

**Create Brilliant Constellations through Literacy:
Media and Learner Centered Teaching**

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Introduction

Increasingly, children are being exposed to hundreds of thousands of media literacy messages—including hate speech—each year, which raises concerns of how they can be empowered to create healthy, moral habits for well-ordered communities. Research indicates that hands-on approaches, a key trait in LCT environments, with shared dialogue and reflective writing as ways that can enhance students’ moral development (Dulack et al., 2011; Lopez & Lopez, 1998; Narvaez, 2001). Today, and historically, reading remains an engaging Learner-Centered way to learn important moral lessons. In every preservice teacher development program, reading pedagogy and instructional techniques are a high priority. We know and understand legislative reading mandates within Oklahoma, and we are aware of the national emphasis placed on students reading ability in other states. To mitigate the trepidation around teaching reading, this research study allowed preservice teachers to experience hands LCT activities in a small, less intimidating school setting.

Connection to Literature

The purpose of Readers Theater is not to increase students’ reading speed, but rather to use repeated readings as a way for students to find deeper meaning of text while making significant gains in expressive reading (Rasinski, 2012). The rereading of the scripts helps increase student’s reading rate, automaticity, and prosody while motivating those students who are reluctant to reread texts (Moran, 2006). This type of repeated reading, “provides students with diverse learning needs an opportunity for authentic participation in rereading texts- in contrast to the traditional skill and drill approach of rereading text by teacher direction” (Garrett & Connor, 2010, p. 7).

Presentation Elements

The presentation elements will include the following:

- (1) The presentation will analyze, evaluate, and review specific Learner-Centered Teaching approaches, using media literacy and reader’s theater for students to discover moral lessons.
- (2) This presentation will also explain how to use reader’s theater and children’s stories as a way to guide moral development, especially as explicit examples and situations provide positive moral growth for youth (Davis, 2003) &
- (3) The presentation will show research results from Teacher Education Service- Learning Readers Theater project at a local Charter school.

Implementation of LCT Service- Learning Project

The elementary students (service-learning subjects) were asked to voluntarily participate in a class assignment. The elementary students were then selected to engage in Readers Theater during the after-school program. The preservice teachers and the students were involved in a dramatic presentation of the age-appropriate children's book, "Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons" by Eric Litwin. This book was selected by the Teacher Education (TE) preservice teachers and approved by the course instructor. The TE preservice teachers served as readers to an audience of afterschool students in lower elementary grades, who read from a "script". The script roles and sections were divided among the participants and the TE preservice teachers, no memorization or special lighting was required. Upon the completion of the service-learning project, preservice teachers provided a written reflection which was then analyzed and coded for emerging themes and trends (Creswell, 2002). The summary notes and teacher candidate emerging outcomes will allow the researchers to identify implications for further research and qualitative investigation.

Results

As a result of the LCT service-learning project, the preservice teachers reflected upon their experience and shared the most impactful occurrences. Below are some of the following are descriptive qualitative findings from the pre-service teachers' insightful reflections. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers:

- thoughtfully selected a book that any student would enjoy and be engaged in.
- enjoyed dramatizing the story "utilizing song and dance" with the students and as a result "their eyes lit up" with excitement as they acted out the story.
- enjoyed the joyful expression of the students' smiles, as they imitated the preservice teachers and provided their own version of reading and dance.
- possessed a strong belief that as developing teachers, they learned as much as the students through the use of Readers Theater.
- motivated students to be engaged in the production, by leading them through the book as they read along, and increased fluency through artistic interpretation of the story.
- received positive feedback from the Readers Theater,
- encouraged reading and motivated the students to have a love and appreciation for reading even after the service-learning project ended.

Conclusion/ Future Plans

This LCT service-learning project integrated a new way of teaching in a small urban classroom setting for developing preservice teachers. The reflection and light bulb moments which were noted, underscored the level of engagement the preservice teachers had with lower elementary students in an urban school. The school site administrator, faculty and staff were all immensely excited about the refreshing way to teach reading using Readers Theater. The school-university partnership in this service-learning project created a positive experience for all who were involved. The research team will extend the study in the future and build upon current results to formulate and improve additional measures and meaningful outcomes.

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