TEACHER RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Presentations by Candidates for the M.Ed. Degree And M.S. in Elementary Education Degree

College of Education
University of Mary Washington
May 1st, 2013
North Building, Stafford Campus
From the Dean of the College of Education...

Welcome to the 3rd annual College of Education Symposium of Graduating Students' Research. A signature feature of the University of Mary Washington educator preparation programs is the critical action research project that our initial licensure candidates and advanced endorsement students complete. Through the research projects being presented this afternoon, our graduates demonstrate how being an effective education professional is informed by practitioner executed action research. Through this program requirement our graduates are encouraged to bring a critical eye to their practice and to contribute to the knowledge-base of our profession right from the beginning of and throughout their careers. Welcome to our graduates' presentations of their research, and congratulations to all of them.

Mary Gendernalik-Cooper, Ph.D.
Dean & Professor
College of Education
University of Mary Washington
Advising Faculty

- Dr. Laurie Abeel, Department of Foundation, Leadership, and Special Populations – *Gifted*
- Dr. John Broome, Department of Curriculum and Instruction – *Social Studies*
- Dr. Deborah Carter, Department of Curriculum and Instruction – *Social Studies*
- Dr. Courtney Clayton, Department of Curriculum and Instruction – *English Language Learners*
- Dr. Janine Davis, Department of Foundation, Leadership, and Special Populations – *English*
- Dr. Beverly Epps, Department of Foundation, Leadership, and Special Populations – *Leadership, Science*
- Dr. Roberta Gentry, Department of Foundation, Leadership, and Special Populations – *Special Education*
- Dr. Norah Hooper, Department of Foundation, Leadership, and Special Populations – *Special Education*
- Dr. Venitta McCall, Department of Foundation, Leadership, and Special Populations – *Foreign Language, Mathematics, Social Studies*
- Dr. George Meadows, Department of Curriculum and Instruction – *Instructional Technology*
- Dr. Kavatus Newell, Department of Curriculum and Instruction – *Literacy*
- Dr. Lillian Pailen, Department of Curriculum and Instruction - *Arts*
- Dr. Tamie Pratt-Fartro, Department of Curriculum and Instruction - *Literacy*
- Dr. Patricia Reynolds, Department of Foundation, Leadership, and Special Populations – *ESL, Foreign Languages*
- Dr. Joanna Robertson, Department of Curriculum and Instruction - *Literacy*
- Dr. Marie Sheckels, Department of Curriculum and Instruction – *Mathematics*
The Effects of Imagery on the Acquisition and Retention of Foreign Language Vocabulary. Megan E. Lamb. Foreign language is often a major part of secondary education curricula that students struggle with. The sheer volume of necessary vocabulary can be overwhelming and several instructional methods have been developed to respond to this struggle. This mixed-methods action research study aimed to examine the effects of one of these methods, the use of imagery in vocabulary instruction. The participants were taken from a mid-level French class in a suburban high school. In lieu of direct translation word lists, the research employed several methods, such as the Keyword Method, to teach vocabulary using imagery. Data was collected through pre- and post-tests on the selected vocabulary, as well as surveys regarding the students’ feelings towards this methodology. The results of this research indicate that images play a significant role in the acquisition and retention of foreign language vocabulary.

Graphic Novels, Vocabulary Acquisition and Motivation in a Foreign Language. Julia E. Lanzarone. Graphic novels are an increasingly popular reading choice for many people today, yet their potential for critical reading in the classroom is yet untapped. Graphic novels can express complex subjects and themes, rendering them easier for students to understand. Their images can aid students in vocabulary acquisition, and yet few studies exist on the use of graphic novels in the foreign language classroom. The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to discover what effect graphic novels have on vocabulary acquisition and motivation in the foreign language high school classroom. The quantitative aspect of the study consists of Likert scale questionnaires about student comfort levels and motivation reading in French and English, as well as vocabulary and comprehension quizzes on both a non-graphic text and graphic novel. Student responses to the Likert scale questionnaires and the vocabulary and comprehension quizzes will be entered into an Excel spreadsheet; t-tests will be used to compare the mean scores of the two Likert scale questionnaires and the mean scores of the two vocabulary and comprehension quizzes. The qualitative aspect of the study consists of students keeping a reader response journal during reading and the researcher taking observational notes; both of these items will be coded at the conclusion of the study. The hypothesis is that reading graphic novels will increase both student motivation and vocabulary acquisition in French.

The Impact of Computer-Based Visuals & Realia on Secondary Students’ Spanish Vocabulary Acquisition. Emily Noordhuizen. Conflicting views exist in the field of foreign language education regarding the effectiveness of various techniques for teaching Spanish vocabulary acquisition. The research presented examines the effectiveness of teaching Spanish vocabulary acquisition through computer-based visuals, as compared to realia. Related literature has investigated various dimensions of second language vocabulary acquisition in the classroom including processes by which students acquire the meaning of the new vocabulary words and the use of visuals in the L2 classroom. Educational researchers demonstrate that no individual technique of vocabulary acquisition instruction has been universally accepted as the
most effective method of instruction. In this mixed-methods study, Spanish III students’ were taught two sets of vocabulary word lists. The first list was taught to the students using computer-based visuals and the second using realia. Growth was measured from comparing the pre-tests to the post-tests. Conclusions are offered on the future approaches to vocabulary acquisition in the foreign language classroom.

Room 110

The Language Experience Approach and Wordless Picture Books: Studying Kindergarten English Language Learners’ Oral Language Development. Hannah Carloni. In 2008, fifty-six percent of general education teachers had at least one English language learner in their classroom (Gil & Woodruff, 2011). Often, these students are not given enough opportunities to develop their oral language skills (Rothenberg & Fisher, 2007; August 2002). The Language Experience Approach (LEA) takes a shared experience and develops it into a student-created text. The all-illustration aspect of wordless picture books makes them an approachable means for creating this shared experience. In my action research, I asked the question: How does using the Language Experience Approach through wordless picture books affect the oral language skills of English language learners in a kindergarten classroom? In my study, I worked with two English language learners to improve their oral language development. The participants narrated the plotlines of the wordless picture books, and I transcribed them. When their words were put into text, we read the story together. The goal of my study was to improve the ELLs’ oral language through the implementation of LEA lessons using wordless picture books. After my seven-week study, I found that my two participant’s oral language levels improved, and they both reported greatly enjoying the LEA lessons.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and its Influence on Student Engagement and Cultural Awareness. Rachel Luehrs. Research has demonstrated that English Language Learners often have difficulties understanding the public school curriculum because it builds off of experiences that are primarily held by White middle class American culture (Adler, 2012; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gail & MacArthur, 2003, Schmidt, 1998.) These difficulties can apply not only to English Language Learners, known as ELLs, but to native born English speaking students as well. The use of culturally relevant pedagogy offers the possibility of eliminating cases of confusion that occur due to cultural differences (Ladson-Billings, 1994.) A culturally relevant pedagogy is defined as a methodology which helps “students honor their own cultural beliefs and practices” while acquiring curriculum knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p.36.) In this study I asked the question: How does the use of culturally relevant pedagogy affect student levels of cultural awareness and understanding of diversity I had third graders complete interviews, writing assignments, and discussions with the goal of developing a greater appreciation for culture and diversity. The results of my research showed that students developed a better understanding of abstract concepts such as culture and diversity and how they were represented in their lives and classroom. In addition, they gained a sense of ownership over their learning experiences by being able to actively connect their unique cultural identities to class discussions.
The Influence of Cooperative Learning Groups on English Language Learner Self-Efficacy. Michaela Sands. The number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in public schools has increased 10% since 2000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Research suggests that mainstream teachers should use instruction based in culturally relevant pedagogy that uses “student culture as a basis for helping students” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 314). In order to help ELLs increase their self-efficacy, or the belief that they have the ability to perform a task or accomplish a goal, teachers can use cooperative learning groups. Previous research suggests that cooperative learning groups provide an environment in which ELLs can develop their identities, make cross-cultural connections, and expand their understanding of the social and academic language they need to comprehend English (Au, 2009; Samway, 2006). In this study, I used culturally relevant pedagogy and the concepts of social constructivism and social cognitive theory to explore the impact of cooperative learning groups on two third grade ELLs throughout a four week unit. The results indicated that cooperative learning groups increased ELLs’ participation and their on-task interactions with their peers. This also influenced their identification and self-efficacy both in group and individual settings.

How does the Literacy Component in Math Affect an ELL's Success in Math? Katelynn Wheeler. Research has shown that the literacy component in mathematics, such as word problems, poses a problem to English Language learners as they have yet to master the English language. In this qualitative action research study, I asked the question: How does the literacy component in mathematics affect an English Language learner’s success in mathematics? In this study, I worked with five English Language learners (ELLs) to gain further insight into what aspect of mathematics caused confusion for the students by using think-alouds and observations. I worked with the students in number-based math problems and word-based math problems in order to evaluate how or if the component of literacy was affecting their ability to solve the problems. It was the goal of my study to obtain enough information based on the patterns in the results to identify why ELLs struggle with math when words are included. In the end, the results were inconclusive. Although there were patterns among the ways the students solved the problems, their identified WIDA levels and their knowledge of key words may have played a role in my results.

Room 114

Schedule Trends in Music Education: A Survey of Virginia Elementary General Music Teachers. Sarah R. Watson. Music schedules are unique to each school. These schedules differ not only from those of general classroom teachers, but also from other music teachers. In some elementary schools, students are on a rotating schedule for music. Other elementary schools have classes assigned to a specific day of the week. Some schools even provide music classes to students more than once a week. For this study, I surveyed elementary music teachers about their music schedules. Participants were asked how many classes they have, the length of each class, how often each class has music, and other details about their daily schedule. The purpose of this study was to explore current elementary music schedules in Virginia and compare them to each other. As a result of this study I determined that while there are some commonalities between music teachers’ schedules, music teachers’ schedules differ on a day to day basis to a degree that was not anticipated prior to this study.
**Drama and Adolescent Social-Emotional Development.** *Charlotte A. Maalouf.* Drama can have an amazing impact on students’ present and future lives. It encourages social interaction through frequent collaboration and communication, and it teaches us how to empathize and view the world from perspectives other than our own. This qualitative, action research-based study was conducted with the following question in mind: How do scripted and role-play activities affect the social-emotional development of high school students in and outside of the theatre arts classroom? This study was conducted with a small, yet diverse, sample of four students in a Drama I classroom at a high school in rural central Virginia. Students engaged in scene work, improvisation, and sociodrama-related activities throughout the four-week data collection period. All data was coded and analyzed according to the four qualities that are believed to indicate adolescent social-emotional growth over time: 1) self-concept, 2) empathy, 3) teamwork, and 4) communication. Survey responses, journal entries, and student work were collected and formal and informal interview transcripts were reviewed. The data indicated a significant amount of social-emotional growth in each of the four student participants.

**Room 115**

**E-Book Reading Comprehension Assessments: The Use of High Level Thinking Assessments in E-Book Guided-Reading Instruction.** *Lucinda Booth.* Guided reading programs and the use of e-books have increased in elementary schools in the past decade. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect that high-level thinking assessments had on the amount of information provided on student reading skills. This was determined by comparing multiple-choice assessments from the e-book with an instructor-created assessment of high level thinking during an e-book guided reading program. In a second grade classroom, three students who were on a first grade reading level participated in a guided reading program that replaced a traditional book with an e-book. At the end of every reading session, each student took the multiple choice assessment together, then individually completed the higher-level thinking assessment. The researcher created the assessments based on the RIGBY reading program’s Comprehension Check and Retelling Response Sheets. The data from these assessments found that the students were given more opportunity to show higher levels of thinking with the instructor created assessments, yet the multiple choice assessments yielded more responses from the students. These results show that instructor created assessments can be used with students who are higher-level readers to extend reading comprehension, but readers who are developing reading skills may not provide skill level information for the instructor.

**Tablet Technology: Providing Differentiated Instruction in a Kindergarten Math Instructional Center.** *Jesse Long.* This action research project investigated the use of interactive tablets, specifically Nabi tablets, as a way to differentiate instruction in a kindergarten math center. Interactive tablets are essentially mini-computers that can be customized for individual users based on the applications (apps) chosen. This study focused on two student’s use of the tablets, though the entire class took turns using the Nabi tablets during math centers. During the implementation of this study, the two focus students used teacher-selected apps that focused on skills they specifically needed remediation on, such as number recognition, patterns, and telling time. The apps allowed the teacher to better differentiate
instruction based on the targeted needs of the students. The students’ ability to recognize numbers, patterns, and tell time did improve, however more research needs to be conducted in order to directly attribute the improvement to the use of the tablets and corresponding apps. Regardless of the direct correlation, the tablets allow students to practice and receive focused remediation or extension on pinpointed skills. It was also discovered that student behavior and motivation to practice difficult skills improved as a result of implementing the interactive tablets.

**Classroom Treasure Hunt: How Using Geocaching Affects Student Engagement.** *Kelsey Williams.* In order for students to learn the most they can, it is important for them to be actively engaged in the classroom. Studies have shown that engagement is correlated with student achievement and motivation. In today’s world, technology is prevalent and students are technologically savvy, but there is a disconnect between its usage at home versus in the classroom. Using technology in the classroom has many benefits, such as increasing engagement and being enjoyable for students. Geocaching, which uses a handheld GPS (Global Positioning System), provides a way to bring technology into the social studies classroom. The purpose of this study was to determine how using geocaching would affect student engagement in a fifth grade classroom during a unit on map skills. This study found that students were actively engaged at higher levels during the geocaching activity as compared to a more traditional activity using the same skills but with paper maps instead of technology.

**Fractions: Creating Authentic Learning using Technology.** *Gloria Yi.* Previous research has indicated that incorporating computer games has displayed positive results in the students’ performance (Vogel et al. 2006.) Current technology provides a high degree of interaction as well as settings rich in multimedia. This action research study examines how interactive computer games can be used in the classroom to provide authentic learning for students. During the I.E. (Intervention and Enrichment) block, students were given the opportunity to play selected math computer games. In one of the games, students were to complete pizza orders by placing the correct fraction of toppings. In addition, students were asked to journal on a teacher chosen prompt. The data was collected through observations, student interviews, and student surveys. The results demonstrate that the use of computer games can be engaging and enjoyable, but there was no significant correlation between students’ performance and computer games.

**Session 2. 2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.**

**Room 109**

**Visual Discovery and Its Effects on Student Critical Thinking.** *Kelsey Hilton.* The purpose of this study was to explore the use of Visual Discovery strategies to increase students’ critical thinking skills. This study examined the following research question: How does Visual Discovery impact students’ critical thinking skills in a fourth grade social studies classroom? Research has shown that too often in today’s educational settings, teachers’ ability to use
creative techniques in the classroom to engage students and build necessary skills are often limited, particularly when it comes to teaching social studies. According to Kontovourki (2010) social studies instruction has traded creativity, engagement, and motivation for high stakes testing. There is no longer an emphasis on building critical thinking skills or other techniques that will enable students to analyze school content and the world around them. In this study, two fourth grade classes, each with twenty four students, were introduced to social studies content using the Visual Discovery process. Each class participated in six Visual Discovery lessons covering Westward Expansion and the Civil War. This study found that the Visual Discovery process strengthened students' critical thinking skills throughout the process. Based on results from the Artful Thinking Critical Thinking Assessment, students moved from a basic to proficient level in terms of their ability to analyze visuals that align with the curriculum. Students also showed improvement in both their oral and written communication. The research findings indicate that repeated study of primary source visuals and opportunities to respond to carefully sequenced questions can build students’ critical thinking skills and increase social studies comprehension.

**How does creative expression through the visual arts impact student understanding in social studies? Julianne Huyett.** This research examines how creative expression through visual art impacts student understanding in social studies. Robinson (2009) defines creativity as “a process of having original imaginative ideas that have value”. When students are provided opportunities to create original art works inspired by the content, they draw upon cognitive skills such as remembering, understanding, and analyzing. Forehand (2005) states that creating original artwork is regarded as a component of the highest level of cognition since students have to think deeply about the content, generate, plan, and use creativity to produce art. Two approaches to art making were explored in the instruction of the Famous Americans unit in a kindergarten classroom. The “learner-generated art” emphasized opportunities for original ideas and creative expression. The “learner-generated art” gave the students freedom to choose what to draw related to the content material. The “teacher-selected art” involved students modeling the teacher’s art product. Teacher-selected art product was a recreation of an art piece chosen for the student. The learner-generated art strategy was applied in the instruction of Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., and President Barack Obama. The teacher-selected art strategy was applied in the instruction of George Washington, Betsy Ross, and Pocahontas. Two data sources were used to determine the impact of the two art strategies on student comprehension and creativity measures: unit test scores and interviews. The results showed that student’s test score averages were higher when the learner-generated art strategy was incorporated. The research shows that providing opportunities for students’ creative expression through visual art supports increases in students’ understanding of social studies.

**Helping Students become Metacognitive Learners: The Role of Choice, Reflection, and Artistic Expression. Connor Pratt.** It appears rare today that students are given time to reflect on their own learning patterns and styles. Instead, students are presented with standard methods with which they are to express their content knowledge understanding. In this action research study, the following questions are addressed: How does providing choices in expressing understanding aid in students’ abilities to be metacognitive about their learning? What are the implications of providing students with artistic choices such as incorporating theatre and visual arts into mathematic stations? Also, how does providing students with the
opportunity to reflect affect their attitudes and metacognitive abilities? In this study, the researcher worked with six fifth grade students, documenting their progress and reflections as they were provided with choices, including those in the arts, to express their understanding of math concepts. Applying the Let me Learn system developed by C. A. Johnson, students were presented with their most frequently used individual learning patterns. The research included providing students with opportunities to make choices regarding their preference of math station activities. In general, the students’ most frequently used learning patterns correlated with their station choices. An additional finding is that, in most cases, students were unaware of this correlation, as was evident in their reflections. The results of the study determined that providing choices and allowing students to recognize and reflect upon their learning styles did, in fact, improve student confidence and motivation.

**How will drawing activities, using the Sunform method of writing instruction, impact the number of reversals in kindergarteners’ handwriting?** Grace Rosales. This study examined the impact of drawing on students’ handwriting skills. Specifically the study examined the research question, "How will drawing activities, using the Sunform method of writing instruction, impact the number of reversals in kindergarteners’ handwriting?" Frequently, students at this age demonstrate a high level of reversals in their handwriting which is a key indicator of students; handwriting ability. A reversal refers to a letter with incorrect orientation. The participants were kindergarten students from a classroom in a suburban school in Virginia. The control group received only the whole group drawing instruction, while the experimental group received both whole group instruction and small group instruction. The drawing content was directly connected to Virginia Standards of Learning for Kindergarten. The research involved the use of drawing to teach handwriting by instructing students to draw counter clockwise circles, lines top to bottom, and lines left to right. The data were collected through both handwriting and drawing samples. The experimental group did not have a significant decrease in reversals in comparison with the control group. The results indicated that the drawing did impact the number of reversals, but that the small group instruction did not. Therefore, teaching line directionality through whole group instruction will improve handwriting by showing fewer reversals.

**Room 110**

**Improving Reading Fluency Rates with Timed and Repeated Buddy Readings.** Caitlin Gleason. This study was designed to increase four students’ reading fluency through the use of a four week buddy timed and repeated reading program. Participants were timed on three different days on a reading passage and the words read per minute are calculated and recorded. The participants worked with another participant who in their reading group to complete repeated readings throughout the week of their assigned passages. Partners also complete one of the three timed readings with their partner in order to limit teacher interactions. Teacher intervention was minimal except for the first and last timings of the week. Participants tracked their progress on a record sheet to receive feedback on their progress. These four students worked over the course of four weeks to complete four different books and reading passages. Growth was shown by each student from the first week to the last in their start and finish times.
for each week and overall from the very first timing they completed in the first week and the last time they completed during the final week.

**Writing: The Impact of Goal Setting and Reflection on Student Performance and Attitude.** *Georgia Karellas.* Prior research has explored John Dewey’s theory of reflective practice, which emphasizes the taking in of new information and reflecting upon it to either accept the utility of new concepts or refute them. The current study sought to examine the influence of reflective practice as well as goal setting upon student attitudes and performance in regard to writing. Students across high, middle, and low reading levels were selected. Writing performance was assessed according to what skills each student based his or her goals upon. The development of student attitudes toward writing was assessed by means of a Likert scale as well as student perceptions. Non-extensive differences were found among student performance as well as student attitudes toward writing. These results were not consistent with prior research so future research should seek to explore methods for implementation further.

**Social studies matters? Examining how project-based learning impacts 5th grade students.** *Ashlee Sisson.* Since 2002 when the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was reauthorized, public schools saw a drastic change in their curriculum due to new federal legislative mandates that put more pressure on teachers to teach to the standardized tests. Because NCLB states that children have to be testing proficient on math and reading tests by the year 2013-2014, teachers have been forced to decrease the time spent on social studies drastically. Therefore, social studies is being marginalized and students are often given worksheets or textbook readings to complete for the content. This is resulting in content memorization rather than comprehension. By using project-based learning to teach social studies, the students will be able to connect the content to the real world while gaining social and cognitive skills. This action research study found through using project-based learning activities that students were more positive about learning social studies, and performed better on a variety of assessments.

**Room 114**

**Analyzing Structure and Student Roles Within Cooperative Learning Groups.** *Heather Thompson.* Cooperative learning, a method of instruction that has students work in groups to perform a certain task, is perhaps one of the most adaptable teaching methods available due to its effectiveness for learning and differentiation. An important aspect of cooperative learning is the presence of structure as it directly influences both student roles and effort in completing the lesson. In this action research study, I ask: how does structure, or the lack thereof, affect student roles within cooperative learning groups? In this study, I observed five eighth-grade students as they worked in cooperative learning groups. Students participated in both highly structured and low structured assignments and allowed themselves to be observed. Although I did not observe any social loafing behavior since all students were highly motivated to learn, I found that personality has a major influence on the roles that students chose to fulfill. As a result, I have concluded that student interest and personality have a major influence on cooperative learning group roles.
Considerate Text Strategies, Reading Comprehension, and the Middle School World History Classroom. Aubrey Elliot. The Social Studies class offers opportunities for reading and analysis that rivals English and Language Arts classes. Regardless of the topic, students in a social studies classroom encounter a wide variety of sources, each with specific challenges. With ancient world history, a lack of primary source material can leave the textbook as the sole source of student reading in the classroom. Without proper scaffolding, students may lose interest in the information and not draw the necessary conclusions that will help them most. In this action research study I will implement a considerate text strategy, as featured in the Bring Learning Alive! publication by Bert Bower and others, to measure the effectiveness of pre-reading activities on student reading comprehension. I will also interview students in order to gain a clearer picture of the strategies that may already be present among adolescent readers.

The Use of Reading to Increase Student Enthusiasm in the Content Area. William L. Timmons. Reading is an important aspect of instruction in many of the core discipline classrooms. Students that read in class may improve their content knowledge and their overall reading comprehension levels. In this action research study, I ask the question: How does the use of choice between pre-selected readings that include both nonfiction and fiction affect the student’s enthusiasm for the social studies content? In this study I worked with one sixth grade classroom by providing them a choice between nonfiction and historical fiction books to read in class. I examined students’ enthusiasm for the social studies content as they read through the use of questionnaires, interviews and reading logs. The goal of this study was to examine the students’ enthusiasm for social studies content to look for an increase in the students’ enthusiasm. I found that reading can be an effect means in increasing students’ enthusiasm in content area, knowledge and increasing their interest in specific points in history.

Room 115

The Effects of Inquiry-Based Teaching Methods in 3rd Grade Geography Instruction. Rebecca Campbell. This study examines the effectiveness of two inquiry-based teaching methods, peer-led discussion and student journaling, in 3rd grade social studies instruction. Action research was conducted in a 3rd grade classroom to find out if using the two methods improved the quality of students’ comprehension of curriculum-based geography content. Open-ended questioning prompts were given to talk and write about, and students were encouraged to reflect critically on each question. In measuring the quality of students’ comprehension, written assessments and individual interviews were conducted before and after implementation of the inquiry-based methods.

Newspapers: a Model for 4th graders’ non-fiction writing. Andrea Castro. This study was conducted in order to determine the effect that analyzing and writing newspapers had on 4th graders’ nonfiction writing. More specifically, this action research project exposed students to a newspaper section weekly. By the end of the week, they chose their own and summarized what they read. At the end of the study, students were given the task to create their own classroom newspaper, where they had the opportunity to work together and show the writing skills they attained throughout the 4 weeks. Once all the data was collected, trends were identified within
the writing and were recorded and analyzed in order to see the effect that writing newspapers had on the students’ nonfiction writing.

**Reading the World: One Book at a Time.** *Deztnie Carter.* The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of the inclusion of multicultural literature to a small group of fourth grade students in a rural area. The qualitative study explored students’ personal feelings about their literature choices, as well as growth in comprehension. I collected and analyzed samples from a culturally diverse group of seven students for my research. The sample of students read high-quality, age appropriate multicultural literature and wrote a series of journal entries about the literature that I responded to. The students were given a selection of higher level prompts to generate their critical thinking skills. I responded back with more prompts and questioning to have a better gauge of their comprehension. Along with the journal entries, the participants were asked to participate in interviews before and after the study was conducted. The interviews sought to understand how the students chose their literature, and if there were any social or cultural factors involved. The results from the study informs educators and pre-service educators about the importance of including multicultural literature in their classroom libraries to not only provide cultural awareness, but to also build students’ confidence and self-awareness.

**Picture Books and Their Effects on ELLs Acquisition of Science Vocabulary.** *Kristin Witek.* English Language Learners are a recently identified at-risk group who struggles to keep up with their peers. These students learn basic English along with the required content. Content area vocabulary is key to gaining an understanding of topics. Picture books are used daily in elementary classrooms and this study seeks to find out how effective they are in teaching ELLs content area vocabulary. A picture book about shadows was read to ELL students. Acquisition was based on a vocabulary pre and posttest along with studying students’ behaviors while reading. A quick interview about the students’ feelings about the book was also given. The posttest was given again at the end of the unit to see if other teaching methods had further affect. Findings helped to determine if picture books are an effective way to introduce vocabulary to kindergarten ELLs.

**Session 3. 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**Room 109**

**Reflective Self-Management Techniques for Students who Struggle with Attention.** *Amanda Manno.* This study examines self-management techniques for students who struggle with attention and have difficulty completing assignments during an allotted time. In addition to self-management techniques, self-reflection is used to help students develop as an independent, active learner through metacognition. It has been found that self-management techniques increase the awareness of one’s own behavior and allows the individual to monitor his/her own behavior. When paired with reflection, the individual is able to critically think and reflect about his/her actions. The combination of reflective self-management skills will allow
students who struggle with attention to be able to monitor their own behavior and help manage their tendencies to be off task. It is hypothesized that the amount of assignments completed will increase after the reflective self-management techniques have been implemented. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that the amount of time students stay on task will increase.

**Readers’ Theater: Improving Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) Rates for Low-Level Readers in Second Grade.** Abbey Vinik. For my study, I worked with three second graders who currently read at a first grade level, and therefore were considered low-level readers. For six weeks, I implemented Readers’ Theater for these particular students to work on improving their words correct per minute (WCPM) rates. The students had time to practice their different scripts each week for about fifteen to thirty minutes each day as a group and then each Friday, the students performed in front of an audience. On Mondays and Fridays of each week, the students read a different passage and I recorded their WCPM rates each week. Student goal setting was also used to see if it played a role in improving their WCPM rates. Two of the students were chosen to write a personal goal of how many words they thought they could read correctly per minute each week. After Readers’ Theater was implemented for six weeks, each student’s WCPM rates showed signs of improvement.

**Room 110**

**Impact of Group Work on Student Comprehension and Metacognitive Development: An Action Research Study.** Laura Johnson. There is currently an intense pressure on teachers to teach to state standards as a result of the passing of No Child Left Behind in 2004. Consequently, the emphasis placed on developing Analytical and Application skills in students has been severely diminished. These skills are vital to lifelong learning and have been linked to metacognitive development. As a result, this research sought to combine existing knowledge of the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies, group work, and student-created museums into one study that examined the influence of group work on student comprehension and metacognitive development during a student-created museum project. Data collection and analysis found an impact of group work on student comprehension of a Virginia’s role in determining a government within the New Nation. The majority of students’ learning improved and many participation cited group work as being helpful, positive, and a method they would like to do again.

**“That really happened?!” Impacting Students’ Social Studies Interest with Choice of Non-fiction Text.** Kathryn O’Keefe. Social studies is an often-devalued subject area in elementary education. However, social studies is an essential subject for our students to engage in because it teaches our students how to be citizens and allows them to practice critical thinking skills. When students have limited access to social studies content, the possibility of them becoming interested in it is also restricted. Students are more likely to comprehend material when they are interested and engaged. Giving students choice in their learning allows them a feeling of ownership, which in turn gives them a sense of pride and helps them to become engaged. The current study looked to see if students’ choice of non-fiction text might impact students’ interest in social studies. Results were based on students’ self-assessment of interest in pre- and post- nonfiction unit surveys, interviews and observations. Students enjoyed reading the
non-fiction texts and were interested due to the factuality. However, students were uncomfortable with the idea of choice because they felt they were make a good choice. Students need to have exposure to choice in order to be comfortable with it.

**Why do they follow rules? Using decision trees to examine decision-making in a first grade classroom.** Shannon Riley. Current research in education states that students are not passive thinkers about school rules and procedures, even at the elementary level (Thornberg, 2007). Many educators stress the importance of teaching critical-thinking and decision-making skills to students so that they can be effective democratic citizens (NCSS, 2012). Ochoa-Becker (2002) asserts that students need to not only know that they make decisions, but also practice making decisions. While these research studies show that students are not passive regarding school rules, they do not demonstrate how students follow school rules. This action research looks to see if students can sort the positives and negatives of choices when making a decision in a situation where school rules apply. Using their prior knowledge and perceptions of school rules, students will complete economic decision trees to make their decision and then identify the school rule that best applied to the given scenario. Results of this action research concluded that students were able to complete a modified decision tree, but unable to complete the comprehensive decision tree where positives and negatives needed to be identified. In spite of this, student interviews revealed that students can define the purpose of rules and do not follow them blindly.

**Innovating with Interactive Technology: The Effects of Replacing Traditional Literature with SMARTboard technology in the Kindergarten Classroom.** Sarah Manuel. Too often kindergarten teachers find themselves reaching for a book to teach content, only to skip half of it and toss it aside. While the dwindling number of good books may be a source of frustration for many teachers, the abundance of SMART technology may help ease the pain. The current study looks to see if students can sort the positives and negatives of choices when making a decision in a situation where school rules apply. Using their prior knowledge and perceptions of school rules, students will complete economic decision trees to make their decision and then identify the school rule that best applied to the given scenario. Results of this action research concluded that students were able to complete a modified decision tree, but unable to complete the comprehensive decision tree where positives and negatives needed to be identified. In spite of this, student interviews revealed that students can define the purpose of rules and do not follow them blindly.

**Room 114**

**Navigating Learning with Digital Natives: Web-Inquiry Projects and the Reading Classroom.** Dana Cazan. With the rapid expanse of Web 2.0 technologies, schools across the country are exploring new ways to promote students’ digital literacy and enhance traditional curriculum expectations. Students’ research and writing skills are among those that may benefit with e-learning tools such as blogs, social networks, group documents, and web-inquiry projects that lend themselves to collaborative learning, interdisciplinary reading, critical thinking, and content application. Web-Inquiry projects are opportune avenues for allowing students to practice research skills and expand their knowledge in a creative space. This study
examined how the use of web-inquiry projects affected middle-school Reading students’ research skills and content-area knowledge through the lens of connectivism. Five themes emerged regarding the effect of Web-Inquiry projects on students' learning, all of which suggest students' ability to use technology to participate in self-directed study allowed them to engage with the content in a more individualized manner; participants believed this opportunity was absent in traditional novel discussions. Results also indicated that 21st Century students favored collaborative learning and technology when exploring new content. Finally, the interlocking themes offered that today’s students are negotiating their own experience with technology as they are introduced to new technological tools in the classroom.

**Writing Workshops in the Secondary Classroom.** *Ian E. Burke.* English education has always been an influential part of the American education system. The recent standardization of educational objectives has led teachers and researchers alike to explore better ways to educate students. In the realm of writing instruction, writing workshops have become a key tool in instructing students towards better writing competency. The combination of cooperative learning and teacher-led instruction has proven beneficial in many studies ranging from early elementary to college level classes. This study examines the question: How do writing workshops affect the writing competency of eighth grade English students? This mixed methods study was conducted during a six-week research period and involved pre- and post-testing, student interviews, and student work. The goal of the study was to evaluate how writing workshops affect writing competency and student attitudes about writing. Findings showed that students increased their writing scores with regards to Written Expression. Also, the attitudes of most students towards writing became more positive as the workshops progressed. This study aims to expand the literature regarding writing workshops and their effectiveness towards meeting the goals of a standards-based curriculum.

**Cooperative Learning’s Effects on Student Attitudes and Behaviors at the Seventh Grade Level.** *Kelly A. O’Grady.* In the words of Robert E. Slavin, an educational theorist and psychologist, cooperative learning is an “instructional program in which students work in small groups to help one another master academic content” (1996, p. 200). In this action research study, I focused on if and how cooperative learning affects students’ attitudes and behaviors at the seventh grade level. I observed students working cooperatively, conducted student interviews, and conducted a brief survey to determine whether or not students enjoyed working in groups and, if so, how group work affected their attitudes toward a subject or their peers. It was the goal of this study to show how students were affected by cooperative strategies in the classroom so that educators may adapt their teaching styles to best suit the needs of the students at this critical developmental time. The study found that the students responded well to cooperative learning when they were confident in themselves, comfortable with their peers, and knowledgeable with the content.

**Room 115**

**Dialogue Journals and At-Risk Third Graders.** *Joseph Martin.* The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of using dialogue journals to improve writing among elementary students. In particular, this study examined the effects of weekly dialogue journals between students and
teacher on writing fluency and quality. This action research study took place in a rural county located in Virginia. Participants in this study included 26 third grade students. While everyone wrote journals back and forth with me, I collected, coded, analyzed, and reported on the focus group’s documents. Themes that emerged from this study are improvements in student writing quality and quantity, and an overall growth in writing enjoyment and motivation as a result of a relaxed writing environment and individualized attention. The results from this study will provide insight for instructors of at-risk third graders relative to writing efficacy.

Active Literacy: The Effects of Kinesthetic Methods on Spelling Achievement, Attitudes, and Engagement. Dorothy Sandridge. The purpose of this study was to examine how kinesthetic activities impact first-graders’ spelling achievement, attitudes toward literacy, and engagement in word study. Various studies demonstrate the benefits of incorporating physical activity into academic instruction, however, research on this is lacking in the area of word study. This mixed methods action research study took place at a rural primary (K-2) school with a first-grade language arts class of 20 students. Participants were taught two kinesthetic activities during word study instruction: “Spellorobics” (stretching one’s arms in certain directions to represent letters) and charades (acting out the meaning of words). Students completed pre- and posttests to assess their spelling development as well as pre- and post-surveys to measure their attitudes toward literacy; qualitative observations were used to evaluate students’ engagement in the activities. Students scored higher on their posttests than their pretests, rated the activities positively, and appeared highly engaged, however, there was no significant difference between their pre- and post-survey scores. Further implications about incorporating movement into instruction are discussed.

The Effect of Visual Aids on English Language Learners’ Science Comprehension. Danielle Minter. English language learners (ELLs), with varying levels of English language proficiency, are entering schools at an increasing rate. These students have to learn the English language as well as the intense amount of content set forth by the Virginia Standards of Learning. ELLs face many learning challenges, such as limited English instruction and understanding complex terminology. Strategies that assist ELLs in learning science range from building on prior knowledge to inquiry learning. This study investigated if providing visual aids to ELLs enhanced their comprehension of science, specifically Ecosystems. Six third grade ELL students read eight different passages (4 with visual aids and 4 without). Scores were compared, along with interviews and observations, to determine if the visual aids were beneficial to science comprehension. Results of this study showed that overall, visual aids had a slight positive impact on ELL student comprehension. From this research, it can be concluded that providing visual aids to ELLs is a good strategy to help enhance science comprehension.

Effect of Collaborative Learning on Student Attitudes and Achievement. Michelle Seal. Elementary aged children learn in many different ways. This research was conducted to see if a certain collaborative instructional model, jigsaw, increased science scores. The students involved in this research learned about different types of habitats. There were pre- and post-interviews given to the students to seek their enjoyment level from working with their peers as well as what they already knew about habitats. While students were working in their groups, observations were taken to determine student participation, engagement, and lack thereof. Student groups gave presentations about their habitat at the end of the unit. Trends were
examined between the pre- and post-science scores. Findings from this study indicate that children working with their peers increase their science scores and have positive attitudes about working with others.

**Session 4. 4:45 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.**

**Room 109**

**The Impact of After School Remediation Programs on Student Achievement.** *Christie Hall.*

The purpose of this research was to identify key elements of after school remediation programs which impact student learning and increase student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. The goal of this research was to discover the essential components of effective after school programs, compare these findings to our current local after school program, and make recommendations for future improvement of after school remediation programs in our local school division. The research began with a review of literature concerning best practices for developing effective after school programs. After the key elements of effective after school programs were examined, the research findings were compared to current practices in my local elementary school. Benchmark test data of students who attended the after school remediation program in the 2010-2011 school year were examined and compared to end of the year standardized test scores in math and reading in order to measure the impact of the local after school program on student achievement. Finally, the information from the research was used along with the test data to make recommendations for improving the local after school remediation program.

**Room 110**

**The Roles of the Reading Specialist.** *Tara Higgins.* In the era of No Child Left Behind, many school districts are implementing scientifically-based literacy curricula. Much research has been conducted regarding how teachers respond to school and curriculum change, as well as the roles of the reading specialist at the elementary and secondary level. This qualitative study sought to add to the literature by answering the question, “What are the roles of reading specialists in the implementation of a new elementary literacy curriculum?” The study was grounded in narrative inquiry and determined the roles of the seven elementary reading specialists with respect to new literacy curriculum implementation. Results indicated that the roles of the reading specialist relating to assessment, instruction, and professional development overlapped to form an over-arching literacy leadership role.

**Survey of the Perceptions of Literacy Abilities of a Twice-Exceptional Student.** *Laura Caton.* Both gifted and special education students have historically been neglected by the educational system. Twice-exceptional students are especially underserved and under identified. They require both gifted and special needs instructional techniques due to their
talents and struggles. This single subject case study investigated the connections among staff, parent, and student perceptions of literacy abilities of one twice-exceptional high school student in a central Virginia school district. Drawing upon surveys, interviews, and a review of Standards of Learning scores, this study compared and contrasted the documented literacy abilities of this student with his self-perceptions and the perceptions of his parents and instructors. Results indicated that although the twice-exceptional student was extremely confident in his talent abilities and that his teachers perceive him as succeeding, little literacy instruction and support were being offered in writing and the content areas as required by his individualized education plan. This suggests that the talents of twice-exceptional students may mask their struggles indicating significant need for embedded literacy professional development from reading specialists.

**Literature Circles, At-Risk Ninth Graders, and Reading Efficacy.** *Christen Oliver.* The purpose of this study was to examine the effect that engagement in hybrid literature circles had on the reading efficacy of at-risk ninth grade students. This mixed-methods study took place in an agricultural community in a mid-Atlantic state. Participants in this study included 13 at-risk ninth grade students enrolled in an Individual Reading course. In addition to the traditional structure of a literature circle, the treatment group participated in an online discussion forum for their novel. Data sources included: the Reader Self-Perception Scale, an evaluation of the quality and the frequency of student responses during discussions, and one-on-one interviews of four students. The results from this study indicate that the use of hybrid literature circles did have an impact on the general perception of reading ability and social connectedness to peers as it relates to reading efficacy. The results of this study likewise provide insight for instructors and educational leaders of at-risk ninth-graders relative to reading efficacy.

**The Effects of Oral Reading Fluency Interventions.** *Michelle Duke.* This research study examined the effectiveness of two different oral reading fluency interventions, reading to a therapy dog and self-recorded reading, in order to understand the effect they had on fifth graders’ oral reading fluency. This study was conducted at a rural elementary school in Virginia with fifth-grade participants. Students’ fluency growth was examined utilizing running records, a fluency scale, and a pre- and post-interview. Results indicated that both intervention programs had positive, yet variable effects on sub-categories of oral reading fluency. Implications relevant to reading specialists, teachers, parents, and administrators are provided as they continually search for effective interventions to support struggling readers.

**Room 114**

**Identification Process of Twice Exceptional Students.** *Meghen Alvorado.* It is difficult to label a student twice exceptional accurately due to the complexity of these students’ achievements. Their giftedness and disability mask each other making it problematic for school psychologists to gather data. If educators were able to have data to make an accurate decision of labeling students twice exceptional then we would be able to individualize instruction for them and properly serve them in schools. Therefore, the research goal was to evaluate the twice-exceptional identification process and how educators can properly serve these students. This evaluation focused on a first grade student with a learning disability who
was going through the process of gifted identification. This research provides teachers, school administrators, and the Office of Student Services with key factors in the gifted identification process of twice-exceptional students and how the factors impact the needs of twice-exceptional students.

**Early interventions of perfectionist behaviors in the gifted learner.** *Amanda Thomas Flanagan.* Research has shown that gifted children are, as a group, perfectionists (Neihart, Reis, Robinson & Moon, 2002). While there is no direct correlation between gifted students and perfectionism it is strongly linked in several other studies (Adelson, 2007; Chan, 2003 (Neumeister, Williams, & Cross, 2007). Perfectionism is a compulsive behavior that debilitates students, leaving them emotionally unable to complete a task or be satisfied with their final product (Adelson, 2007). Even though research shows perfectionism is a struggle for gifted learners (Neumeister, Williams, & Cross, 2007), many teachers do not address these emotional needs. The Multidimensional Perfectionist Scale, developed by Frost, Marten, Lahart and Rosenblate (2006) was used as the basis for the questions asked of the students. Through observation, research, and student journaling, I implemented a variety of coping strategies for perfectionist behaviors to determine which were most effective in the lower elementary gifted learner. The final project includes a report of the findings of the best intervention and coping strategies for early elementary students with perfectionism.

**Room 115**

**Collaborative Video-Based Instruction and the Effects it has On Student Problem Solving Skills.** *Jon Meister.* In this action research study, I ask the question: How do collaborative video-based activities impact students’ problem solving skills in middle school mathematics? In today’s high tech driven society, educators are finding themselves struggling to keep pace with the speed of technological development and the demand it has in the classroom. New technologies are changing the way professional educators view education and the aid it provides for the student. In this study, I worked with one seventh and sixth grade period using only online video-based instruction to improve their problem solving skills in mathematics. While working with a partner, students were provided several videos narrated by myself and asked to complete problems online dealing with skills in problem solving. In order to complete the problem properly, they had to collaborate together on the correct answer throughout the entire lesson. Students were required to complete a pretest, posttest, formative assessments, and a final survey at the end of the unit.

**Using Graphic Organizers for Mathematics Problem Solving.** *Kelley Clouse.* Traditionally, people tend to think word problems are hard to solve. They also think figuring out what the problem asked is the hardest part of the word problem. Today, students are presented with more and more word problems to build students’ problem solving skills and basic mathematics operation skills using a real world context. The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of graphic organizers in a third grade classroom would increase students’ achievement and confidence when solving word problems. Twenty-one third grade students were taught how to solve word problems using a graphic organizer as a guide for solving the problem. During the study, the data collected was three sets of five word problems and a
questionnaire that was filled out after completing the problems to measure the students’ confidence and feelings about solving word problems and using the graphic organizers.

**The Effect of Personalized Mathematical Word Problems on Elementary School Learners.** Catherine Kennedy. This paper provides research and evidence for how personalized mathematical word problems affect students’ attitudes and perseverance while developing mathematical concepts. The research I conducted assessed how successful first grade students are at solving mathematical word problems if the word problems are personalized towards the individual student. I used students’ interests to create personal mathematics word problems that they could relate to. I also had the students solve non-personalized word problems adapted from a textbook/the curriculum they were learning from to use as a comparison. I assessed students’ achievement, attitude, and perseverance while solving both the non-personalized and personalized mathematics problems, using student reflections and feedback (through oral interviews), as well as how well they mastered the content of the word problems.