

Effects of Sex, Third Grade Reading Achievement and Motivation as Predictors of Fourth Grade Reading Achievement of Hispanic Students

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Abstract

This study explored the topic of motivation for intermediate students combining both an objective criterion measure (i.e., standardized test scores) and the self-report of students on self-concept and value of reading. The purpose of this study was to examine how third grade reading achievement correlated with the motivation of fourth grade boys and girls, and, in turn, how motivation related to fourth grade reading achievement.

The participants of this ex post facto study were fourth grade students ($n = 207$) attending two public, elementary schools in Miami-Dade County who were of primarily Hispanic origin or descent. Data were collected using the Reading Survey portion of the Motivation to Read Profile (1996), which measures self-concept and value of reading in order to measure motivation and the Third and Fourth Grade Reading Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests 2.0 (FCAT 2.0) to assess achievement. First, a one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether motivation differed significantly between fourth grade boys and girls. Second, a path analysis was used to determine whether motivation mediated or moderated the association between FCAT 2.0 third and fourth grade scores.

Results of the ANOVA indicated that motivation, as measured by the Motivation to Read Profile did not differ significantly by sex. Results from the path analysis

indicated that the model was significant and that third grade FCAT 2.0 scores accounted for a significant amount of the variance in fourth grade FCAT 2.0 scores once motivation was entered. Results of the study demonstrated that motivation partially mediates, but does not moderate the relationship between FCAT 2.0 third and fourth grade scores.

In conclusion, past student achievement for fourth grade students plays a role in current student achievement when motivation is also considered. It is therefore important in order to improve the quality of a fourth grade student's current performance to take into account a student's motivation and past achievement. An effort must be made to address students' motivational needs whether through school-wide programs or at the classroom level in addition to or in conjunction with cognition. Future research on the effect of self-concept in reading achievement is recommended.

Implications for Practice

The findings offer educators some new insights into Hispanic students' performance in the subject area of reading. From the findings in this study, it can be concluded that to improve the quality of fourth grade Hispanic student's current performance, it is important to take into account a student's motivation and past achievement. As determined by the results of this study, the latter elements partially play a role in a student's current achievement. An effort must be made to address students' motivation, whether through school-wide programs or at the classroom level, in addition to or in conjunction with cognition. In particular, this study showcased the need for reading programs that address the motivational component of self-concept as readers for students.

Shell, Colvin and Bruning (1995) indicated that low achievers have higher outcome expectancy in reading and writing, but lower self-efficacy in these two areas,

while at the same time they attribute causality to factors that are beyond their control (p. 395). Developing reading programs that address these students' motivational needs while also addressing their cognition needs is important. New reading programs may not necessarily be needed, but the current reading programs may be enhanced to include students' motivational needs. Guthrie et al. (2006) suggested that activities that provide long-term motivational development will be more beneficial in influencing students' reading motivation in the long run. The latter is important because, as determined by this study, for Hispanic students, this will also affect their future academic performance.

Most importantly, this study also demonstrates that standardized testing is affecting motivation, which in turn is affecting future standardized testing performance. Educators becoming aware of the relationship between standardized testing (achievement) and self-concept and value (motivation) for Hispanic students is a must. Guthrie (2002) concluded, "In this environment of school improvement through accountability, testing is a 'high stakes' part of teaching and schooling" (p. 370). This study highlights the notion that reading success as determined by standardized testing is also dependent on motivation.

The Use of Visualization, Onset-and-Rime and Read-Alouds to Improve Diverse First Graders' Vocabulary and Comprehension

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Abstract

It has long been known that vocabulary is essential in the development of reading. Because vocabulary leading to increased comprehension is important, it is necessary to determine strategies for ensuring that the best methods of teaching vocabulary are used to help students make gains in vocabulary leading to reading comprehension. According to the National Reading

Panel, multiple strategies that involve active engagement on the part of the student are more effective than the use of just one strategy.

The purpose of this study was to determine if students' use of visualization, student-generated pictures of onset-and-rime-patterned vocabulary, and story read-alouds with discussion, would enable diverse first-grade students to increase their vocabulary and comprehension. In addition, this study examined the effect of the multimodal framework of strategies on English learners (ELs).

This quasi-experimental study ($N = 69$) was conducted in four first-grade classrooms in a low socio-economic school. Two treatment classes used a multimodal framework of strategies to learn weekly vocabulary words and comprehension. Two comparison classrooms used the traditional method of teaching weekly vocabulary and comprehension. Data sources included Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR), comprehension and vocabulary scores, and weekly MacMillan/McGraw Hill *Treasures* basal comprehension questions and onset-and-rime vocabulary questions.

This research determined that the treatment had an effect in adjusted FAIR comprehension means by group, with the treatment group ($adj\ M = 5.14$) significantly higher than the comparison group ($adj\ M = -8.26$) on post scores. However, the treatment means did not increase from pre to post, but the comparison means significantly decreased as the materials became more challenging. For the FAIR vocabulary, there was a significant difference by group with the comparison adjusted post mean higher than the treatment's, although both groups significantly increased from pre to post. Still, the FAIR vocabulary posttest was not part of the *Treasures* vocabulary, which was taught using the multimodal framework of strategies. The *Treasures* vocabulary scores were not significantly different by group on the assessment across the weeks, although the treatment means were higher than those of the comparison group. Continued research is needed in the area of vocabulary and comprehension instructional methods to determine strategies to increase diverse, urban students' performance.

Implications for Practice

As Heibert (2009) pointed out, current basals are designed for majority students. These basals do not address the needs of our growing, diverse population. More relevant cultural and linguistic additions to basals would be a positive move forward for the diverse students. More scaffolding of language learners is needed in our schools. Teachers in diverse schools should have cultural background knowledge for the benefit of their students. Including the 2000 most important words for English learners on elementary vocabulary lists would also be of value. Schools need to be more culturally aware of their diverse students and their particular needs.

As stated earlier, basals do not effectively address the needs of the EL students (Heibert, 2009). Because the multimodal framework of strategies had limited success despite good intentions, a bilingual approach might be one way of addressing the issue of vocabulary acquisition and comprehension improvement for the ELs. Benefits might be achieved using a bilingual teaching method, which would require that the teachers be bilingual.

A Q-Methodology Approach to Investigating the Relationship between Level of Reflection and Typologies among Prospective Teachers in the Physics Learning Assistant Program at Florida International University

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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to understand physics Learning Assistants' (LAs) views on reflective teaching, expertise in teaching, and LA program teaching experience and determine if views predicted level of reflection evident in writing. Interviews were conducted in Phase One, Q methodology was used in Phase Two, and level of

reflection in participants' writing was assessed using a rubric based on Hatton and Smith's (1995) "Criteria for the Recognition of Evidence for Different Types of Reflective Writing" in Phase Three.

Interview analysis revealed varying perspectives on content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and experience in relation to expertise in teaching. Participants revealed that they engaged in reflection on their teaching, believed reflection helped teachers improve, and found peer reflection beneficial. Participants believed teaching experience in the LA program provided preparation for teaching, but that more preparation was needed to teach.

Three typologies emerged in Phase Two. Type One LAs found participation in the LA program rewarding and believed expertise in teaching did not require expertise in content or pedagogy, but it developed over time from reflection. Type Two LAs valued reflection, but not writing reflections, felt the LA program teaching experience helped them decide on non-teaching careers and helped them confront gaps in their physics knowledge. Type Three LAs valued reflection, believed expertise in content and pedagogy were necessary for expert teaching, and felt LA program teaching experience increased their likelihood of becoming teachers, but did not prepare them for teaching.

Writing assignments submitted in Phase Three were categorized as 19% descriptive writing, 60% descriptive reflections, and 21% dialogic reflections. No assignments were categorized as critical reflection. Using ordinal logistic regression, typologies that emerged in Phase Two were not found to be predictors for the level of reflection evident in the writing assignments.

In conclusion, viewpoints of physics LAs were revealed, typologies among them were discovered, and their writing gave evidence of their ability to reflect on teaching. These findings may benefit faculty and staff in the LA program by helping them better understand the views of physics LAs and how to assess their various forms of reflection.

Implications for Practice

Results of Phase One may indicate that in addition to helping LAs develop pedagogical content knowledge, faculty and staff in the LA program may need to help LAs realize the importance of developing expertise in pedagogical content knowledge rather than pedagogical knowledge or content knowledge individually.

The perspective that people are born with pre-determined abilities required for developing expertise in teaching can potentially be a hindrance for prospective physics teachers to remain in the LA program. This is also a potential problem for preservice teachers as they enter the field. Thus, physics LAs need to understand that one can hone his or her teaching skills over time and that—as in any other discipline or career choice—expertise is gained through several years of deliberate practice (Ericsson, 1991). To help LAs realize that one can improve in their teaching, it may be beneficial to have LAs engage in self-evaluation while participating in the program so that they can evaluate their own progress as they begin to hone their teaching skills.

LAs perspectives on the kind of experience necessary to develop expertise in teaching varied, as well. Although LAs seemed to have a good understanding of how various types of teaching experience can contribute to their developing expertise in teaching, it may be beneficial to help them focus on how one can learn from and improve their teaching skills, regardless of the kind of teaching experience they have, by engaging in a deliberate, reflective practice on their teaching.

According to Schon (1993), it is reflection on practice that helps a practitioner become better over time. LAs found reflection to be beneficial and necessary for teachers to improve their teaching. However, they mentioned reflecting less on their teaching strategies in the LA program as they gained more experience teaching. They also indicated that they no longer engaged in reflection through writing after the LA Seminar course, but continued to reflect with their peers. Thus, it may be beneficial to help LAs have more formal peer reflection after the seminar course; with a focus on things that are not just teaching

strategies. Moreover, peer reflection and other forms of reflection can be included in the curricular materials for the LA Seminar course.

It Takes an Institution's Village to Retain a Student: A Comprehensive Look at Two Early Warning System Undergraduate Retention Programs and Administrators' Perceptions of Students' Experiences and the Retention Service they Provide Students in the Early Warning Retention Program

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Abstract

Institutions have implemented many campus interventions to address student persistence/ retention, one of which is Early Warning Systems (EWS). However, few research studies show evidence of interventions that incorporate noncognitive factors/skills, and psychotherapy/ psycho-educational processes in the EWS. A qualitative study (phenomenological interview and document analysis) of EWS at both a public and private 4-year Florida university was conducted to explore EWS through the eyes of the administrators of the ways administrators make sense of students' experiences and the services they provide and do not provide to assist students. Administrators' understanding of noncognitive factors and the executive skills subset and their contribution to retention and the executive skills development of at-risk students were also explored. Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms and Perez's retention strategies were used to guide the study. Six administrators from each institution who oversaw and/or assisted with EWS for first-time-in-college undergraduate students considered academically at-risk for attrition were interviewed.

Among numerous findings, at Institution X: EWS was infrequently identified as a service, EWS training was not conducted, numerous cognitive and noncognitive issues/deficits were identified for students, and

services/critical departments such as EWS did not work together to share students' information to benefit students. Assessment measures were used to identify students' issues/ deficits; however, they were not used to assess, track, and monitor students' issues/deficits. Additionally, the institution's EWS did address students' executive skills function beyond time management and organizational skills, but did not address students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes.

Among numerous findings, at Institution Y: EWS was frequently identified as a service, EWS training was not conducted, numerous cognitive and noncognitive issues/deficits were identified for students, and services/critical departments such as EWS worked together to share students' information to benefit students. Assessment measures were used to identify, track, and monitor students' issues/ deficits; they were not used to assess students' issues/deficits. Additionally, the institution's EWS addressed students' executive skills function beyond time management and organizational skills, and psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes.

Based on the findings, Perez's retention strategies were not utilized in EWS at Institution X, yet were collectively utilized in EWS at Institution Y to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms. Future research could be designed to test the link between engaging in the specific promising activities identified in this research (one-to-one coaching, participation in student success workshops, academic contracts, and tutoring) and student success (e.g., higher GPA, retention). Further, because this research uncovered some concern with how to best handle students with physical and psychological disabilities, future research could link these same promising strategies for improving student performance for example among ADHD students or those with clinical depression.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this study could inform policies, practices, etc., in the field of higher education, particularly as they pertain to persistence, retention, at-risk students, and EWS. For instance, with what could be learned from this research, there would be more

support for allotting precious resources acquired from state, federal, and institutional funding towards providing formal and coordinated retention programs. In addition, the findings could also support investing in more staffing designated specifically for retention programs, and training and empowering retention staff to better understand and assist at-risk students in therapeutic settings such as student success/life coaching.

Overall, the results of this research could distinguish new predictor variables that identify at-risk students more clearly and connect new psychotherapy/ psycho-educational processes to addressing students' issues and development needs. The findings could also provide institutions with a broader understanding of EWS and the campus services that work together to share student information that can benefit students. Additionally, the findings could provide institutions with a broader understanding of what they do and do not do to assist students, and be motivated through the study to better assist students. Finally, heightened research in these areas could translate into more effective interventions that lead toward finding a remedy for student attrition.

The Effect of Reciprocal Mapping on Social Studies Achievement by Diverse 6th Grade Struggling Readers in Social Studies Classrooms

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Abstract

Reading deficits in students in Grades 4 to 12 are evident in American schools. Informational text is particularly difficult for students. This quasi-experimental study ($N = 138$) investigated sixth-grade students' achievement in social studies using the Reciprocal Mapping instructional routine, compared to sixth-grade students' achievement taught with a traditional approach. The Reciprocal Mapping instructional routine incorporated explicit instruction in text structure using graphic organizers. Students created their own graphic organizers and used them to write about social studies content. The comparison

group used a traditional approach, students' reading the textbook and answering questions.

Students for this study included sixth-graders in the seven sixth-grade classrooms in two public schools in a small, rural south Florida school district. A focus of this study was to determine the helpfulness of the intervention for at-risk readers. To determine students considered to be at-risk, the researcher used data from the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), 2011-2012, that considers Level 1 and 2 as at-risk readers. The quasi-experimental study used a pretest-posttest control group design, with students assigned to treatment groups by class. Two teachers at the two rural sites were trained on the Reciprocal Mapping instructional routine and taught students in both the experimental and control groups for an equivalent amount of time over a 5-week period.

Results of the 3 x 2 factorial ANCOVA found a significant positive difference favoring the experimental group's social studies achievement as compared to that of the comparison group as measured by the pre/post unit test from the social studies series (McGraw-Hill, 2013), when controlling for initial differences in students' reading FCAT scores. Interactions for high-risk struggling readers were investigated. Due to no evidence of statistically significant interactions, the main effects of treatment were interpreted. The pretest was used as a covariate and the multivariate analysis was found to be significant. Therefore, analysis of covariance was run on each of the dependent variables as a follow-up. Reciprocal Mapping was found to be significant in posttest scores, independent of gender and level of risk, and while holding the pretest scores constant.

Findings showed there was a significant difference in the performance of the high-risk reading students taught with the Reciprocal Mapping intervention who scored statistically better than students in the control group. Further study findings showed that teacher fidelity of implementation of the treatment had a statistically significant relationship in predicting posttest scores when controlling for pretest scores. Study results indicated that improving students' use of text structure through the Reciprocal Mapping instructional routine positively supported sixth-grade students' social studies achievement.

Implications for Practice

Findings suggest that the Reciprocal Mapping instructional routine is an effective teaching practice for students in content area classes aiding with understanding of informational text structure as well as comprehension of informational text. Reciprocal Mapping appears to be an effective strategy for both high-risk readers and proficient readers. Findings also suggest that Reciprocal Mapping instructional routine is equally effective for both male and female students.

Important for many schools is the success that the Reciprocal Mapping instructional routine has in the whole group setting. For this study, Reciprocal Mapping was used during whole group classroom teaching, in classrooms that included general education students, exceptional education students, students who are not native English speakers, and gifted students. The nature of the Reciprocal Mapping instructional routine may allow the teacher to be able to effectively teach all types of students.

The Effect of Trained Teachers' Integration of Dialogic Reading Discourse on English Language Learners Literacy Skills in Kindergarten and First Grade

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) study explored whether the vocabulary and reading comprehension mean scores of Hispanic Kindergarten ELs whose teachers were trained to utilize Dialogic Reading (DR) discourse were higher than the mean scores of Hispanic ELs in kindergarten whose teachers were not trained to utilize DR discourse strategies. Sixty-three self-identified Hispanic, English Language Kindergarten students and four teachers participated in the study. The teachers were randomly assigned to either the experimental group (DR trained) or control group by drawing names from a hat. Student assignment to

experimental versus comparison group was based on the teacher's assignment to either the experimental or comparison group. Thirty-one were assigned to the control group and 32 to the experimental group.

The teachers were instructed to read the story to a group of six students (maximum) at a time, utilizing the DR discourse strategies they had been trained to implement. Subjects were read a story each week during the 8-week duration of the study. Teachers in the experimental group collaboratively selected 10 words each week from the *Read Together Talk Together (RTTT)* instructional stories that were utilized for vocabulary instruction.

A test of homogeneity was conducted to evaluate whether the variance among the dependent variables was the same across the groups. An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was applied to analyze students' vocabulary and comprehension mean scores in the experimental group and the comparison group. The results of the study demonstrated a significant increase in the vocabulary and reading comprehension mean scores for the students whose teachers had been trained in DR discourse strategies. When comparing the two groups, the results revealed a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$).

In conclusion, this study was conducted to explore how DR discourse may be an effective technique to teach literacy skills. The findings of this study showed that vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension of Hispanic ELs were positively affected by the teachers' inclusion of dialogue during storybook reading. Its outcomes accentuated the need for teachers to provide assistance to ELs as they develop vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension skills.

Implications for Practice

Young ELs' limited vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension when they first begin formal schooling continue to be the center of researchers and educators' focus. Findings from this study can be a catalyst for literacy instructional change in several ways. First, evidenced score gains in both vocabulary and reading comprehension indicated that integrating DR discourse is a viable tool for Hispanic ELs' vocabulary

knowledge to be accelerated and enhanced. Another important finding is that when teachers (adults) scaffold children's learning by posing higher thinking questions (who/what/where/when/why), they positively affect both vocabulary levels and comprehension of text of the learners. Furthermore, by allowing children to dialogue and make connections between read text and what is familiar to them, students' understanding is developed.

The findings of this study showed that vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension of Hispanic ELs were positively affected by the teachers' inclusion of dialogue about content and vocabulary during storybook reading. Additionally, although both groups made gains, the DR discourse trained teachers had greater gains in mean scores. Thus, DR discourse strategies can be included during storybook reading sessions to foster the development of ELs' language, vocabulary, and comprehension skills in English.

A Relationship between the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test 2.0 Mathematics Scores and Racial and Ethnic Concentrations when Considering Socio-Economic Status, ESOL Student Population, and School Climate

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Abstract

From the moment children are born, they begin a lifetime journey of learning about themselves and their surroundings. With the establishment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, it mandates that all children receive a high-quality education in a positive school climate. Regardless of the school the child attends or the neighborhood in which the child lives, proper and quality education and resources must be provided and made available for the child to be academically successful.

The purpose of this ex post facto study was to investigate the relationship between the FCAT 2.0 mathematics scores of public middle-school students

in Miami-Dade County, Florida and the concentrations of a school's racial and ethnic make-up (Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics), English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) population, socio-economic status (SES), and school climate. The research question of this study was: Is there a significant relationship between the FCAT 2.0 Mathematics scores and racial and ethnic concentration of public middle school students in Miami-Dade County when controlling SES, ESOL student population, and school climate for the 2010-2011 school year?

The instruments used to collect the data were the FCAT 2.0 and Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) School Climate Survey. The study found that Economically Disadvantaged (SES) students socio-economic status had the strongest correlation with the FCAT 2.0 mathematics scores ($r = -.83$). The next strongest correlation was with the number of students who agreed that their school climate was positive and helped them learn ($r = .74$) and the third strongest correlation was a school percentage of White students ($r = .66$). The study concluded that the FCAT 2.0 mathematics scores of M-DCPS middle-school students had a significant relationship with socio-economic status, school climate, and racial concentration.

Implications for Practice

The current educational policies such as Title I, Title VII, and No Child Left Behind need to be re-evaluated to make sure that their focus is to meet the needs of the students and provide a quality education. Analyzing how their funding is being used will bring to light if funding is lacking or being misused. In addition, establishing a rigorous accountability system that truly measures the assistance given by these educational policies will help protect the funds provided and reassure educators, parents, and students that the educational policies are carrying out their purpose and goals.

Researching school districts or metropolitan areas in similar situations to see how they are resolving this problem might help provide a solution (Moore, 2002). They might have effective practices already in place that might help Miami-Dade County Public Schools

meet the needs of their students and provide them all with the same quality education.

Conducting a district-wide analysis of the educational resources and technology available at each school to compare and contrast the inventory might provide another step toward providing resources to the neediest schools. Equipping all schools throughout the district with equally modern and high quality educational resources and technology is one step towards providing all students with the same quality education (Cobb & Glass, 2009).

Students who do not pass the FCAT 2.0 Mathematics Test should be required to take additional classes of mathematics that will help reinforce their mathematical skills. Additionally, offering afterschool care led by certified teachers who can provide good classroom management and help students with their homework assignments can help provide students with the structure and attention they may lack at home.

Teachers' Experiences in and Perceptions of their 12th-Grade British Literature Classroom

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and perceptions of 12th-grade literature teachers about curriculum, Post-Colonial literature, and students. Theories posed by Piaget (1995), Vygotsky (1995), and Rosenblatt (1995) formed the framework for this micro-ethnographic study. Seven teachers from public and private schools in South Florida participated in this two-phase study; three teachers in Phase I and four in Phase II. All participants completed individual semi-structured interviews and demographic surveys. In addition, four of the teachers were observed teaching.

The analysis yielded three themes and two sub-themes: (a) *knowledge* concerned teachers' knowledge

of British literature content and Post-Colonial authors and their literature; (b) *freedom* described teachers' freedom to choose how to teach their content. Included in this theme was dilemmas associated with 12th-grade classrooms which described issues that were pertinent to the 12th-grade teacher and classroom that were revealed by the study; and (c) *thoughts about students* described teachers' perceptions about students and how literature might affect the students. Two subthemes of knowledge were as follows: (1) text complexity described teacher responses to a Post-Colonial text's complexity and (2) student desirability/teachability described teachers' perception about how desirable Post-Colonial texts would be to students and whether teachers would be willing to teach these texts.

The researcher offers recommendations for understanding factors associated with 12th-grade teachers' perceptions and implications for enhancing the 12th-grade experience for teachers and curriculum, based on this study: (a) build teacher morale and capacity, (b) treat all students as integral components of the teaching and learning process; teachers in this study thought teaching disenfranchised learners was a form of punishment meted out by the administration, and (c) include more Post-Colonial authors in school curricula in colleges

and schools as most teachers in this study did not study this type of literature nor knew how to teach it.

Implications for Practice

What it means to be a 12th-grade British literature teacher is considerably more multifaceted than the researcher originally thought. Given our population increases, and a combination of class size and inclusion amendments, English Language Arts teachers need to leave college versed in many areas, including Special Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), because these are the students in the regular and college prep classrooms. Teachers must know how to teach American, British, and Caribbean literature so that they will not feel frustrated when asked to teach these classes. They need to be prepared to teach in any area of the discipline and to a variety of learners.

There is a need for teachers to obtain the proper credentials to teach the youth of today. Student teaching or apprenticeship programs have to be more in-depth and proactive where pre-service teachers spend time in an English Language Arts classroom prepared for the different type of curriculum needs. It would be helpful for teachers to spend more time in different settings, teaching different types of students for extended periods of time.