allows the user to create a character, show relationships with others, add images or videos, and create timelines with posts and comments. Fakebook page design can be an individual or collaborative project that emphasizes deep investigation of a subject.

Due to the popularity of Facebook, children of all ages are familiar with the format of the application. Fakebook allows students to design a social media profile safely. Students can develop a profile for a book character or historical figure. Just as with Facebook, they can upload images, answer demographic questions, and note important dates. As students continue to develop the Fakebook page, they can include a list of friends and add comments from others on the Fakebook page they are creating.

Fakebook is a simple tool to use. For Facebook users, the experience will seem as though they are on that site. For younger students or non-Facebook users, the software is very simple to learn. A tutorial is available on the Web site with guiding notes and directions in each section. Once a student completes the design of a Fakebook page, the teacher can easily assess the young person's demonstration of knowledge of the character or historical figure and ability to show connections with others.

As with other means of social media, Fakebook is a cost-efficient and effective tool that can be used in the classroom to develop intellectual skills (Abe & Jordan, 2013). Fakebook also provides students an opportunity to engage in interactions that are necessary in the technology-driven world both now and in the future (McMeans, 2015). It uses the basics of Facebook to promote learning. Fakebook proves to be an effective, engaging, and safe tool that offers an alternative approach to instruction, presentation, and assessment in any classroom.

Google Classroom. With more technology coming into classrooms, teachers now need to find new and different ways of integrating this tool into the curriculum. One such innovative tool that is quickly growing in popularity is Google Classroom. This platform allows teachers to use technology to help maximize student learning as well as to manage their classrooms efficiently. Along with Google Classroom, one of the most powerful tools available is the G suite, formerly known as Google Apps, which includes a word processor

and presentation tool. Google is one of many tools that teachers have available to them in the classroom.

Google Classroom is an interactive platform that teachers can utilize to help manage how their classroom is run. Teachers can flip their classroom, a strategy in which the students are creating, exploring, and helping to drive their instruction. As Cummings (2016) noted, Google Classroom is a “Web 2.0 technology than can be used to ‘flip’ the online classroom by creating asynchronous workshops in social environments where immediacy and social presence can be maximized” (p. 81). By using Google Classroom, teachers can empower their students to be learners and take ownership of their learning.

Google Classroom and the apps that it contains address many of the goals for education promoted by International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) to

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help transform teaching and learning utilizing technology as a tool. In the twenty-first-century classroom, educators want students to be able to create, collaborate, gain and share information, and think critically (Crane, 2008). Students using the various apps in the suite can maximize their learning in the classroom as well as stay engaged throughout the school day. Even using just the word processing app can begin to help students address twenty-first-century learning in the classroom. Many classroom engagement and motivation issues stem from students being bored or unmotivated. As noted earlier, when utilized correctly, technology can help in both engagement and classroom behavior issues.

Educreations. Today’s students must use a variety of technologies to construct knowledge and produce creative artifacts to demonstrate their learning (ISTE, 2016). The implementation of technology as a constructivist tool supports students in collaborating, processing information, and creating representations of conceptual knowledge (Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999). In today’s digital age, it’s essential that classroom teachers remain relevant while providing students opportunities for active involvement in the learning environment. In order to accomplish this goal, educators can use interactive whiteboards and screencasting tools to empower students to take ownership of their learning through shared, project-based learning tasks.

Educreations (<https://www.educreations.com/>) is an app that serves as an interactive whiteboard and screencasting tool through which users can add videos, voice-overs, images, and annotations to instructional presentations in an effort to explain a concept or idea. The virtual whiteboard includes a variety of ink colors for students to draw or annotate. The app is easy to use and allows both teachers and students to create videos, craft presentations, and illustrate ideas. Educreations is commonly used by teachers to create lessons in a flipped classroom environment or for the purpose of distance learning. Furthermore, while Educreations is beneficial to teachers seeking a tool that facilitates teaching and learning, it also allows learners to develop strategies for creating and demonstrating competency in their learning targets.

With a growing emphasis on performance-based assessment, digital tools are needed to ensure students are provided with opportunities for explaining their knowledge and ideas in a variety of ways. Educreations is an effective tool for all subjects. In the science

classroom, students can use the Educreations app to create a video explaining the steps of a science experiment and then explain their conclusions based on the results from the experiment. In the math classroom, students can use the Educreations app to create a video explaining the steps they took to solve a problem. In the language arts classroom, students can use the Educreations app to create a digital story using pictures, videos, and narrations that demonstrate their thinking in a creative way.

Educreations offers a Basic Edition free plan that includes 50MB of cloud storage space for one's lessons. Educreations Pro allows teachers to create a class that students can join within the app. Lessons sync automatically between the teacher's and students' iPads, so it is easy for students to view teacher instruction and for teachers to monitor the students' work while providing feedback. Unfortunately, at this time, students are not able to share their work with classmates within the environment of an Educreations class—a capacity that would also energize learning. Educreations is compatible with iOS 7 and works only on the iPad. Other screencasting tools and whiteboard apps include Explain Everything (<https://explaineverything.com/>) and Show Me (<http://www.showme.com/>).

Seesaw: The learning journal. Seesaw (<https://web.seesaw.me/>) is a student-driven digital portfolio that provides a secure and private place to keep students' assignments and projects that can be shared with parents. Students can upload photos, videos, drawings, text, PDFs, and links to show their learning.

A teacher can create digital portfolios for students by following simple steps. First, a teacher creates his or her own Seesaw account. Then he or she creates a class, adds students, and configures class settings. The teacher decides who is able to view student work, such as classmates and parents, and whether to allow them to "like" or comment on other's posts. Seesaw Web site provides resources for teachers to set up their first class. *Getting Started Calendar, Checklist, Seesaw Student Challenge, and Parent Introduction Presentation and Letter* are several resources available for teachers.

Seesaw Student Challenge is an introductory lesson plan to allow students to learn the basics of a digital journal, handling devices, signing in, taking pictures, recording a video, using drawing tools, and giving feedback to classmates. Utilizing Seesaw engages students and helps them take ownership in their learning. By downloading Seesaw's Parent App for iOS or Android devices, or by using the Web to view learning artifacts, parents can view only their own child's portfolio and classroom items that a teacher posts to "Everyone." Seesaw thus provides a simple and quick way for a teacher to communicate and update each student's progress with his or her parents. This app also allows parents to give feedback on their child's artifacts. Seesaw digital portfolio is an easy way to inform parents of classroom activities and provide more opportunities to participate in their child's education.

Conclusion

Student engagement is essential to student learning. Keeping students engaged in learning helps them feel more connected to the learning and the teacher. Fostering these connections allows teachers to keep students motivated to learn. As a result, when students remain engaged, they are required to access deeper, more critical thinking skills, which, in turn, increases achievement. Teachers no longer need to compete with the digital tools of the current age. Instead, the tools can be used to enhance instruction and promote learning. Incorporating twenty-first-century tools into daily classroom activities helps teachers engage students and monitor their learning and behavior. The online programs and apps included in this article can be utilized in any classroom to provide benefits in engagement, management, and skill-building.

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Dues Adjustments: A Study

By Phyllis A. Hickey, Nita Scott, Theresa Waller, Carolyn Pittman, Kara Hamann, and Judith R. Merz

This article provides an overview of a comprehensive study completed by DKG administrators and others regarding factors involved in considering dues adjustments for member countries. The study was shared with the international administrative board during their deliberations in late 2016 and provides insight into the myriad considerations and factors involved.

One of the strengths of DKG is its involvement of women from 17 countries, reflecting varied cultures and lifestyles. That same strength, however, can pose problems when one considers fiscal matters such as dues and the notion of equity.

In recognition of varying cultures and economies, *International Standing Rule 4.13* indicates that the DKG administrative board may make any adjustments in dues and other required payments for chapters or state organizations impacted by major political upheavals, severe natural disasters, or penalty exchanges between the monetary units of member countries and the United States dollar. Although the administrative board did attempt a definition of such triggers for adjustments in 2011, the concept proved unworkable as details were researched and the complexity unearthed.

Defining the Issues

Ten currencies exist in the 17 countries that make up DKG:

1. Icelandic Krona
2. Canadian Dollar
3. Mexican Peso
4. Euro
5. Norwegian Kroner
6. British Pound
7. Swedish Krona
8. Guatemalan Quetzal
9. Japanese Yen
10. Costa Rican Colon

The administrative board considered a wide variety of factors (Table 1) involved in comparing the fiscal and economic situation of each member country to that of the United States:

- Historical data indicating the fluctuation in the exchange rate over a period of 2 years. This particularly demonstrated the difficulty of determining a specific period for consideration of “penalty exchange rates.”
- The average exchange rate of each currency to the U.S. dollar over a 6-month period (May 2016 to October 2016). Again, specific choice of a period for comparison would impact the data.

Table 1
Comparison of Factors

	Value to US Dollar	DKG Dues	Average Teacher salary (15 years)	Average Rate of Inflation In %			Gallon of Milk	Dozen Eggs	Gallon of Gas	Levi Jeans
				2013	2014	2015				
US Dollar	1 USD	\$40	\$46,130	1.47	1.62	.12	\$3.28	\$2.59	\$2.32	\$41.37
Icelandic Krona	119.35 ISK	4,559.60 ISK	\$26,991	3.88	2.05	1.63	\$4.71	\$5.29	\$6.42	\$155.49
Canadian Dollar	1.32 CAD	53.62 CAD	\$56,349	1.24	1.47	1.61	\$6.05	\$2.29 US	\$3.00	\$46.54
Mexican Peso	18.75 MXN	760.07 MXN	\$19,590	3.81	4.02	2.72	\$3.01	\$1.34	\$2.75	\$37.93
Euro	.896 EU	36.42 EU								
The Netherlands			\$52,292	.64	.98	2.53	\$3.75	\$2.32	\$6.31	\$89.37
Estonia			\$12,306	2.79	-.10	-.49	\$2.32	\$1.28	\$4.40	\$75.06
Norwegian Kroner	8.3 NOK	330.94 NOK	\$37,585	2.13	2.03	2.17	\$7.24	\$3.98	\$6.44	\$101.71
British Pound	.75 GBP	32.86 GBP	\$44,269	3.00	2.4	1.0	\$4.09	\$3.16	\$4.99	\$68.99
Swedish Krona	8.44 SEK	360.85 SEK	\$34,387	-.04	-.18	1.63	\$4.44	\$4.30	\$5.70	\$96.03
Guatemalan Quetzal	7.56 GTQ	306.16 GTQ	\$30,000	4.34	3.78	6.22	\$5.51	\$1.82	\$2.79	\$51.50
Japanese Yen	104.11 JPY	4,190.32 JPY	\$45,741	.10	2.36	1.62	\$6.76	\$2.20	\$4.70	\$71.86
Costa Rican Colon	544.81 CRC	22,386.4 CRC	\$12,000	5.2	4.5	0.8	\$4.88	\$2.93	\$3.99	\$60.26

- Translation of DKG \$40 international dues to the nation's currency.
- The average salary of a teacher in the nation under study compared to the average U.S. salary.
- The cost of various “staples”—a gallon of milk, dozen eggs, gallon of gas, pair of jeans—in the nation under study compared to the average cost of those staples in the United States.
- The average rate of inflation in each country for each year, 2013-2015.

Further consideration included comparing the cost of living in member countries to that of the United States (Table 2). These data further confound the issue of equity in dues and other assessments.

Table 2

Cost of Living for Member Countries Compared to United States

Member Country	Cost of Living Compared to United States	
Canada	7.73%	lower
Costa Rica	22.62%	lower
Canada	7.73%	lower
El Salvador	40.02%	lower
Estonia	31.58%	lower
Finland	.77 %	higher
Germany	8.69 %	lower
Guatemala	41.34%	lower
Iceland	46.14%	higher
Japan	23.97%	higher
Mexico	55.82%	lower
Netherlands	.42%	lower
Norway	46.36%	higher
Panama	26.94%	lower
Puerto Rico	9.54%	lower
Sweden	1.86%	higher
United Kingdom	8.69%	lower

In looking at the data above, the administrative board members also noted the variations that can occur within a member country. For example, salaries, costs of staples, and overall cost of living vary widely from state to state within the United States. Adding analysis of all the myriad factors involved in locale within a state organization—whether it be within the United States or within any member country—would further complicate efforts to achieve equity.

About the Authors:

Phyllis A. Hickey is the Business Services Administrator at DKG headquarters in Austin, TX,

Nita Scott is the Membership Services Administrator at DKG headquarters in Austin, TX.

Theresa Waller is Financial Supervisor at DKG headquarters in Austin, TX.

Kara Hamann is a CPA who works with the Business Services Department at DKG headquarters in Austin, TX.

Carolyn Pittman is DKG International President, 2016-2018.

Judith R. Merz is DKG Interim Executive Director and editor of the *Bulletin*.

Resources*Currency Conversion*

www.oanda.com/currency/converter/

www.xe.com/currencycharts/?fromUSD&to=

[Note: insert country name in url; site provides multiple charts for the researched countries indicating 1-year and 5-year data and trends]

www.xe.com/currencytables/?from=USD&date=2016-05-16 [current and historical rates charts]

www.oanda.com/solutions-for-business/historical-rates/main.html

Cost of Living

www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/rankings_by_country.jsp

www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country_result.jsp?country=

[Note: insert country name in url; site provides multiple charts for the 17 researched countries]

Salaries and Inflation Data

<http://worldoftefl.com/teaching-english-in-guatemala/>

www.teacherportal.com/teacher-salaries-by-state/

[www.costaricatesol.com/tefl-costa-rica-blog/how-much-money-can-i-make-teaching English-in-costa-rica-61](http://www.costaricatesol.com/tefl-costa-rica-blog/how-much-money-can-i-make-teaching-English-in-costa-rica-61)

www.inflation.eu/inflation-rates/

www.ssa.gov/oact/cola/colaseries.html

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- ✦ Authors are responsible for accurately citing all quoted and bibliographic materials and for obtaining permission from the original source for quotations in excess of 150 words or for tables or figures reproduced from published works.
- ✦ Co-authors are permitted. At least one author must be a Delta Kappa Gamma member.

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- ✦ Although there is a suggested theme for each issue of the *Journal*, manuscripts on all topics are welcome. The *Collegial Exchange* is not theme-based.
- ✦ Manuscripts should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise, and appropriate for *Bulletin* readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable, and free from gender, political, patriotic, or religious bias. Topic headings should be inserted where appropriate.
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- ✦ Place tables and figures on separate pages at the end of the manuscript. Use Arabic numerals and indicate approximate placement in the text.
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<i>Journal</i>	Action/Classroom Research: Organized, systematic, and reflective analysis of classroom practice with implications for future practice in teaching and learning.	1,500-4,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Qualitative/Quantitative/Mixed Methods Research: Essentially narrative with nonstatistical approaches and a focus on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meanings from their experiences (Qual)/Gathers and analyzes measurable data to support or refute a hypothesis or theory through numbers and statistics (Quan)/Utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data to explore a research question (Mixed).	1,500-4,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Position Paper/Viewpoint: Defines an issue; asserts clear and unequivocal position on that issue, provides data and references that inform that position, and argues directly in its favor.	1,000-1,500	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
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<i>Journal</i>	Program Description: Provides an overview and details of a single program in an educational setting. Goals, resources, and outcomes are included. No marketing or promotion of a program is allowed.	1,500-2,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
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<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Classroom Practice/Program: Describes practice or initiative used in a classroom to advance educational excellence	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	DKG Chapter/State Organization Practice/Program: Describes a practice or initiative used by a chapter or state organization to advance the purposes of DKG	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Viewpoint on Current Issue: Defines and addresses an issue related to education, women, children, or DKG	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Personal Reflection or Anecdote: Shares a personal experience that provides insight to the human condition, particularly related to educators and women	500-700	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Inspirational Piece: Provides transcript of speech delivered at chapter, state, regional, or international events	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Bio and/or Interview: Shares the story or thoughts of a key woman educator or leader in education, women's issues, or children's issues	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Book Review: Combines a summary and personal critique of a textbook, resource, or book (fiction or nonfiction) related to education or to women and children	400-700	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Technology Review: Combines a summary and personal critique of an educational application, program, or piece of hardware that is useful in the classroom or that is useful in the life of an educator	400-700	Bio; photo
<i>Journal or Collegial Exchange</i>	Letter to the Editor: Responds to items previously published in the <i>Bulletin</i>	200-300	Author's name; chapter/state
<i>Journal or Collegial Exchange</i>	Poetry/Creative Work: Original expressions in any creative format	NA	Bio; photo

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