Indiana State LITERACY ASSOCIATION

Indiana Literacy Journal

Spring 2023

Volume 51, Issue 2

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Dear Teaching Colleagues and Literacy Champions,

As you read the Spring 2023 issue of the Indiana Literacy Journal, we believe you will find practical ideas that can impact your teaching, whether you are looking for strategies about the Science of Reading or how to more effectively share literature in engaging ways with students. Steensma and co-authors share instructional strategies related to the foundational skills of reading involved in the word recognition aspect of the Simple View of Reading Model (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) and Duke and Cartwright's (2021) Self-Regulated Model of Reading. Conversely, Husband and Walker share more of the affective side of story through how we can use diverse literature to promote students' awareness of disabilities. We also connect Husband and Walker's article to two aspects of Duke and Cartwright's (2021) Self-Regulated Model of Reading, the active self-regulation component and cultural knowledge that is seen with the language comprehension component.

As our State of Indiana's Department of Education and state legislators continue to pass legislation and policies that impact our literacy instruction, it is more important than ever that educators are able to confidently apply research-based practices that build the foundational skills of reading our students need to master. Steensma and co-authors provide an explicit process that teachers can implement in their instruction with young readers to build their phonemic awareness and spelling skills, through phoneme grapheme mapping. Based upon their work with students in their own classrooms, they provide a step-by-step process for teaching students to discriminate or hear the sounds in words, then begin to match phonemes to graphemes by using Elkonin Boxes. Applying these strategies supports students as they gain skills and confidence in the word recognition aspect of the Science of Reading models (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Gough & Tunmer, 1986). We see this article as a helpful resource for early elementary teachers aligning their instruction to the Science of Reading, as well as teachers providing reading interventions to older students who need to strengthen their phonemic awareness and phonics skills.

Within the increasingly diverse context of our society, educators and families are encouraged to share multicultural literature with their students and children. Whereas literature is becoming more diverse to represent a variety of ethnicities and cultures, there is still much work to be done to accurately represent the diverse experiences our students come from in their lives. One diverse aspect that is often overlooked relates to disabilities and how we promote awareness of exceptionalities within our schools and classrooms. Husband and Walker ground the importance and use of multicultural literature representing those with disabilities around four approaches including Critical Literacy, Critical Readers Response, Critical Inquiry, and Cultural Studies. They provide detailed explanations of how these four approaches can guide teachers in sharing multicultural literature with main characters who have disabilities. They provide considerations and cautions for teachers, as well as a diverse list of books that represent a broad range of disabilities. Husband and Walker's article provides teachers with ways to motivate and engage students in reading (active self-regulation component), as well as build cultural knowledge around the experiences of those with disabilities (language comprehension component). They demonstrate how stories can provide compassion and connection to build a stronger community of learners within schools and society, just as John Schu (2022) shares in his recently published text, *The Gift of Story.*

We trust you will find something within these articles that will impact your literacy instruction and mentorship of students in positive ways through both building foundational skills and a great

literacy in understanding others. As you enjoy the quiet of summer, may you take something from our Spring 2023 issue to impact your own literacy learning, teaching, and leading!

Your Indiana Literacy Journal Editors,

Dr. Benjamin Boche

Dr. Sharon Pratt

The Use of Phoneme Grapheme Mapping to Improve Decoding in the Primary Classroom

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Abstract

Phonemic awareness is a building block for decoding words. It is the ability to recognize and manipulate the smallest unit of sounds, phonemes (Ryder et al., 2007). Without the ability to discriminate phonemes, mapping phonemes and graphemes to decode words is extremely challenging, even impossible (Lindsey, 2022). The aim of this study was to determine if implementing phoneme grapheme mapping strategies into a small group setting coupled with explicit feedback would improve students' decoding abilities.

Following the pandemic's impact in 2020, schools faced many challenges. Some students had missed a year or more of school due to health concerns. Teachers had to manage in-person and online learning formats. With social distancing guidelines in place, students did not have the same engagement opportunities in the classroom as they did before. These changes to both teaching and learning resulted in teachers noticing gaps in learning that varied on scales larger than before.

The lack of interaction and engagement with school norms and atmosphere impacted student achievement. As two first grade teachers, whose classrooms span two states, we observed essential foundational skills were missing for our students. Baseline data from our classrooms showed a decrease in overall decoding scores with 44% of students performing below grade level. Specifically, 100% of our students needed support with decoding nonsense words and word segmenting. Overall, the data showed a collective need for reading instruction pertaining to decoding, specifically phoneme-grapheme mapping.

Phonemic awareness is a building block for decoding words. It is the ability to recognize and manipulate the smallest unit of sounds, phonemes. Letters are designed to represent spoken phonemes so phonemic awareness, or the awareness of individual sounds in spoken words, is an essential skill to reading (Kilpatrick, 2020; Ryder et al., 2007). Word decoding requires the ability to apply phonemic awareness. It is "[this] knowledge of the alphabetic code, which involves understanding the relationships between letters and sounds" (Ross & Joseph, 2019, p. 1) that allows students to correctly pronounce written words and begin to recognize them when reading. Without this connection between letters and sounds, one that is essential for mapping words, students often struggle to read because they cannot orally blend or manipulate the sounds in words (Dragić & Vučković, 2020).

The term decoding refers to different strategies used to read words. This involves translating graphemes into phonemes and blending the sounds to form words. Ehri (2005) portrays the development of the ability to read words through overlapping phases. Represented in these phases is the connection students are making between written words and their spoken pronunciation. As students' understanding of the phoneme-grapheme connection enhances, so does their ability to decode and read words. Since our alphabetic system represents speech at the phoneme level, students should be taught to identify the connection between the phonemes they hear and the string of graphemes that represent the sounds (Sargiani et al., 2022). This connection bonds the spellings of those words to their pronunciations and meanings and secures these words in students' memory.

When students are given explicit intentional instruction with word decoding, they are more successful at reading a given text. Garcia and Cain (2014) found that when students have more accurate and automatic decoding skills, they are able to read at a more accurate rate. Explicit training in phonemic awareness and decoding skills helps students who are at risk for falling behind (Nilvius et al., 2021). According to Felton (1993), "Reading will not become pleasurable until a certain level of automaticity of word decoding is achieved" (p. 588). Giving students a deep understanding of how to decode words provides more positive feelings towards reading.

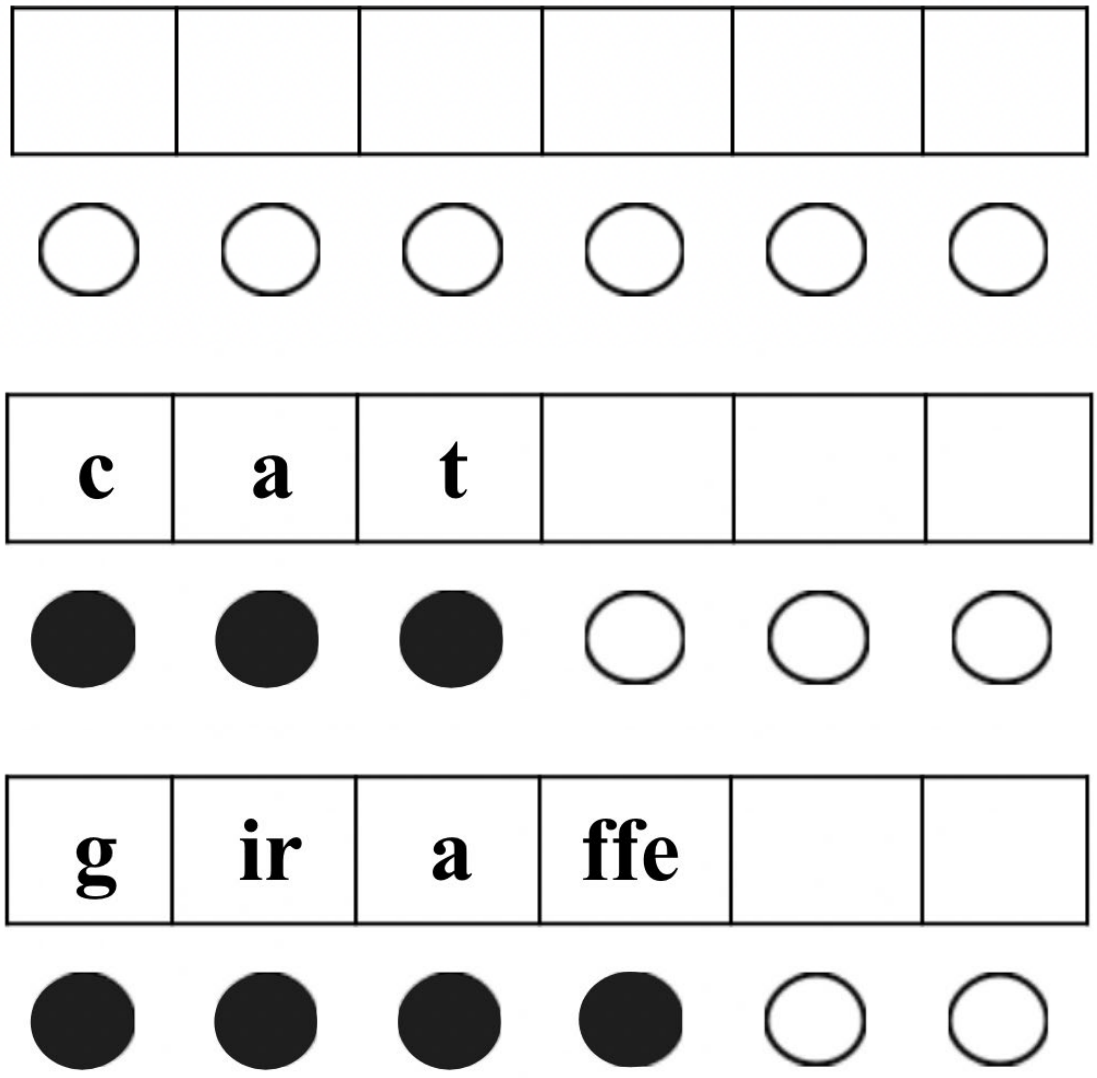
Phoneme Grapheme Mapping

The road to automatic word reading is long and complex and requires mastery of letters, phonemic awareness, knowledge of the writing system and how to spell the sounds in words. Research shows that written words are stored in memory when graphemes are connected to phonemes in pronunciations of words (Ehri, 2022; Kilpatrick, 2020). A reader encounters an unfamiliar written word and decodes it by converting graphemes into a blend of phonemes. Repeating this process a few times securely bonds its pronunciation in memory. To deepen students' understanding of the alphabetic principle and the connection between phonemes and graphemes when decoding and encoding words, teachers must utilize strategies and tasks that place emphasis on this connection. Elkonin boxes can be a beneficial tool in supporting this connection.

Elkonin Boxes

Elkonin Boxes are both a visual and kinesthetic way to demonstrate the explicit connection between letter and sound. Knowing how words are best stored in memory, this approach supports students in identifying the phonemes in a word and then identifying graphemes that represent those phonemes. Students start by counting the phonemes in a word using counters. Then, each grapheme is written in an Elkonin box (Miles et al., 2017). For example, if a student is breaking up the word "cat," the student would count each phoneme in the word, starting with /c/. Then, the student would write a letter c in the first box because it is the letter matching the first phoneme. The next step would be to add a letter a in the second box which matches the next phoneme /ă/. In the third box, we would add the letter t to represent the phoneme /t/. This strategy is particularly useful when students practice irregular word patterns, such as the word "giraffe." Students must be taught segmentation, which is the ability to break, or segment, a word into each of its sounds. The strategy works best with words at a student's instructional level. In a recent study, phoneme grapheme interventions demonstrated "high levels of phoneme-grapheme mapping segmentation, letter-sound correspondence, and spelling performance" after the intervention was no longer in place (Ross & Joseph, 2019, p.48). In a similar study researching the use of Elkonin boxes with sight words, results showed improvement of sight word recognition in struggling readers (Miles et al., 2017). This segmentation strategy assists students in relating sounds to letters and letter patterns during reading, which also allows them to practice decoding. Stretching phonemes is where students hold each sound for a few seconds before saying the next phoneme (Ryder et al., 2007). This helps students recognize each sound and the formation their mouth makes when they produce the sound. Figure 1 shows the Elkonin Boxes students used in small groups and independently and the phoneme grapheme maps for the words, "cat" and "giraffe."

Figure 1
Elkonin Boxes



Explicit Feedback & Progress Monitoring

By giving students explicit feedback, they know the area of reading and skill they are working to improve. No matter the strategy that is used, all the strategies must be explicitly taught with explicit feedback attached to the practice (Hudson et al., 2011; Felton, 1993). In a study conducted by Hudson and colleagues (2011), results of this study showed student improvement of decoding automaticity and reading fluency when instruction was paired with explicit feedback.

Monitoring progress and providing feedback is an important aspect of reading intervention because it supports student self-regulation and motivation. Benefits include organization, confidence, participation in class, and better time management (Lee et al., 2009).

When students set personal goals, self-monitor and visualize their progress towards the goal, they take ownership of their own learning. Self-monitoring increases student engagement as students work to self-observe and record to reach their goal (Lee et al., 2009). Progress monitoring and feedback is an important aspect of reading intervention because it supports student self-

regulation and motivation. This strategy is beneficial when students are reading which is paired with reinforcement (Hudson et al., 2011). Motivation and progress monitoring connect a student to working towards improvement and growth.

Therefore, educators must accurately identify lacking skills to implement supplemental instruction that meets students' needs (Ross & Joseph, 2019). Our action research explored the impact phoneme grapheme mapping strategies would have on students' decoding abilities. Specific strategies included Elkonin boxes, explicit feedback, and progress monitoring.

Methodology

Research Context

The aim of this study was to implement phoneme grapheme mapping strategies to improve students' decoding abilities. Action research took place in two, first grade classrooms in two separate schools, in two different states. Action research identifies a problem with the intent to seek the solution (Alfaro-Tanco & Erro-Garcés, 2020). Throughout the study, classroom teachers were flexible with the implementation of strategies in our classroom which follows the procedures of action research (Alfaro-Tanco & Erro-Garcés, 2020).

Participants

Participants of this study were in two first grade classrooms in two separate states. Although one school was in a suburban location and the other was rural, both schools had nearly 600 students with School A reporting 15% of students on free and reduced lunch and School B 43%. Classrooms A and B had 22 and 21 students respectively. In Classroom A, 36% of the students needed additional support and were included in the action research; 52% were included in Classroom B. Within Classroom A, 25% of the participants were girls and 75% of the participants were boys. In Classroom B, 36% of the participants were girls and 64% of the participants were boys. Out of the 19 participants, 32% did not attend kindergarten and 5% attended remotely. Information in Table 1 details the school and classroom community.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Demographics	Classroom A	Classroom B
School Location	Suburban Community	Rural Community
Participants	8 students (2 girls, 6 boys)	11 Students (4 girls, 7 boys)
Classroom Population	22 students	21 students
School Free and Reduced Lunch Percentage	15%	43%
White Student Population of School	87%	93%

Action Research Design & Implementation

The 19 students receiving intervention met in small groups four-five days each week for a combined total time of 60 minutes of additional practice and instruction. The small group format

included a phonemic awareness warm-up, followed by a new or reviewed phonics pattern, reading a differentiated book that connected to the phonics pattern as a group, followed by an Elkonin Boxes activity. Students were given opportunities to practice the phonics pattern through both the connected passage and the Elkonin Boxes activity. When using Elkonin Boxes, it is essential that the same routine is used repeatedly throughout the process of teaching (Keesey & Joseph, 2015). When using Elkonin Boxes, the teacher first says the word and then asks students to repeat it. Students are then asked to identify the sounds and represent each sound in the word with counters. Students would then write the corresponding letters to represent each sound before blending the sounds to read the word. This building, writing, and reading of words provides more guidance and opportunities for explicit feedback. The mastery of the decoding skill was assessed every two weeks using the nonsense word screener. This influenced instruction for the following two-week period.

Data Collection & Analysis

During the six-week intervention, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected to inform next steps and adjust instruction as needed. Data collection methods included anecdotal notes and nonsense word screeners.

Anecdotal Notes. Throughout the research progress monitoring was used for each student. Figure 2 shows an example of the anecdotal note organization that was used in data collection.

Figure 2
Example Anecdotal Note Structure

Student (A)	**Observations (B)**	**Next Steps & Feedback Provided (C)**

In Box A, we listed the student's name. Box B included observations such as body language, quotes from the students, and behaviors noted. Box C highlighted the feedback we provided and the next steps for the student.

Data Analysis of Anecdotal Notes. Anecdotal notes were analyzed for the themes. Thematic analysis allows researchers to gather an understanding of experiences and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis, although a common qualitative research method, is often not described with enough detail to be viewed as a sophisticated method of research (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). As a result, Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a six-step process to support the methodology. Although originally developed in psychology, it transfers to education as well. First, we, as Authors 1 and 2, reviewed the data collected from the anecdotal notes independently. After analyzing, we found our observations of students were similar. Together we identified the initial coding and used this to search for themes found in the data. Afterwards, we reviewed, defined, and named themes, before reporting the information (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Nonsense Word Screener. A Nonsense Word Screener following the phonics scope and sequence, shown in Table 2, was administered individually to students every two weeks in small groups. The screener consisted of ten nonsense words connected to each phonics skill identified in the scope

and sequence. Teacher A and Teacher B used district curriculum nonsense word screeners. An example of the screeners is shown in Figure 3. Students were asked to decode each word listed on the screener. Students demonstrated mastery if they were able to accurately decode 5 out of 10 nonsense words connected to a specific phonics skill. Students received reteaching on the decoding skill if mastery was not met. If students showed mastery, they received instruction on the next phonics skill in the scope and sequence.

Table 2
Nonsense Word Screener Scope and Sequence

Level	Proficiencies
1	Letter Sounds
2	CVC
3	Consonant Digraphs
4	CCVC/CVCC
5	Silent e
6	R Controlled Vowels

Figure 3
Example Nonsense Word Screener

CVC	jat tep lom fap vad weg pim zaf lud sib	/10
Consonant Digraphs	nosh ling whap thig fosh chab thid tish mack fich	/10
CCVC/CVCC	stam plub gleb praf jest slud bant tosp lund clud	/10
Silent e	dole paze jate pote gile tade lune hite labe mune	/10
R Controlled Vowels	lort purt girk dirn lerm farp darm lirf horb surp	/10

Data Analysis of Nonsense Word Screener. Mastery of the decoding skill was assessed every two weeks using the nonsense word screener. Students mastered the skill when they decoded 50 percent of the words accurately. Students are able to segment and blend the sounds to produce the nonsense word. To calculate the number of phonics skills each student grew by a numerical value was given to the phonics skills in the scope and sequence. At the beginning of this study, students ranged from CVC (2) to CCVC (4). Additionally, a Paired-Samples T-Test was conducted prior to implementation of the intervention and six weeks after.

Results

The goal of the intervention was to improve students' decoding skills. Data collected showed that Elkonin Boxes and corrected feedback positively impacted student learning outcomes. In the following sections, we report the results and our interpretation of the data.

Anecdotal Notes

After analyzing anecdotal data from observations (Box B), it was clear there was a change in student perceptions. In weeks 1-3 students showed more frustration and at times aggressive behavior. They often appeared nervous. Frustration levels included physical and verbal aggression and negative self-talk. Nervousness included reading quietly or seeking reassurance. In weeks 4-6 another theme emerged. Students demonstrated more self-confidence while decoding. We also saw a decrease in frustration levels and nervousness. Student confidence was demonstrated when students read words as a statement, rather than as a question. Quotations and observations are included for each theme found throughout the research in Table 3. Overall, we noted that students saw themselves as readers and knew they had the ability to decode accurately.

Table 3
Observations and Example Quotations from Students

Weeks	Themes	Observations	Student Quotations
Weeks 1-3	Frustration Level	Kicking and throwing objects Fixed Mindset Avoidance	"This is stupid." "I can't read." "I don't want to."
	Nervousness	Quiet Reading Seeking Reassurance Tone of Voice	"Is that right?" "Reading makes me nervous." "I don't want anyone to hear me."
Weeks 4-6	Confidence	Fluent Reading Engagement Participation	"I am a reader!" "I know this [word]." "I've seen that word!"

When analyzing feedback provided and next steps (Box C) from the anecdotal notes, data analysis indicated that our explicit feedback fell into two themes: positive feedback and corrective feedback. Corrective feedback was used only when a mistake is made to ensure students do not reinforce incorrect practices. If attention is not drawn to a mistake, students continue to make the same mistake. After corrective feedback is given, it is important to follow with positive feedback to avoid students feeling defeated and frustrated (Lee et al., 2009). When analyzing observations (Box B), we noted positive affirmations increased as the weeks progressed as did their confidence. At first, we modeled the phrases and repeated them to students when providing explicit feedback. As their confidence increased, it became routine for students to positively affirm themselves, before reading, during reading, or after reading. By the end of the study students were verbally expressing that they enjoyed reading more and self-correcting. Students were more motivated to self-correct their decoding during independent reading tasks as well.

Nonsense Word Screener

Based on the results of the study, 100% of students made growth in their decoding abilities. At the end of the study, students' growth ranged from Consonant Digraphs (3) to R-Controlled Vowels (6). On average, students receiving classroom support grew by nearly 2 phonics levels, specifically the average student grew 1.7 levels over the course of the 6 weeks.

A Paired-Samples T-Test was conducted to determine the effect of the use of phoneme grapheme mapping strategies on students' decoding. There was a significant difference in the scores prior to implementing phoneme grapheme mapping strategies (M=3.21, SD=0.69) and after implementing (M=5.05, SD=0.76); $t(19)= 13.335$, $p < .001$. The observed effect size d is large, 3.06. This indicates that the magnitude of the difference between the average of the differences and the expected average of the differences is large. These results suggest that the use of phoneme grapheme mapping strategies had a positive effect on students' decoding.

Implications & Discussion

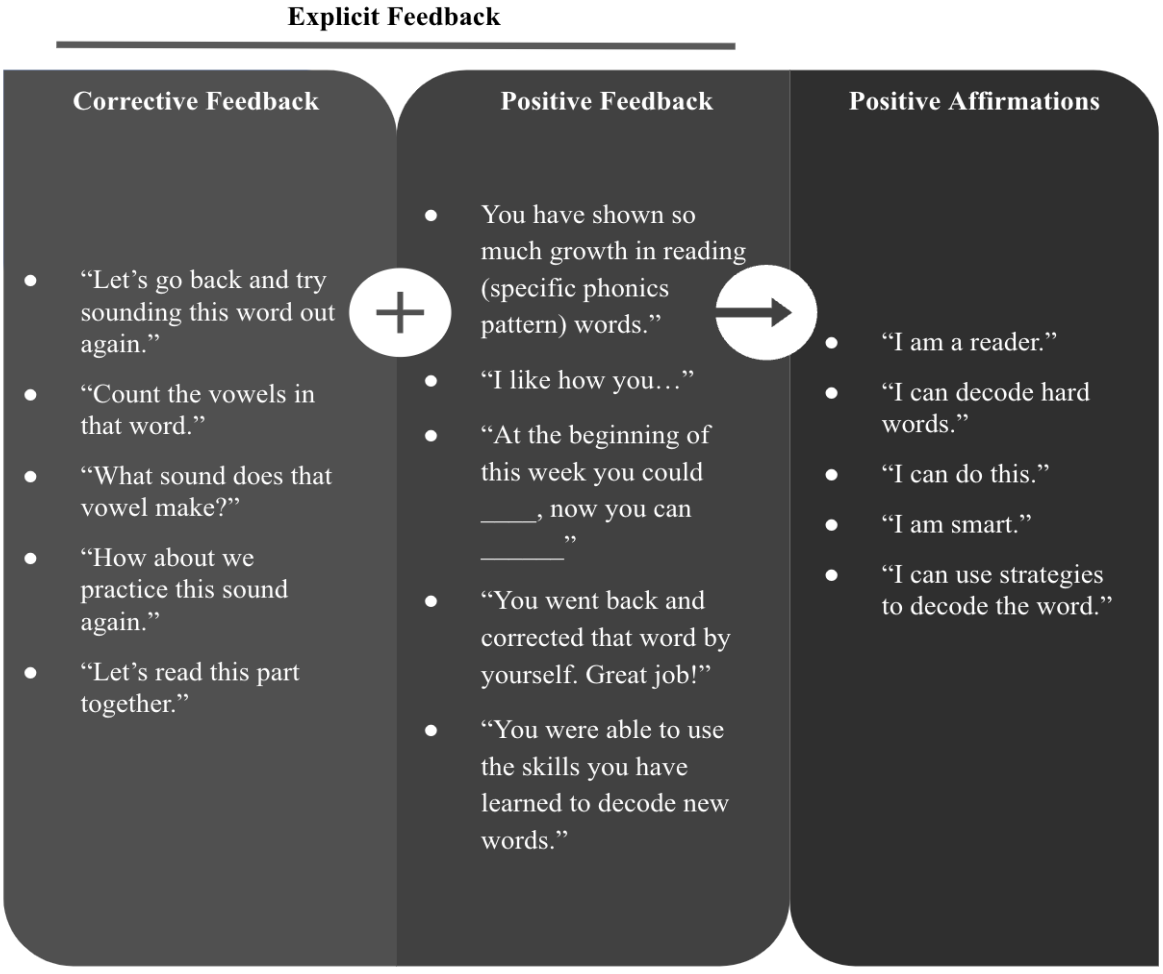
What was validated from the results is that the use of Elkonin Boxes and explicit feedback can have a positive impact on students' decoding abilities. Given the results of the study we suggest using Elkonin Boxes to support students' abilities to build, write, and read words (Miles et al., 2017) in conjunction with explicit feedback (Hudson et al., 2011). Creating consistent opportunities to build, write, and read words provides practical, tactical application. We suggest teachers utilize counters, as described in Build It, because it reinforces students' awareness of phonemes in spoken words (Kilpatrick, 2020). Write It supports memory connections between graphemes and phonemes, while Read It supports the connection to the pronunciation of the words (Ehri, 2022; Kilpatrick, 2020). See Table 4 for step-by-step ways to integrate, build it, write it, and read it into small group work.

Table 4
Elkonin Boxes Format

Build It	Write It	Read It
1. Use counters to find the number of sounds in each word. Once students have found the number of sounds then they are to build the words with magnetic letters or tiles. 2. Place each phoneme in each Elkonin Box. Have students say each sound as they place it in the box.	1. Students start by counting the sounds on their fingers of the word they are writing. 2. Each finger represents a sound. The student goes back through each sound and writes the letter that matches that sound on their paper. 3. Students write the whole word.	1. As students are reading after practicing letter-sound correspondence with Elkonin boxes, they continue to use the skill while decoding. Students decode a word by touching underneath the letters with their fingers. 2. While touching underneath each letter, the student says the sounds aloud. 3. After decoding the whole word, the student blends the sounds together to read the whole word.

Results also showed an increase in student confidence and accuracy in decoding skills. In support of Felton (1993), this structure supported increased decoding confidence and increased positive affirmations supporting that reading is more pleasurable when automaticity is reached. We surmise this is a direct result of the positive outlook students had on themselves and their abilities because of explicit feedback. As we provided positive explicit feedback, we modeled positive affirmations to build reading confidence as opposed to when only providing corrective feedback. If students are decoding incorrectly without explicit feedback, students will continue to decode incorrectly, yet teachers need to consider how to blend this with positive feedback to support growth. Ending small groups on a positive, allowed for students to leave feeling proud of their growth and promoted a positive reading outlook. See Figure 4 for examples of explicit feedback leading to positive affirmations.

Figure 4
Explicit Feedback Leading to Positive Affirmations



Conclusion

Every student is different and not every strategy is going to work for every student. Intentional, individualized, and meaningful learning experiences are essential for student growth, not only in reading, but in their view of themselves. As educators, it is important to research, collaborate, and use data to guide instruction. This study taught us how our actions impact students.

The way we, as teachers, plan and solution-seek requires us to look beyond just the academic data. Student needs are the largest priority in our classrooms, and it is our job to meet those needs.

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Using Multicultural Children's Literature to Promote Disability Awareness in Elementary Classrooms

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Abstract

Elementary classrooms have become increasingly diverse. While progress has been made in terms of reflecting race, culture, and language diversity within the curriculum that is used in many elementary classrooms, teachers have been slow to represent people with disabilities within the books that are used and made available in the classroom. In this paper we argue for teachers to use multicultural children's literature to promote disability awareness in elementary classrooms. We outline and discuss a framework of four different approaches to using multicultural children's literature of main characters with disabilities. We conclude with a discussion of important cautions and considerations teachers should be mindful of as they engage in this form of practice.

Introduction

Recent census data (NCES, 2016) tells us that U.S. classrooms have become increasingly diverse along the lines of culture, language, race, economic status, and ability. In response to these dramatic demographic changes, multicultural education scholars (Banks & Banks, 2020) have argued for curriculum and pedagogical approaches to be used in elementary classrooms that respond to, center, and affirm these social identities. While much progress has been made over the last two decades relative to incorporating more curriculum and teaching strategies that center race, culture, and class, very little progress has been made related to promoting and centering the experiences of people with disabilities. It is not uncommon for many teachers to practice what Sapon-Shevin (2017) terms disability invisibility and to act and teach as if people with disabilities do not exist in society. Nearly 26% of Americans have disabilities. At the same time, nearly 10% of school-age children with individualized education programs are children with disabilities (U. Department of Education, 2020). While children with disabilities make up a considerable percentage of elementary classrooms, they are often missing within the curriculum, and in books that are used in many of these classrooms (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019; Price & Hayden, 2022). Teachers are often reluctant to talk about people with disabilities and their experiences in a meaningful and ongoing manner in the classroom (Bialka et al., 2021; Hansen et al., 2022). Given these dramatic demographic shifts and the lack of critical dialogue on this topic, it is necessary for elementary teachers to incorporate more content in their classrooms that raise children's awareness about people living with disabilities as a means of creating a culturally responsive, inclusive, equitable, and socially just classroom environment. In this paper we argue for elementary teachers to use diverse literature to raise awareness about people living with disabilities. We begin by discussing several reasons why it is important for teachers to engage elementary students and these types of discussions using diverse children's literature. Next, we present a framework of four potential approaches that teachers may use as they begin engaging their students and these critical discussions. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of several important cautions and considerations teachers should reflect upon and be mindful of as they engage in this form of pedagogical practice.

We recognize and acknowledge that people living with disabilities are not monolithic in nature. We are in no way suggesting or advocating that merely reading diverse children's books with characters who have disabilities will fully highlight or showcase the complexity of experiences of people living with disabilities. Instead, this paper argues that diverse children's literature has the potential and possibility of increasing children's knowledge and consciousness of the experiences of people with disabilities. Furthermore, when referring to disabilities in this paper, we draw from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (IDEA; P.L. 108-446) typology of 13 categories of disability. These categories include: Autism, Deaf-Blindness, Deafness, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, Speech Language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visual Impairment, and other health impairments (e.g., asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome). Furthermore, it is important to note here that we recognize and affirm that fact that many people in the deaf community do not consider being deaf a disability (Harvey, 2008). Rather, many in the deaf community view themselves as merely being "different" than others in society (Harvey, 2008 p 53). Nonetheless, because the IDEA identifies deafness as a distinct category of disability, we found it important to include deafness as a category of disability in this paper.

The Power and Possibilities of Multicultural Children's Literature

For the purposes of this paper, we draw from Galda, Sipe, Liang and Cullina's (2013) definition of multicultural literature (MCL). Essentially, they broadly define multicultural literature as literature that includes and highlights the narratives, experiences, voices, frames of reference, and vantage points of historically underrepresented groups in society. More specifically, multicultural literature is written with the intent to foreground and highlight diverse experiences along the lines of race, culture, class, ability, language, region, age, and other forms of diversity. Table 1 provides examples of multicultural children's books with characters with disabilities that can be used in elementary classrooms to promote disability awareness.

Table 1
Examples of Multicultural Children's Literature with Characters with Disabilities

Disability Category	*Title*	Author	Publication Year	Brief Summary
Autism	*A Boy Called Bat*	Elana K. Arnold/ Charles Santoso	2017	This book is about a third grader who tries to persuade his veterinarian mother to let him keep the baby skunk she brings home.
Autism	*A Kind of Spark*	Elle McNicoll	2021	Addie, an autistic girl,

				identifies with the women accused of witchcraft during her town's witch trials centuries ago.
Deaf-Hard of Hearing	*Proud to Be Deaf*	Ava Lili/ Nick Beese	2019	Ava, who is seven years old, socializes with her hearing friends and is pleased to be both deaf and bilingual.
Deaf-Hard of Hearing	*Show Me a Sign*	Ann Clare LeZotte	2020	Mary, who is also deaf, becomes a "live specimen" in the scientist's cruel experiment.
Deaf-Blindnesss	*Helen Keller: The World at Her Fingertips*	Sarah Albee/ Gustavo Mazali	2019	This biography covers Helen Keller's major life events.
Deaf-Blindness	*Me and Mr. Bell*	Phillip Roy	2013	Eddie gains the confidence to start learning to read and write as a result of his interactions with Alexander Graham Bell and Helen Keller.
Emotional/Behavioral Disorders	*Cookie*	Jacqueline Wilson & Nick Sharratt	2009	Beauty and her mother flee Beauty's controlling father to begin a new life.
Emotional/Behavioral	*Jason's Why*	Beth Goobie	2013	Jason's mother

Disorders				places him in a group home to help him deal with his anger.
Health Impairments	*Meena Meets Her Match*	Karla Manternach/ Rayner Alencar	2019	During recess, Sofia interacts with Meena who is having seizures.
Health Impairments	*Michael Vey: The Prisoner of Cell 25*	Richard Paul Evans	2011	Michael's unique experiences as a child with Tourette's Syndrome are shared.
Intellectual/Developmental Disability	*Why Are You Looking at Me? I Just Have Down Syndrome*	Lisa Tompkins/ Ryan Eubanks	2013	A child with Down syndrome named Lynn wonders why she is perceived differently by everyone despite sharing so many traits with them.
Intellectual/ Developmental Disability	*My Special Brother Bo*	Britt E. Collins/ Brittany Bone-Roth	2019	Lucy, seven, explains some of the differences between herself and her younger brother, Bo, who has Down syndrome.
Learning Disabilities	*Scribbles*	Theresa Mackiewicz	2017	Until a special educator assists her, Scribbles prefers to draw rather than complete her schoolwork.
Learning Disabilities	*Niagara*	Henry	2003	Hank Zipster's

	Falls, or Does It?	Winkler and Lin Oliver		fourth-grade experience worsens until a music teacher recognizes his learning difficulties and suggests that he be tested.
Multiple Disabilities	*Extraordinary*	Miriam Spitzer Franklin	2015	Pansy is cheerful that her best companion, Pansy, will return to the individual she was some time recently contracting meningitis and creating different disabilities.
Multiple Disabilities	*Fast Friends*	Heather M. O'Connor/ Claudia Davila	2020	Tyson, who does everything rapidly, becomes great friends with Suzi. Suzi is a new classmate with various disabilities.
Physical Impairments	*All the Way to the Top: How One Girl's Fight for Americans with Disabilities Changed Everything*	Annette Bay Pimentel/ Nabi H. Ali	2020	Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins climbs the steps of the United States Capitol Building without her wheelchair as part of her advocacy work for individuals with disabilities.
Physical Impairments	*Amazing*	Steve Antony	2020	A little child in a

				wheelchair keeps a dragon as a pet.
Speech/Language Impairments	*Paperboy*	Vince Vawter	2013	Vince, a 14-year-old stutterer, takes over a friend's paper route.
Speech/Language Impairments	*Hooway for Wodney Wat*	Helen Lester/Lynn Munsinger	1999	Because he has trouble pronouncing the letter R, Rodney Rat is harassed. One day he plays a game of "Simon Says" to turn the tables on his tormentor.
Traumatic Brain Injury	*Heads Up! The Story of Finn and Reef*	Harley Rose Taich/ Kelly Sinkeldam & Karen Mehren	2015	Finn is forced to rest and recover after sustaining a concussion during a surfing mishap.
Traumatic Brain Injury	*Bringing Nettie Back*	Nancy Hope Wilson	1992	Nettie, Clara's eleven-year-old friend, suffers a stroke that renders her less cheerful and quick witted. Nonetheless, she is still a great companion.
Visual Impairments	*Brian's Bird*	Patricia A. Davis/ Layne Johnson	2000	Brian, an eight-year-old child who is blind, takes good care of his bird and learns to respect and admire his older brother.

Visual Impairments	*Colors of the Wind: The Story of Blind Artist and Champion Runner George Mendoza*	J. L. Powers/ George Mendoza	2014	In this true story, George starts to lose his vision but continues to paint great images.

There are multiple reasons why teachers should use MCL children's literature to promote disability awareness. The first of these reasons deals with children who have been identified as having a disability. Much like all children, children with disabilities need to see themselves portrayed as main characters in the books they read (Kingsbury, 2022). Through ongoing and sustained exposure to characters with disabilities, children with disabilities are likely to experience higher levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, and emotional security. As Rudine Bishop (1990) profoundly articulates and others have echoed, MCL can serve as "mirrors" and be used to affirm students from diverse backgrounds. Using multicultural children's literature with positive protagonists and messages can help create an environment where children with disabilities feel welcomed, included, and valued in the classroom. For example, a 4th grade teacher who reads and discusses *Rules* (Lord, 2008) is likely to make a child with autism in their classroom feel affirmed, supported, and seen. For this reason, as compared to less diverse forms of children's literature, MCL can create spaces in the classroom where children in the classroom feel safe, supported, and included.

In addition to helping children with disabilities feel valued and affirmed in the classroom, MCL also has the potential to promote positive interactions and attitudes between children with disabilities and children without disabilities in classrooms. Research (Adomat, 2014; Parsons, 2013; Artman-Meeker et al., 2016; Prater & Dyches, 2008; Prater et al., 2006; Shapiro, 1999) suggests that increased exposure to characters with disabilities can lead to more positive interactions and attitudes between students with disabilities and students without disabilities. For example, Adomat (2014) found that elementary students can become motivated to take social actions toward making the world a more humane and just place for people with disabilities as a result of participating in ongoing language arts lessons that centers on the experiences of people with disabilities. In short, her study involved 52 second and third graders who participated in a series of whole class read alouds, group literature discussions, inquiry centers, writing, art, and drama activities centering on the topic of disability. A total of 18 books were used for the read-aloud and small group literature discussions of protagonists with disabilities. These books were based on recommendations from the American Library Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. These books included a range of disabilities such as developmental, physical, learning, and autism. Students talk before, during, and after the read-aloud and small group literature discussions were audio and video recorded and transcribed and analyzed. Two important findings emerge from this study. First, the teachers in the study noticed dramatic changes in how the children with disabilities and the children without disabilities interacted in the classroom. Several students in the classroom became more understanding of why a particular autistic student typically received special assistance from the teacher. Prior to participating in the language arts activities related to disability, many of the children without disabilities view the autistic child as receiving special privileges from the teacher. Next, Adomat also found that as a

result of participating in the language arts activities related to disability, several students without disabilities in the classroom developed a stance towards advocacy. After reading and discussing several texts related to disability advocacy, several students in the classroom decided to adopt "people first language" as a means of honoring people with disabilities and taking an initial step towards disability justice. Ultimately, what the data from this study suggests is that multicultural literature that centers the experiences of people with disabilities can have a positive impact on the consciousness and interactions of both children with disabilities and children without disabilities.

Critical disability scholars (Shah et. al, 2015) point out that ableist ideologies and messages are implicit and explicit all throughout much of the formal curriculum that is taught in schools. People with disabilities are often presented within the school curriculum as individuals who need to be "fixed" and or individuals who are strange, intimidating, burdensome, or childlike (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017; Cologon, 2013; Deckman et al., 2020). To resist and reverse these ableist ideologies and messages, it is necessary for children to encounter anti-ableist narratives on a consistent basis (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). Multicultural children's literature provides opportunities for students to read about the positive contributions, histories, voices, and perspectives of people with disabilities. Through prolonged exposure to these positive encounter narratives, students are less likely to develop and maintain negative and deficit-oriented perspectives towards people with disabilities.

Young children often hold negative implicit biases toward people with disabilities. These negative biases often formulate as a result of the negative and stereotypical messages and information they receive from their direct interactions with peers, family members and groups, and various media such as television, books, and movies (Triandis et al., 1984). Insofar as media has the potential to have a negative influence on children's attitudes toward people with disabilities, Ostrosk and Favazza (2015) argue that storybooks that portray characters with disabilities in a positive manner can help children develop positive attitudes about people with disabilities in three important ways. First, reading and discussing multicultural books in the classroom of characters with disabilities can provide unique opportunities in the classroom for elementary teachers to inform and shape students' consciousness of human differences in society, and the experiences of people with disabilities. Through reading, discussing, and learning about the experiences of people with disabilities, children begin to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be a human with a disability. Next, reading and discussing multicultural books of characters with disabilities can provide critical opportunities for teachers to clarify any misconceptions or misinformation students may have about people with disabilities. Due to a lack of exposure and interaction with people with disabilities, children often develop and communicate misunderstandings and outright incorrect information about people with disabilities (Diamond & Hestenes, 1994). Reading and discussing MCL with characters on a consistent basis can help teachers identify and correct many of these misunderstandings. Lastly, reading and discussing books of characters with disabilities provide indirect and vicarious opportunities for children to interact with people with disabilities (Okagaki et al., 1998). Furthermore, these indirect and vicarious interactions with people with disabilities can foster more positive attitudes in children toward people with disabilities.

Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Children About People with Disabilities

In the section that follows, we outline a framework of four specific ways that teachers might use MCL to promote disability awareness in their respective elementary classrooms. These

approaches can be used individually and/or in tandem with each other to accomplish the overarching goal of promoting disability awareness. These approaches include Critical Literacy, Critical Readers Response, Critical Inquiry, and Cultural Studies (see Table 2).

Table 2
Summary of Different Approaches

Name of the Approach	Goals	Examples of the Types of Activities an Elementary Teachers Might Use
Critical Literacy	To identify issues of power, marginalization, and power as it relates to people with disabilities. To provide multiple perspectives related to disabilities. Promote social action related to disability justice.	Students might read and discuss a series of books and other texts describing the experiences of people with visual impairments. Teachers and students might discuss how people with visual impairments are impacted by both individual and institutionalized forms of discrimination. Students create presentations, posters, videos, blogs, and or other activities to raise awareness of these issues and take social action toward combating these issues of individualized and institutionalized discrimination toward people with visual impairments.
Critical Reader's Response	Students use their personal, cultural, social, and historical experiences as a lens when responding to MCL with characters with disabilities. Students reads texts with the intent to gain new information (efferent), appreciate and	Students participate in student-led literature circle groups to read fiction and non-fiction text sets related to specific disability categories. Students collaborate to develop and present projects to summarize and synthesize

	enjoy the textual content (aesthetic), and or interrogate issues of power, marginalization and oppression (critical)	their learning during these literacy circle groups.
Critical Inquiry	To allow children's organic conversations, curiosities, and interests to serve as research projects related to people with disabilities.	Students work individually or collaboratively to research an organic and authentic question related to people with disabilities. For example, 2nd grade students might be interested in learning more about how children who are blind read and learn using braille and other impairment accommodations. Students then work individually or collaboratively to showcase their learning.
Cultural Studies	To study a particular form or category of disability in an extensive and in-depth manner.	Students decided to read, discuss, and learn about people with a specific form of disability in great depth and for a significant period of time. Students develop and present projects, artifacts, and or presentations to showcase their learning.

Critical Literacy

A mutually agreed upon definition of Critical Literacy does not exist within the scholarship. Nonetheless, scholars (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Lewis & Flint, 2002; Lewison et al., 2008; Vasquez, 2017; Winograd, 2015) identify the four dimensions of critical literacy as: disrupting the commonplace, considering multiple viewpoints, focusing on the sociopolitical, and taking action to promote social justice. In keeping with this approach, elementary teachers should encourage students to first consider the notion that no text is ideologically/ politically neutral and that every text is written from a particular perspective and for a particular purpose (Tondreau & Rabinowitz, 2021). As such, elementary students should read closely in ways that

enable them to become aware of hidden messages about able-bodied people and people living with disabilities in the text and within the broader society. This process often requires elementary students to engage, critique, and utilize what Freire (2018) calls problem posing strategies and language as they read the text. Students ask questions related to power, marginalization, and oppression. For example, students may ask questions such as: Who benefits in this story? Pertaining to people with disabilities, what perspectives are missing in this story? How does this story contribute to ableism? In what ways does the story advocate for issues related to disability justice? By asking these types of questions, students began developing a deeper awareness of the issues of power and oppression as they relate to people living with disabilities.

Pertaining to the second dimension of Critical Literacy, considering multiple viewpoints, teachers should encourage elementary students to consider the messages being presented in diverse texts about people living with disabilities from multiple vantage points. This will help students develop a deeper, multi-dimensional, and more nuanced understanding of the experiences of people living with disabilities. This process of considering multiple viewpoints can be facilitated by having students read multiple texts related to a specific character, author, or theme pertaining to people living with disabilities. For example, if a teacher is interested in helping their students consider multiple viewpoints related to people living with hearing impairments, this teacher might have their students simultaneously read and discuss books such as *Gracie's Ears* (Blackington, 2021); *Listen* (Synder & Graegin, 2021) and *Super Hearing* (Whitehead & Reymann, 2022) as a means of creating a space in the classroom where multiple viewpoints on this topic are presented.

The third dimension of Critical Literacy involves encouraging elementary students to make connections between the messages presented and the text they are reading related to people living with disabilities and the systems and structures within the broader society that contribute to an advanced system of marginalization and oppression. For example, after reading *Thank You, Mr. Falker* (Polacco, 2012) and considering how the main character was bullied during the early portion of her schooling years for being dyslexic, the teacher might then help their students make connections between what happened in the book and some of the larger socio-political policies and processes that impact other children who have been diagnosed as being dyslexic today. In this sense, children begin to make linkages between what they are reading in the text and how many of these processes are connected to, and a product of the structures that shape society.

The fourth dimension of Critical Literacy, sociopolitical action, involves teachers creating and facilitating opportunities for students to take social action toward disability justice. After having spent a considerable amount of time reflecting on and identifying some of the oppressive practices and policies that affect people with disabilities, elementary teachers should then work with their students to brainstorm and implement practical steps toward resisting and ultimately reversing these oppressive practices. For example, after reading *The Chance to Fly* (Stroker & Davidowitz, 2021) teachers may work with their students to brainstorm ways to make their local school environment more inclusive and supportive of people using wheelchairs. Even more so, the teacher might work with their students to then advocate towards changing the wheelchair policy and creating accommodations for students within their entire school district. In this sense, critical literacy has the potential to help students become catalysts for social change in their local context and within the broader world around them.

Critical Reader's Response

Another pedagogical approach to using multicultural children's literature to promote disability awareness is known as a Critical Reader's Response approach (Blake,1998; Brooks & Browne, 2012; Enriquez, 2014; Rosenblatt, 1978). In keeping with this approach, elementary teachers utilize literature circles as opportunities and dialogical spaces where elementary students read, reflect, discuss, and learn about people with disabilities and issues associated with disability justice. A teacher who is implementing this approach in their fifth-grade classroom might begin by providing their students with multiple copies of multicultural children's books of people with disabilities as the protagonist and/or books that deal with issues of equity and justice for people with disabilities. The students might then be encouraged to read and discuss these books in small student-led groups. Students might be assigned to roles (i.e., Summarizer, Discussion Director, Connector, Illustrator, Vocabulary Wizard, Researcher) (Daniels, 2002) during these discussions to help facilitate rich, meaningful, and sustained dialogue related to people with disabilities and disability justice. As a culminating activity, the students in each literature circle group might then be asked to create a project that represents the thinking and learning that occur as a result of reading and discussing a particular book related to people with disabilities and disabilities justice. When feasible, the teacher might provide an opportunity for students to showcase this learning to the other students in the classroom, other students within the broader school context, and possibly even people within the local community.

Critical Inquiry

The Critical Inquiry-Based approach (Callison, 2015; Edelsky et al., 2008; Swan et. al, 2008; Wargo, 2021) to using MCL to promote disability awareness allows children's natural questions and curiosities (related to people with disabilities and disability justice) to serve as the focus and driving force behind the books that are read and the topics that are explored in the classroom. Consistent with this approach, elementary teachers shepherd students through a series of four different steps involved in the inquiry learning process (Wargo, 2021). First, teachers begin by asking students to formulate a series of questions related to people with disabilities and disability justice that they are interested in researching, discussing, and learning more about. For instance, after reading *Painting in the Dark: The Longing to Be Seen, to Be Heard, and to Be Known* (Thorson, 2006) students might formulate a list of questions to research such as: What is the nature of life for a person who is visually impaired? What challenges does a person who is visually impaired must overcome? What policies and practices might business, schools, and other organizations do to make life more equitable for people who are visually impaired?

During the second step in the critical inquiry process, the teacher provides opportunities for their students to work individually and/or in small groups and read books and other text to find information related to the broader questions (Wargo, 2021). The teacher will provide students with access to read and discuss a wide variety of books and digital texts with protagonists who are visually impaired. This step will lead students toward finding specific answers to the initial research questions that were opposed. In other instances, this secondary step may lead students toward developing additional questions to research later. Students are asked to document these new questions and save them for future learning opportunities. The teacher works intentionally and strategically to provide access to a wide variety of text related to the questions that their students are interested in researching. Furthermore, students are asked to document their learning during this step.

During the third step, students are asked to communicate and present what they learned during the research and discussion processes (Wargo, 2021). The teacher sets the parameters for these presentations. For instance, students may be encouraged to present what they learned about people living with autism in the form of a presentation, blog, essay, dramatic performance, video montage, and/or song. The final step in this process involves reflection. During this step, students are asked to reflect on what they learned about the topic and particular questions that emerged as a result of participating in this process.

Cultural Studies

The fourth approach to using MCL to promote disability awareness is known as the Cultural Studies approach (Banks & Banks, 2020; Connor et al., 2015; Harkins et al., 2022). In short, this approach involves in-depth exploration and study about the voices, experiences, histories, and narratives of a particular diverse group of people in society. More specifically as it relates to people with disabilities, for example, this might involve in-depth reading extensively about people with autism, people with visual impairments, or people with learning disabilities. The overall goal within this approach is for students to develop a deep, in-depth, and nuanced knowledge of a particular group of people with disabilities (Banks, 2020). The primary goal here is to raise students' consciousness about the marginalization that a particular group of people with disabilities has experienced in society. The secondary goal is to familiarize students with the accomplishments and contributions of people with disabilities in history and contemporary societies (Banks, 2020). While the other previously mentioned approaches to using children's literature to promote disability awareness provides children with a wider and more shallow view of the experiences of people with disabilities, the cultural studies approach focuses on a narrow, yet deep understanding of a singular group of people with disabilities.

Cautions and Considerations

People with disabilities are not monolithic in nature. As a result, elementary teachers should provide diverse representations of people living with disabilities. In many classrooms where teachers use books that center characters with disabilities, these stories tend to highlight negative trauma narratives, stories of people who have disabilities, and are overcoming acts of bullying (Hughes, 2012; Kingsbury, 2022). For example, through a content analysis of 25 fictional picture books with deaf protagonists, Golos et al. (2012) found that approximately 93% of the coded content in the illustrations contained pathological perspectives and deficit-oriented information about deaf people. In many of these books, the deaf characters were portrayed as having a hearing aid, being isolated, being in a dangerous situation, and visiting a doctor's office. Most of these books portrayed a deaf character interacting with a hearing character. Only 4% of these books portrayed deaf characters interacting with other deaf characters. In this sense, the researchers point out that most of these books focus on the experiences of deaf characters navigating a hearing world instead of the experiences of deaf characters navigating a deaf world. These messages and images to some degree, implicitly suggest that deaf people need to be fixed. These images and messages also suggest that deaf children are unhappy and have difficulties developing and sustaining meaningful friendships with peers and others. As much as it is important to read and learn about the challenges that people with disabilities often encounter, it is equally important to read and learn about the joy, humor, and other positive emotions and experiences that people with disabilities experience (Hayden & Prince, 2020).

In addition to selecting children's books of students with disabilities who are engaged in a wide variety of human experiences, it is equally important to select books that represent people across different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds who have disabilities as well. For example, in a recent critical content analysis of 30 picture books involving characters with dyslexia, Sotirovska and Vaughn (2022) found that 26 out of the 37 main characters in these picture books were White. Seven of the main characters in these books were Black and three of the main characters in these books were Latinx. What these findings suggest is that there is an over-representation of White protagonists in many books that contain characters with disabilities. Hence, teachers should work towards including books of characters with disabilities who are also members of racially diverse groups in society as a means of providing a wide variety of representation within the classroom.

Another very important caution that teachers should consider when selecting books with protagonists who have disabilities is to make a concerted effort to avoid deficit tropes and narratives at all costs (Kleekamp et al., 2019). Unfortunately, some of the books that have protagonists who have disabilities simultaneously contain biased, stereotypical, and/or negative information and depictions of people with disabilities. Consequently, there is a great potential for the implicit biases that elementary students already possess being reinforced and exacerbated. Hence, elementary teachers must move beyond simply looking for characters with disabilities when selecting diverse texts and critically interrogating the plot and other literary elements surrounding the characters in these texts.

Teachers should also include books that cover a wide range of different types of disabilities, both visible and invisible. In many classrooms and community libraries where books with characters with disabilities are accessible, the books tend to focus almost exclusively on characters with "visible disabilities". For instance, in an analysis of 1,143 board books in their local award-winning Moose Jaw Public Library (MJPL) in Saskatchewan, Canada, Kaplan et al., (2022) found that only 87 of this included disability representation. Of these 87 titles, six included a character with a mobility device, one of these books included a character with an auditor device, seven of these books had a character with Down's Syndrome, 48 of these books had characters with vision aids, and 25 of these books had characters with a double form of disability. Notably, a book of a character with mental illness was not present in this entire collection. It is equally important for teachers to include books that showcase the experiences of characters with invisible disabilities and/or mental health challenges as a means of helping students develop a deeper awareness and understanding of people across the disability spectrum.

Language is often used to construct, maintain, and advance acts and systems of oppression in classrooms and schools (Coakley-Fields, 2019; Lewis et al., 2007). Elementary teachers should make an effort to be self-reflective about the language they use while reading and discussing books of characters with disabilities. Ableist language and discourse is deeply embedded in all aspects of society. As a result, it is not uncommon for teachers to use ableist language dysconsciously in their everyday communications. To combat this issue and use language that is anti-ableist, inclusive, and affirming while incorporating MCL of characters with disabilities, teachers must make an intentional effort to reflect critically on what they say in the classroom to ensure that their language is not indirectly or directly advancing deficit-oriented, offensive, stereotypical, and ableist messages about people with disabilities. In this sense, to teach inclusively and socially just ways involves teachers who make an ongoing effort to talk in inclusive and socially just ways as well.

As mentioned previously in this article, teachers are often reluctant about using books in their classroom of characters with disabilities. Some of this angst stems from not being familiar with high quality books that center the experiences of people with disabilities in a positive light (Sigmund et al, 2016). In a recent study, Hansen et al., (2022) asked 32 preservice teachers to conduct a critical analysis of disability representation in a series of award-winning children's books. These preservice teachers' thoughts about disabilities in general and disability representation in these books were recorded and documented before and after they completed the critical analysis. The researchers found that many of the preservice teachers in this study held what is commonly referred to as a "medical" (Huang & Brittain, 2006) view of people with disability. That is, the preservice teachers held a deficit-oriented view of disability that assumes that people with disabilities need to be corrected or "fixed. Moreover, the medical view of disability assumes that being disabled is a form of social difference that is highly undesirable and/or problematic. For this reason, it is first necessary for teachers to engage in critical self-reflection to identify and dismantle any implicit biases, negative mindsets, and/or deficit perspectives they may consciously or unconsciously be holding toward people with disabilities.

It is important to note that a vast number of the books available on the market and in classrooms that involve people with disabilities are not written by people with disabilities or people who have close friends or relatives with disabilities. For this reason, it is equally important for teachers to carefully research the author's experiences when making decisions regarding which books to include in the classroom. This is not to suggest that a book that is written by a person who is not living with a disability will automatically be erroneous or biased. Instead, this is to mere raise awareness of the fact that, if a book is written by a person without a disability, it may be somewhat limited and less nuanced than inclusive picture books written by an author who is living with a disability or is living in close proximity to someone who is living with a disability.

Lastly, given the cautions and considerations presented above, it may be difficult for teachers to find high quality children's literature involving characters with disabilities in their school and local libraries. One organization that teachers might consult to learn more about high quality children's literature with characters with disabilities is American Library Association (www.ala.org.). More specifically, the ALA bestows the *Schneider Family Book Award* each year for authors and illustrators for excellent portrayal of disability experiences in children's and young adult literature. A bibliography of books that have earned this highly regarded distinction since 2004 is presented on the ALA's website.

In short, the elementary student population is projected to continue to become increasingly diverse along the lines of ability as we journey through the remainder of the 21st century. This necessitates for elementary teachers to create learning opportunities and environments that are reflective, inclusive, and supportive of students from diverse backgrounds. Using multicultural children's literature that contain protagonists with disabilities can create positive learning experiences for children with disabilities. At the same time, MCL has the potential to engender a sense of empathy and advocacy among children without disabilities. Furthermore, elementary teachers should take both possibilities into pensive consideration as they work toward creating more inclusive, equitable, and democratic learning environments for all students.

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Indiana Literacy Journal

The *Indiana Literacy Journal* is the peer-reviewed journal of the Indiana State Literacy Association, which is composed of and serves classroom teachers, literacy specialists, educational leaders, teacher educators, and university faculty. The journal publishes on diverse topics related to literacy, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, visually representing, technology, and literature for children and young adults. Submissions are invited in any of the categories below, though we are particularly interested in manuscripts that connect literacy and social justice, address new literacies (e.g., technology, graphic novels, podcasts, etc.), current literacy legislation, and other literacy topics relevant to the state of Indiana.

Our Fall 2023 issue is an open-themed call, so we welcome submissions on a variety of topics and methods.

Deadline for submission: September 1st, 2023

Bridging Research and Practice Articles
Articles submitted in this category present original descriptions of research-based instruction that improves the literacy learning of students ranging from birth to college age. Articles describing research-based practices in literacy teacher education will also be considered. Manuscripts in this category must include practical steps to guide readers in applying the research to their practice. Manuscript submissions should include APA formatted references to the relevant research literature and must not exceed 5,000 words (including tables, figures and appendices; excluding reference list) in 12-point font and left-aligned. Any charts or graphics must be of high-quality and in black and white. These manuscripts undergo blind review by members of the journal's editorial review board.

Voices from the Region
Articles submitted in this category will showcase evidence-based literacy practices being implemented throughout the state and region in such varied spaces as classrooms, districts, libraries, after school programs, online schools, homes, daycares, preschools, etc.. We are specifically interested in submissions from practitioners who can share tips and ideas about what is working in their context, why they are engaging in these ideas, and how others could do this, too. Our goal is to hear from a range of practitioners in and around the state who are interested in literacy. Manuscripts in this category should begin with an introduction to the authors and the context of their work. Please also include APA formatted references to the relevant research literature, if appropriate to the piece. Manuscript submissions should be between 750 and 1500 words (including tables, figures and appendices; excluding reference list), double-spaced, and in 12-point font and left-aligned. Any charts or graphics must be of high-quality and in black and white. These manuscripts undergo blind review by members of the journal's editorial review board.

Visual Artifacts and Graphics
Submissions in this category share visual artifacts of literacy teaching practices through photos of teachers and students engaging in literacy, literacy projects, literacy centers, and artifacts of student learning. Each image should be clear, in focus, of a high resolution/quality, and sent as a

full-size jpeg or tiff file attachment, accompanied by a brief, 50-100 word description. Documents must be scanned, not photographed; the latter will not be of high enough quality for publication. By submitting an item in this category, the individual indicates that he/she has obtained consent from the district, school, teacher, parent, and child to use the image for publication. The journal's editorial team reviews submissions in this category

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