We accept this Thesis as conforming to the required standard.

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Date: April 5, 2019

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Abstract

The development of foundational literacy skills in the early years of schooling have been shown to later influence academic success. Therefore, the purpose of this project was to improve the quality of literacy instruction young students receive by focusing on the support they receive from paraprofessionals. This is an important area of instruction to focus on as the number of paraprofessionals in schools is increasing to now include commonly supporting students with literacy. To help prepare pre-service paraprofessionals for this role, this project focused on creating a workshop to help paraprofessionals respond to young students while reading with them. This project considers appropriate skills needed for paraprofessionals by acknowledging the interrelated roles and responsibilities of inclusive education systems today. Through this project pre-service paraprofessionals will be able to further develop their understanding of early literacy and how to support students. Within this workshop, pre-service paraprofessionals will have an opportunity to practice using examples of specific feedback to consistently support the literacy processes and effort young students benefit from receiving while reading.

Keywords: paraprofessionals, early literacy, special education, literacy processes, feedback
Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging some of my own early literacy teachers. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my Mom from whom I believe I developed my first love of books through the stories she read to us nightly. Next, I would like to acknowledge the passionate and dedicated teachers I had at Sangster Elementary School in the Sooke School District (SD62). My early experiences at Sangster Elementary are ones that I remember fondly and have helped to shape me into the person I am today. As a teacher, now working in the same district, I feel privileged for the opportunities SD62 has continued to provide for me to learn and grow. In particular, this year I feel very fortunate to be part of a Reading Recovery training program, a program the district has implemented in all elementary schools across the district in a dedicated effort to increase early literacy success. My participation in the Reading Recovery program has sharpened my own understanding of literacy learning and has thus strongly influenced the purpose and content of this project. From this experience I would like to specifically acknowledge the program’s teacher leader, Kara McPherson, as well as my colleagues in the program who have taught me so much.

On a personal level, I would like to acknowledge the people who have helped me to bring this project to completion. Thank you to my parents, Ian and Susan Broome and Mark Hogeweide, for always encouraging and supporting my education. Thank you to my supervisor, Ana Vieira, for without her support and extensive guidance, I could not have completed this. Thank you to my 2nd reader, Sue Melanson, for her thoughtful comments and feedback. Lastly, thank you to my partner, Kyle Melanson, for supporting me so lovingly along the way.
A WORKSHOP FOR PRE-SERVICE PARAPROFESSIONALS

Table of Contents

Abstract .........................................................................................................................iii
Acknowledgements .....................................................................................................iv
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................v
Chapter One: Introduction .........................................................................................1
   Rationale ..................................................................................................................1
   Background .............................................................................................................5
   Purpose Statement .................................................................................................9
   Brief Overview of Project .....................................................................................10
Chapter Two: Literature Review ...............................................................................12
   Changing Roles and Responsibilities in Special Education ..................................12
   Paraprofessionals Supporting Early Literacy Development .................................19
   Language to Support Literacy Development .......................................................28
Chapter Three: Project Description ..........................................................................38
   Project Overview ..................................................................................................39
      Purpose ..............................................................................................................39
      Goals ...............................................................................................................40
      Transfer of Knowledge ....................................................................................41
   Support for the Project .......................................................................................42
      Rationale ............................................................................................................42
      Literature Supporting the Design of the Project .............................................44
   Project Design ......................................................................................................45
   Secondary Sources ..............................................................................................45
Chapter One: Introduction

As language acquisition and literacy experiences begin at birth, children entering school for the first time arrive with a diversity of skills needed for early reading. Significant differences between children can be found in their vocabulary knowledge, phonological sensitivity, and print awareness, all of which are prerequisites for learning to read (Dickinson, McCabe, Anastasopoulos, Peisner-Feinberg, & Poe, 2003). In this early phase, some children will continue to quickly build on their reading skills while others who lack these sub-skills may develop early reading difficulties (Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling, & Scanlon, 2004). By grade 4 large individual differences in students’ reading abilities become evident with the gap between readers widening as more proficient readers continue to improve each time they read (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, & Foy, 2007). Consequently, the first few years of school are our “one and only chance to upset the correlation between initial progress and later progress” (Clay, 2016, p. 13). If left unattended, students who fail to develop foundational literacy skills are likely to continue to struggle with reading, more likely to misbehave, and less likely to graduate (Allington, 2000; Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). Compounding the issue, students who struggle emotionally or behaviourally are at a higher risk of having reading difficulties and often hide their problems by acting out or shutting down (Levy & Chard, 2001; Selznick, 2009; Vaughn, Levy, Coleman, & Bos, 2002).

Rationale

Given the impact literacy has on students’ behaviour and future success it is imperative that we pay close attention to whom students are receiving literacy instruction from. Classroom teachers are no longer the only ones delivering literacy instruction as it is now becoming a common role for paraprofessionals (Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2011). In British Columbia
(BC), paraprofessionals are often referred to as Educational Assistants (EAs). They work under the general direction of a teacher and are employed for a variety of roles including assisting with the implementation of instructional learning activities, as well as monitoring and reporting progress to the teacher (British Columbia Teacher Federation (BCTF) & Canadian Union Public Employees (CUPE), 2009). The role of the paraprofessional is one which has changed over time in response to special educational practices. Supporting students with reading is now one of the most common roles of paraprofessionals (Wasburn-Moses, Chun, & Kaldenberg, 2013). One of the reasons for this may be that schools serving large numbers of struggling readers have had to look for cost-saving alternatives to supplement certified teachers instructing reading interventions (Brown, Morris, & Fields, 2005).

Many students who require special education services, receive their one-to-one supports primarily from a paraprofessional (Broer, Doyle, & Giangreco, 2005). As a result, it has become necessary to increase collaboration between paraprofessionals in order to better support them in their role of providing reading support (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). For example, the role of the special education teacher has evolved to require greater amounts of collaboration to coordinate the efforts between the members of a student’s team, including the classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, school administration, specialists, and other outside agencies (Klinger & Vaughn, 2002; Morgan, 2016). Therefore, by hiring more paraprofessionals, special educators like myself, rather than spending our time providing instruction, are finding ourselves in a position of managers of paraprofessionals who are the ones providing the bulk of specialized instruction to students with complex learning challenges (Suter & Giangreco, 2009). Thus, when training and assigning roles to paraprofessionals it is important to consider their roles in relation to other roles in the profession. While there are some examples
of highly effective reading programs using non-certified teachers, the programs rely heavily on leadership often assumed by special education teachers as trainers and supervisors.

To avoid disrupting the roles and responsibilities of other professionals, guidelines created by Causton-Theoharis, Giangreco, Doyle and Vadasy (2007) are more appropriate for paraprofessionals supporting students with literacy. In their guidelines, two primary requirements are emphasized: (a) paraprofessionals should be used to provide supplemental, not primary, instruction; and (b) paraprofessionals must receive ongoing direction and training. Examples of supplemental reading instruction suggested by these guidelines include listening to and re-reading stories with students, reinforcing skills, and answering questions. While the skills needed may appear simple, even supplementary reading activities require skills, training, and experience (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2007). As is the case in BC, we expect paraprofessionals to be able to implement “specific techniques, strategies, and appropriate language as discussed” by the teacher or team (BCTF & CUPE, 2009, p. 7). If we are going to rely on paraprofessionals to work with young students and text, even informally, we need to discuss the techniques, strategies, and appropriate language that can be used to enhance the quality of these interactions.

The challenge with training paraprofessionals to respond informally to readers is that there is not a scripted curriculum or program to follow. The instruction is happening in real time and decisions about how to respond have to be made on the spot. Improving the quality of these interactions with something as seemingly simple as listening to a child read requires a basic level of knowledge about literacy development. For example, when a child gets stuck while reading there are many ways to respond, some responses will provide opportunities for further learning while others will not. A person with an understanding of early literacy development and skills is able to offer feedback focusing on reading processes and effort so that the response
“acknowledges and highlights the work the reader did and shows the reader how the work led to learning” (Goldberg, 2016, p. 122). Research of emergent reading has shown that readers arrive with skills and apply what they already know to the new task of print (Martin & Kragler, 2011). For example, many young children have been observed with wordless picture books already using strategies to construct meaning using specific language, visually scanning images, making inferences, and creating dialogue to maintain a narrative (Lysake & Hopper, 2015). It takes an understanding of basic literacy processes and a trained eye to recognize and draw attention to these strategic processes the child may be using.

Availability of relevant preparation in supporting students’ reading development, however, remains a persistent need. Student success is in jeopardy when we increasingly rely on paraprofessionals without training (Giangreco et al., 2010). We must not assume that paraprofessionals have the experience or skills to support a young reader, even informally. Therefore, when invited to do a presentation by the teacher responsible for our districts’ EA program, I chose supports in early literacy as my presentation primary focus. If there are two things we know schools are full of, it is children and books, and it is almost certain that paraprofessionals are going to encounter both. Naturally, conversations will happen around text. It is the purpose of my presentation to raise the quality of those interactions. The language we are immersed in subtly conveys what we believe so students need to regularly hear messages about the processes and effort that are required for learning embedded in the speech of all the people who support them (Dweck, 2006; Johnston, 2012). In addition to encountering children and text, paraprofessionals will most likely be working with students who need behavioural and emotional support. Predictably, these are the same students who often have been identified as being at higher risk for reading problems (Selznick, 2009). Many of these children commonly receive
messages of failure throughout their day from various aspects of their lives. In order to effectively work with these students, it is imperative that the students have someone who can help point out their strengths (Selznick, 2009). Therefore, it is important we provide training to support early readers in ways that enhance not only reading skills, but also self-confidence in learning. To understand appropriate ways paraprofessionals can purposefully engage with young readers, we first need to understand how students who struggle with reading are serviced, as well as how roles within special education have evolved to service these needs.

**Background**

A brief history of special education. In the last half century, the field of special education has undergone a transformation driven by societal values in the treatment and access to education for people with exceptionalities (Andrews et al., 1993). Throughout this transformation, the role of special education has changed through historical points of view, revisions to policy and law, evolving practices, and human rights issues of diversity (Council for Exceptional Children, 2009). In education we have seen this transformation beginning with principles of integration in the 1970s, mainstreaming practices in the 1980s, and inclusion in the 1990s (Andrews et al., 1993). Much of this change has been influenced by the evolution of legislation in the United States regarding people with disabilities. For example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and 2004 mandated that all children have access to a quality education with the goal of increasing academic achievement for students with disabilities. Influenced by this legislation in 1998, the release of a publication titled, *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability*, shared Canadian values on the full participation of people with disabilities. The understanding that all children have the ability to learn has thereafter been the underpinning ideology of a movement towards educational inclusion in Canada.
Special education today. The BC Ministry of Education’s newly mandated curriculum, which began in the Fall of 2016 for kindergarten to grade 9, has continued to emphasize the inclusion of students with special needs. To achieve meaningful participation for all students, classroom teachers are expected to personalize their instruction and assessment to promote equitable access to learning and achievement. The inclusion of students with special needs has meant that collaborative planning between professionals has become increasingly important. For example, it is the classroom teacher’s responsibility to “designing, supervising and assessing” educational programs for students with special needs; however, the BC Special Education Manual (2016), stresses that this is best done in consultation with resource personnel (p. 9).

While the organization of consultation can vary across schools, one model of service delivery, Response to Intervention (RTI), has served as the dominant framework to help to coordinate the efforts between teachers and other professionals. Included in BC’s redesigned curriculum, RTI is a multi-tiered model of support which encourages early detection of academic difficulties by having classroom teachers perform ongoing assessment and data collection. The purpose of RTI is to provide early screening and progress monitoring to make decisions about instruction and allocate resources regarding the level of academic support a student receives (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012). While there are no strict guidelines on the level of supports offered, the most common model offers three tiers of instruction beginning with core instruction in the general education classroom and increasing in intensity from there (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). For example, in the second-tier students may receive small group instruction delivered by someone other than their classroom teacher while others will receive more intensive and individualized instruction from special educators or other specialists in the third tier of support (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).
Special Education Policy in BC has been influenced by the move toward RTI. For instance, in addition to needing to prove a discrepancy in cognitive ability through psychoeducational testing, the guidelines for the diagnosis of a learning disability in BC now include a provision for an RTI approach. Since 2002, education guidelines in BC have identified learning disabilities as persistent difficulties with learning where “assessment data should document systematic attempts to address the student’s difficulty through instructional adaptations, as well as the extent of the student’s ongoing difficulties in spite of the variations in instructional approaches” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 49). In practice, this means that for a student to be diagnosed with a learning disability, documented evidence of assessment and supplemental instruction, such as that provided at the second or third tier of RTI, must demonstrate ongoing difficulties despite additional support being offered. The problem with this model, however, is that regulations and guidance for RTI implementation are vague (Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009). As a result, RTI frameworks have been inconsistently implemented and left up to individual school teams to define (Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009). As a result, wide variations in the implementation of RTI are affecting the quality, intensity and duration of supports students are receiving. For example, to keep up with the increasing need to provide tier 2 interventions, more and more paraprofessionals are being employed to provide these kind of supports (Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2003). The issue with responding inconsistently to students needing higher levels of support is that the formal identification of disorders in literacy development typically don’t occur until the intermediate grades, a time which research indicates may be too late for remediation (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). This delay in identification may be due to the fact that relatively little is known about “which combination of assessment components is most accurate for
identifying children who will experience serious or chronic reading problems” (Fuchs et al., 2012, p. 226). Therefore, it is important that we not wait for our students to fail and that we consider how to improve the quality of early literacy support at all levels of instruction.

The relationship between the current roles of special educators and paraprofessionals. Coordinating efforts to offer students increasingly specialized instruction using the RTI framework has meant that the roles and responsibilities of those working in special education have had to evolve. Understanding the relationship between these roles is fundamental for preparing pre-service paraprofessionals for the instructional responsibilities they may be given. The BC Ministry of Education’s manual, Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines (2016), refers to special educators as Learning Assistance (LA) teachers. According to the manual, the LA teachers “typically help to organize, maintain, and integrate services in the school” by coordinating collaborative planning, as well as engaging in instruction and consultation (p. 23). The manual emphasizes communication with outside agencies, school-based teams and, most importantly, with students and parents. More specifically, the LA teacher coordinates the identification, assessment, implementation, and reporting of students with special needs. In regards to literacy, a special educator may be providing literacy-based assessments, providing one-to-one and small group reading interventions, collaborating with the teacher by supporting literacy activities within the classroom, and working as part of a team to develop, implement and monitor the literacy goals in Individual Educational Plans (IEP). Understanding the roles and responsibilities of special educators is an important part of understanding the role of paraprofessionals. As part of this work, in collaboration with a team of professionals, a common role of the special educator is to work with the classroom teacher to help develop lesson plans and learning strategies for
paraprofessionals to use for reviewing and reinforcing the concepts and skills targeted in the IEP (BCTF & CUPE, 2009). With a move towards inclusive education, the duties of paraprofessionals have changed from administrative and clerical support to now also providing supplemental instruction and behavioural support (French, 1999). This redefinition of roles is echoed in the BC Ministry of Education Special Education manual which states that paraprofessionals “play a key role in many programs for students with special needs, performing functions which range from personal care to assisting the teacher with instructional programs” (2016, Section B.3, p. 10). Further clarifying these roles, a joint position paper titled *Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Teachers Assistants/Education Assistants* (2009) was co-created by the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) and Canadian Union of Public Employees of British Columbia. The document offers specific examples of the individual and shared roles of teachers and paraprofessionals. These distinctions are important as they demonstrate how interrelated the roles and responsibilities of professionals working in schools are. For example, the document states that while the teacher is responsible for designing and supervising the instructional program, the paraprofessional can, under the direction of the teacher or special educator “facilitate the student learning individually and in small groups” (p. 7). If it is the responsibility of paraprofessionals to help facilitate student learning, we must ensure that they are properly trained in the skills needed for this role. Further, we must consider how the skills we train paraprofessionals influence the type of service that is offered students, as well as the impact on the roles and responsibilities of educators working in inclusive education systems today.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this project is to create a workshop to provide training for paraprofessionals to respond to young readers in purposeful ways with text. As stated in the joint
review by the BCTF and CUPE (2009), the “provision of appropriate in-service on instructional and behavioural techniques and strategies is paramount in ensuring the necessary conditions for students with special needs to succeed in school” (p. 4). Leadership is a significant part of my role as a special educator and I feel it is important to contribute to professional learning opportunities. For this reason, I will use research evidence to inform the creation of a single-day workshop for paraprofessionals in training. Focusing on how paraprofessionals can purposefully respond to young readers, the intention will be to share the workshop with our school district’s Educational Assistant Program.

**Brief Overview of Project**

To provide literacy training appropriate to the anticipated role of a paraprofessional in British Columbia, the research reviewed in chapter 2 will being by looking further at the interrelated roles of professionals involved in special education. As we move towards systems of inclusion, collaboration between professionals is becoming increasingly important, and to effectively collaborate, we need to have a better understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities (Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2010; Kligner & Vaughan, 2002; Morgan, 2016). For this reason, we must carefully examine what we are asking paraprofessionals to do and provide the necessary training so as to not disrupt the roles of other professionals in the field. Then, looking more specifically at reading programs delivered by non-certified teachers, the review will assess the needs and impact of employing paraprofessionals to deliver formal instruction, a role they commonly perform today. Finally, research into the type of feedback and language we can use with young readers will be reviewed to inform that type of skills paraprofessionals need for informally responding to young readers. In chapter 3 these skills will be used to identify appropriate learning objectives for a workshop intended for pre-service
A WORKSHOP FOR PRE-SERVICE PARAPROFESSIONALS

paraprofessionals, and following the delivery of the workshop, a reflection of this project will be included in chapter 4.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

This section provides a review of the literature to support best practices in preparing pre-service paraprofessionals for supporting young readers. This literature review was informed by three guiding questions: (1) Before training a paraprofessional to perform a task I ask, How have the interrelated roles and responsibilities in special education evolved to include paraprofessionals?; (2) Looking more specifically at these roles in relation to paraprofessionals delivering literacy instruction I then ask, Is it appropriate for paraprofessionals to deliver literacy instruction, and if so, what impact can this have? and (3) Respecting what the evidence says about appropriate roles for paraprofessionals, the final question will ask, What does research say about effective language to support literacy development and how can this be used to enhance the quality of interactions between paraprofessionals and young readers?

How Have the Interrelated Roles and Responsibilities in Special Education Evolved to Include Paraprofessionals?

With a move toward inclusion practices comes a paradigm shift in the organization and operation of schools. For this reason, research continues to highlight the importance of role clarity for both teachers and paraprofessionals (Giangreco et al., 2010). The Council for Exceptional Children (2000) has also identified job design in their report on working conditions as a key component in their agenda for special education. This need was further reflected in two surveys conducted by the British Columbia Teachers Federation (2002) on the views teachers held about special education. The survey found that teachers reported: (a) levels of support are insufficiently coordinated to meet student needs, (b) access to collaboration is minimal, and (c) they often feel unqualified to deal with the unique challenges of individual learners (Naylor, 2002). From these survey results we can see that factors of job design, combined with
opportunities for collaboration and professional development are needed to keep up with a changing education system. The first section of this literature review will consider these needs through a special education lens focusing primarily on the changing roles of special educators and paraprofessionals.

**Changing roles and responsibilities of special educators.** The role of special educators has changed into what Morgan (2016) has called Collaborative Learning Specialists. Morgan (2016) wanted to know what skills and attitudes were needed to “bridge the gap between special and general education” to “overcome the isolation that exists between them” (p. 42). Working with educators in a rural K-6 elementary school in Vermont over the period of one academic year, Morgan used qualitative, ethnographic research to gain insight into the collaborative experiences educators were having. Thematic data analysis was used on participants’ interviews, personal reflections and open-ended survey responses, to reveal common themes related to what is necessary for special educators to be effective collaborators. Emerging from this data, factors of personality, time, technology, intrapersonal skills, and accountability were uncovered. Summarizing these results, the researcher, who acknowledged her own biases as a proponent of collaboration and co-teaching herself, found that effective collaboration requires a change in beliefs and that a “shared responsibility for all students was at the core of effective collaboration and thereby driving force behind inclusion” (Morgan, 2016, p. 55). Similarly, Kligner and Vaughn (2002) have found that collaboration skills are defining the specialty. Over a period of seven years the researchers worked cooperatively with an urban elementary school in a southeastern United States school district. Gathering qualitative ethnographic data, the researchers concluded that the roles and responsibilities of special educators were “complex and
A WORKSHOP FOR PRE-SERVICE PARAPROFESSIONALS

multifaceted and depended largely on successful interpersonal and communication skills” (p. 29).

A driving force behind the increasing need for collaboration has been the expansion of paraprofessionals in the field. Interested by the rising numbers of paraprofessionals in Vermont school districts, with an estimated 300% increase hired between 1990 and 2005, Suter and Giangreco (2009) conducted research on how special education teachers’ job responsibilities have changed in response. Driving their research was concern in the educational community stemming from recent evidence that paraprofessionals are often under qualified to be working with students who have the most complex learning needs (French, 2001; Giangreco & Broer, 2005). With a rise in the number of paraprofessionals, the researchers were equally concerned about how this impacts the job of special educators. For example, they wanted to know how caseloads have changed to include the management and utilization of paraprofessionals. Utilizing a descriptive, qualitative design, 160 participants were recruited from 19 inclusion-oriented schools (K-12). Special educators were given questionnaires to gather information about their perceived roles, caseloads, time use, and the paraprofessionals they supervised. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found special educators engaged in a multitude of tasks, with 40% of special educators (n=36) reporting that 35% or less of their time was actually used for instruction. The data further revealed special educators had unmanageably heavy caseloads, creating pressures that were frequently resolved by hiring more paraprofessionals. The researchers found that ideally, schools that maintained a ratio of 1:50 to 1:79 full time special educators to total enrollment had special educators who reported adequate resources and time. Conversely, schools with full time special educator ratios of 1:100 or higher were “most consistently challenged in their ability to absorb fluctuations affecting service
delivery” (Suter & Giangreco, 2009, p. 90). The risk of unreasonably heavy caseloads, the researchers warned, is that special educators reported being unable to apply their expertise to the direct service and benefit of students with disabilities (Suter & Giangreco, 2009).

Recognizing that the types of duties paraprofessionals perform impacts the role of special educators is important when preparing pre-service paraprofessionals for their anticipated roles. This is especially important when considering the level of services students are receiving. The concern is that highly qualified special educators are spending less time with students and, in their place, more unqualified paraprofessionals are spending more time supporting students’ learning. Wasburn-Moses (2005) was concerned about this when 378 randomly selected high school special educators were surveyed. The quantitative survey focused on the day-to-day tasks of special educators, their roles and responsibilities, specific assignments, and the effectiveness of teacher preparation. Simple descriptive statistics were used to demonstrate that the management of student behaviour was the most frequent daily task (89.5% of participants engaged in daily), followed by completing paperwork (80.1%), working with general education teachers (71.7%), creating accommodations and modifications (67%), caseload consultation (62.8%), mathematics instruction (56%), and working with administrators (53.9%). Alarmingly, the research also found that just under half of the special educators surveyed spent less than 1 hour a week, and 68% reported 2 or less hours a week, working with students individually. Based on the findings, Wasburn-Moses (2005) advocated for narrowing the roles and responsibilities to emphasize student achievement as a primary focus of special educators. While the generalizability of this study is limited to high schools, the studies conducted by Suter and Giangreco (2009) and Wasburn-Moses (2009) both revealed that special educators are spending
more time as collaborators and managers than engaging with students in the current inclusive education systems.

**Changing roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals.** Since 2001, the research surrounding the roles of paraprofessionals has more than doubled, demonstrating a growing need for information about the way paraprofessionals are fitting into the trend for more inclusive systems (Giangreco et al., 2010). In a review of recent research, it was found that a lack of agreement regarding appropriate roles has made assignments and supervision challenging (Giangreco et al., 2010). Looking at the role of paraprofessionals working in inclusive education systems in the United States between 2000 and 2007, the review drew from 32 studies and substantiated prior findings of a similar review conducted by Giangreco, Edelman and Broer in 2001. The findings confirmed existing challenges with hiring and retaining qualified paraprofessionals, as well as with a lack of clearly defined responsibilities. In the review, paraprofessionals felt there was a lack of respect, training, and support to perform their jobs well (Giangreco et al., 2010). Job satisfaction is low, the study revealed, as paraprofessionals are increasingly being asked to assume roles that are traditionally the role of the teacher with very little training or support. Considering their past studies on respect and appreciation of paraprofessionals, the authors conclude that paraprofessionals “may be among the most marginalized employees in schools” (Giangreco et al., 2010, p. 50). Overall, the review finds the lack of support for paraprofessionals is well documented.

In Giangreco and Broer’s (2005) earlier study, questionnaire data from 737 school personnel and parents of students with disabilities revealed concerns about special education teachers spending less time instructing students, time which was being replaced by paraprofessionals. These concerns were earlier supported in Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes &
Moody’s (2000) meta-analysis of one-to-one tutoring, where the qualifications and training of the instructor were, unsurprisingly, found to be the best indicator of success. The problem is compounded when the majority of special educators, who theoretically are expected to direct the work of paraprofessionals, report that they have received little to no training on supporting paraprofessionals (Drecktrah, 2000; French, 2001). With this research, a contradiction is created between reality and legislation. For instance, federal law in the United States maintains that paraprofessionals need to be “appropriately trained and supervised” when assisting in the provision of special education services (IDEA 2004, Sec. 300.156). Due to the lack of adequate training for paraprofessionals, Giangreco et al.’s (2010) synthesis of literature suggests that the roles of paraprofessionals should be strictly limited to supplemental, teacher-designed, instruction. In this synthesis the authors propose that we need to consider how we can use paraprofessionals in ways that helps create more opportunities for students with disabilities to receive direct instruction from general and special educators. For this reason, when creating program objectives for pre-service paraprofessionals it is important to prepare them for roles that do not interfere with general and special educators servicing students with complex needs.

Offering pre-service training and professional development opportunities for paraprofessionals is one way of alleviating the time special educators are having to spend training paraprofessionals on the job. Examining elements of collaboration between special education teachers and paraprofessionals, Biggs, Gilson and Carter (2016) wanted to determine what influences the quality of these relationships. To do this, semi-structured interviews of 22 educators working together in five teams (9 teachers and 13 paraprofessionals) were sampled across multiple grades and diverse public school settings in the United States. While all participants acknowledged paraprofessionals have an important role, they also admitted to
feeling their “varied backgrounds, minimal pre-service training, and limited professional
development often did not fully equip them for the job” (Biggs et al., 2016, p. 265). To overcome
this, successful teacher leadership helps to bridge this gap by sharing information regularly and
transparently communicating expectations (Biggs et al., 2016). Similarly, it was noted that a
shared vision and consistent expectations for students between teachers and paraprofessionals
was one of the keys factors to a successful working relationship. The more these training
opportunities to develop skills and shared expectations can be built with paraprofessionals the
less of an impact their increasing numbers will have on the roles and responsibilities of
educators.

**Summary of research on the changing roles in special education.** As special education
legislation has shifted towards systems of inclusion, one of the changes we have seen is the
increase in paraprofessionals working in the field. When reviewing the roles and responsibilities
of paraprofessionals, it can be seen that flexibility is a common feature found in the job
descriptions of paraprofessionals. This flexibility may be, in part, due to the economic factors
that have forced many schools to consider cost-saving alternatives, such as employing lower paid
paraprofessionals to deliver tier 2 interventions (Giangreco et al., 2003). However, with this
flexibility comes the risk of poorly defined roles and qualifications, a persistent and unresolved
issue in the field (Giangreco et al., 2010). The issues of loosely defined roles revealed in the
research can be found in British Columbia as well. In the BC Special Education Manual (2010) it
acknowledged that some schools use the title of ‘Resource Teacher’ when learning assistance is
combined with other special education services. The manual states that “there are no territorial
lines drawn in service delivery,” an acceptable liberty so long as the needs of the students are
being met (p. 23). While this liberty allows school systems the flexibility of service based on
need, it also creates an ambiguous definition of the roles and responsibilities for special educators. The commitment to the profession is at risk as “a poorly designed job can affect teachers in negative ways, leading to withdrawal from involvement in the job” (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Haniss, 2001, p. 550).

**Is it Appropriate for Paraprofessionals to Deliver Literacy Instruction, and if so, What Impact Can this Have?**

Researchers are calling for closer examination of the roles and responsibilities of those working in special education today (Giangreco et al., 2010). One of the changes has been the increasing reliance of paraprofessionals providing reading instruction. This may be explained by the fact Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) found that about 80% of children identified as learning disabled are also described as reading disabled. Additionally, students are now receiving more support in earlier grades in schools using RTI models, another explanation for why paraprofessionals are providing more reading instruction (Wasburn-Moses et al., 2013). While some research is indicating that it is possible for paraprofessionals to effectively provide reading instruction, their lack of qualifications means that ongoing extensive training and supervision are needed (Slavin et al., 2011). For this reason, the reliance on paraprofessionals to deliver reading instruction is concerning some researchers who are recommending we eliminate paraprofessionals from instructional roles as “we have too much evidence that expertise in reading matters for any child who is struggling while learning to be literate” (Allington, 2013, p. 524). To further understand the impact of having non-certified teachers delivering formal reading instruction, the next section of this literature review will consider the amount of training and supervision a non-certified teachers require. Knowing the impacts this has not only the roles of other educators, but also on
student success, is important to know before creating learning objectives for training pre-service paraprofessionals.

**Impact on the roles and responsibilities of special educators and paraprofessionals.**

Brown et al. (2005) investigated how paraprofessionals compared to certified teachers in their delivery of tutored reading programs. To answer this question, researchers worked with teachers and paraprofessionals from seven schools across the Intermountain West United States. In the study, 36 certified teachers and 28 paraprofessionals tutored 83 students in grades 2 through 6. The experiment was set up to use two different models of instruction, with 40 of the children in the treatment group using the *Howard Street Next Steps* tutoring model and 43 in the control group using the existing school-district approved reading program, *Open Court*. Over the course of the school year, tutored students received supplemental instruction for either 45 minutes twice a week using the one-on-one *Next Steps* model, or 45 minutes each day of small group instructions using the *Open Court* format. The treatment group receiving the *Next Steps* lessons included guiding reading matching the instructional level of each student, word study, and fluency practice. Meanwhile, the control group read stories in groups and practiced phonics concepts from their classroom basal reader. The researchers found the students who were being tutored by paraprofessionals in the treatment group significantly outperformed students in the control group on the Woodcock posttests in word recognition (ES=0.78), passage reading (ES=0.55) and comprehension (ES=1.01).

While the researchers found certified teachers to be slightly more effective in the treatment group, the evidence for paraprofessionals as effective tutors was substantially positive (Brown et al., 2005). One factor to this success was the provision of training and supervision. Experienced primary teachers with master's degrees were assigned to each school as supervisors
of the treatment model; the same supplementary training and supervision were not provided to the control group. Instead, following the existing design of the Open Court model, the tutors received only direction and supervision from the general classroom teachers of the students they were working with. While it may be possible for paraprofessionals to effectively deliver literacy instruction, we must be mindful of the demands placed on other educators to be managers, trainers, and supervisors.

If we assign roles to paraprofessionals in which they are not supported or qualified to perform, their job satisfaction is greatly at risk (Giangreco et al., 2001). While it may make financial sense to employ paraprofessionals to provide formal reading instruction, low morale can lead to problems of employee retention and the hidden costs of hiring processes (Giangreco et al., 2010). To inform how levels of training and supervision are related to student achievement examples of reading instruction provided by volunteer community members are included in this review. While it is not the purpose of this review to advocate for the use of volunteers, studies utilizing volunteers are included as examples of the level of training and supervision that are needed when working with non-certified teachers. Further, while we have many experienced and talented paraprofessionals working in our schools, it cannot be expected that they have any formal training in early literacy instruction. Further, with pre-service paraprofessionals as the targeted audience for this project, their varied backgrounds and lack of experience working in school-based settings may be comparable to volunteer community members.

One such example can be found in a 2016 study of the program, Reading Partners, a program which serves over 8,500 students across 160 schools in the United States. Using a sample size of 1,166 students in grades 2-5 across 19 schools, Jacob, Armstrong, Bowden & Pancreated (2016) created a randomized trial to assess the effectiveness of Reading Partners, a
program which follows a three-step model using levelled lessons. In the research, each lesson began with the tutee choosing a book for the tutor to read aloud and facilitate a discussion about the text. Next, a skill was reinforced or introduced using the Reading Partners curriculum materials and finally, the tutee had a chance to apply the skill by reading aloud with support from the tutor. To support this process tutors were trained over multi-day sessions and were provided ongoing support through their site coordinator. In addition to training, hired site coordinators selected books to match students’ reading levels and as students progressed Individualized Reading Plans were updated using the data collected throughout the program. Over 28 weeks, students enrolled in the Reading Partners program (n=594) received two 45-minute, one-to-one tutoring sessions a week from a volunteer tutor while students in the control group (n=572) received classroom instruction and regular services offered through their school. Considering the training and preparation that went into the intervention, the assessed impact of this program using tests for reading comprehension, sight word efficiency, and fluency, effect sizes were relatively small (ES= 0.10 for reading comprehension, 0.11 for sight word efficiency and 0.09 for fluency). With such small effect sizes, one must ask if expert time spent training and preparing for less qualified individuals to provide tier 2 reading instruction is worthwhile.

Using volunteer tutor programs may initially seem to be cost effective but there are drawbacks to consider, such as the challenges associated with commitment, training, attendance, and retention (Jacob et al., 2016). Some of these drawbacks were seen in the Readers Partners model when the researchers considered not only the effectiveness of the program, but also the perceptions of the volunteer tutors (Jacob et al., 2016). Volunteer tutors were trained through one-hour long shadowing sessions and provided with ongoing supervision during tutoring sessions, however, the researchers still found that while the tutors felt they had adequate support
to do their jobs successfully, problems with commitment where obvious. Tutors had the option to attend further training sessions held by site coordinators twice a month, but very few actually attended. Further evidence of this was seen by a high dropout rate, with 11 weeks being the average length of time a volunteer committed to. In addition to the small effect sizes and high turnover rates as measured by the researchers, an imagined impact would have been on the school-based staff. In addition to the site coordinators, teachers involved in the study participated in 2-3 weeks of training sessions to learn about the model and had the responsibility of providing ongoing support for the tutors delivering it. Being pulled away from their traditional roles to manage tutors who have high rates of attrition and overall lack of commitment was an ineffective use of their skills.

Ritter and Maynard (2008) found the consequences of neglecting the training and supervision needs of non-certified teachers can be seen in a cautionary example of a program operated out of the University of Philadelphia. Assessing the effectiveness of the West Philadelphia Tutoring Project (WPTP), a program for students in grades 2 through 5, researchers used a randomized trial with 385 students from 11 elementary schools all of whom were identified by their teachers as needing academic support (Ritter & Maynard, 2008). Of the 385 students included in the study, 196 of the students were enrolled in the WPTP, a program operating under the guidance of team leaders. Volunteer university student tutors received some pre-service training and mentorship, however, the focus of the tutoring sessions varied widely. In general, the one-hour a week tutor session included home-work assistance and unspecified activities related to reading and math. The results of this study showed no statistically significant academic gains from participation in the tutor program, and in fact, null scores were presented when the control groups’ year end grades in reading were higher than the treatment group.
Despite these findings the research was published as the authors agreed that reporting studies with null finding can be “critically important because of the opportunity cost associated with ineffective programmes: time and energy expended on ventures that do not work diminish the time and energy for programs that may actually be effective” (Ritter & Maynard, 2008, p. 13).

The time and energy expended on training non-certified teachers impacts the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. A further example of this can be seen in the tutoring framework, *Book Buddies* (Johnston, Invernizzi, Juel, & Lewis-Wagner, 2009). In a push to have all students reading by third grade, the *Book Buddies* framework was first adopted by Charlottesville City Schools in 1992. Evaluating its effectiveness in 2001, Meier and Invernizzi (2011) concluded that “a model of using adult volunteer tutors to tutor high-risk first graders in a closely supervised, one-on-one structured format is not only possible, but also effective” (p. 331). To carry out the research, 55 first-grade children from one elementary school were selected and split into two groups (treatment n=28, control n= 27). Students in the treatment group received 40 tutoring sessions from September to January, while the students in the control group received the same from January to June. The results demonstrated significantly stronger reading skills for the treatment group mid-way through the study, with the control group catching up. Both groups were showing no significant differences in their reading skills by the end of the school year. While the results are promising, the fact that *Book Buddies* is an expert-driven model must be accounted for. To replicate the model, the researchers hired a tutor coordinator with a Masters of Education to take on the supervisory role that the program relies on. As part of the responsibilities, the coordinator trained the tutors over a 3-day workshop, created daily individualized lesson plans for each student, selected and organized appropriate materials, supervised daily training sessions, as well as held informal hour-long training sessions two times
A WORKSHOP FOR PRE-SERVICE PARAPROFESSIONALS

a week. In addition to the training, all responsibilities, according to the Book Buddies manual, can be expected to take 22.5 hours a week per 15 students receiving two 45-minute lessons a week (Johnston et al., 2009, p. 10). As can be seen from this example, it takes highly skilled people to fill supervisory roles, which contributes to special educators finding themselves in positions of managers of staff members as opposed to interventionists (Suter & Giangreco, 2010). This managerial role becomes problematic as the majority of special educators do not receive any formal training in supporting paraprofessionals (French, 2001). If special educators are assuming this responsibility, we need to be aware of how this impacts their caseload.

The level of training provided to non-certified teachers appears to be related to the type of instruction a program relies on. For example, relying less on qualifications, the extensively researched Sound Partners model is a program-driven approach to tutoring using scripted lessons and program specific materials (Vadasy & Pool, 1997). To maintain consistency of instruction, Sound Partners relies on 100 scripted lessons for K-3 students focused on phonological awareness, phonics, word identification, text reading, and writing. A study conducted in 2004 looked at how 79 struggling first graders could benefit from the delivery of this program from paraprofessionals across 11 urban schools in the Northwest United States (Jenkins, Peyton, Sanders & Vadasay, 2004). While the use of a scripted program reduced the training and supervision requirements, it was still recognized in an earlier study of Sound Partners, that “a necessary condition for school-based implementation is having at least one teacher or administrator in the building who is committed to and has the time to invest in the program” (Jenkins, Vadasy, Firebaugh & Profilet, 2000, p. 83). To address this need during the research, the paraprofessional tutors received 3 hours of initial training, as well as informal weekly visits by the research staff over the 25 week-long study (Jenkins et al., 2004). Compared with the 20
other children in the control group, the children receiving 30 minutes a day of tutoring, 4 days a week demonstrated significantly positive differences. Overall, six combined decoding and word reading measures produced a mean of ES=+0.67. While the positive results and low training needs of Sound Partners are attractive, the heavily scripted design of the program has its limits. Other than the pace of the instruction, the ability to individualize and respond to each student through authentic encounters with text in a scripted program is severely limited (Atwell, 2013). This issue is common in boxed commercial reading programs which “typically provide lessons that bear little or no relationship to the research on fostering the development of reading comprehension” (Atwell, 2013, p. 522). The problem is that these programs rarely provide students with opportunities to engage in authentic reading.

The way in which we interact with students can also impact student success. Bingham, Hall-Kenyon and Culatta (2010) were interested in how levels of engagement impact early literacy proficiency by using an instructional framework known as Systematic and Engaging Early Literacy (SEEL). While the study measured a prescribed curriculum, it was different from the other studies reviewed as it began to consider the quality of interactions between students and paraprofessionals. Similar to many of the literacy programs reviewed, the SEEL curriculum systematically scaffolds literacy skills in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, letter knowledge, and letter-sound associations. However, according to the researchers, SEEL instruction is unique in the way that it blends activities intended to engage the attention and affect of young readers. Using this instructional model, 63 students made up of five kindergarten classrooms from two different schools participated in this study examining the effectiveness of the SEEL framework. Over the yearlong study, all students received remedial instruction delivered by paraprofessionals. The students in the control group (n=25) received the district
approved, *Reading One-to-One* tutoring program three times a week for 40 minutes, while the students in the treatment group (n=38) received instruction using the methods of the SEEL curriculum in small groups, three times a week for 30 minutes. Interestingly, the research found that the students who received small group SEEL instruction outperformed those who received one-to-one instruction. This is intriguing as one-to-one models of literacy instruction have predominantly been found in the research to be more effective, especially for students who have been identified as having reading or learning disabilities (as cited in Elbaum et al., 2000). Perhaps making up for the inferiority of a small group model was the quality of the social interactions held between the paraprofessionals and the students. This is an important point when considering how we are training pre-service paraprofessionals to respond to young readers. The type of language they use and the feedback they give the students they are working with may be just as important as the literacy skills themselves.

**Summary of the impact of non-certified teachers supporting early literacy development.** While the research demonstrates that it would be inappropriate to assign instructional roles to paraprofessionals without significant training, there is still the fact, as explained by Fuchs and Fuchs (2006), that paraprofessionals are predominantly working closely with students with reading difficulties. Paraprofessionals are also the ones who are spending individual time with these students where the benefits of one-to-one instruction such as maximized reading time, individualized instruction and feedback are much easier to achieve (Slavin et al., 2011). Recognizing this benefit, many of the studies included one-to-one instruction with the goal of providing authentic opportunities for students and tutor to engage with text together (Brown et al., 2005; Jacob et al., 2016; Meier & Invernizzi., 2001). For example, in the study conducted by Brown et al. (2005) the one-to-one instruction of the
treatment group allowed students to read for 60 minutes per week compared to the small group round-robin structure of the control group which only added up to 30 minutes per week of reading. The amount of time spent reading has been found to be directly related to fluency, a variable which has been found to be the single most important predictor of academic success (Atwell, 2007). However, issues of assigning paraprofessionals instructional responsibilities they are not qualified for impact the roles and responsibilities of other educators as well. As was seen in the research of our changing inclusive education systems, guidance and leadership are now essential for regular communication to share goals and expectations (Biggs et al., 2016 & Morgan, 2016). The need for leadership becomes even clearer when we consider the research of paraprofessionals delivering reading instruction. As a result, the roles and responsibilities of school-based staff are impacted as they are pulled away from their work with students to become trainers and supervisors. For these reasons, we need to cautiously consider the increasing reliance of paraprofessionals delivering formal reading instruction. Unless extensive, ongoing support and expertise can be provided, we need to consider other ways to improve the quality of interactions between paraprofessionals and young readers.

**What Does Research Say About Effective Language to Support Literacy Development and How Can this be Used to Enhance the Quality of Interactions Between Paraprofessionals and Young Readers?**

The final section of this literature review will consider what research indicates to be effective instructional practices with struggling early readers. Of key interest will be the type of language effective teachers use to support students as they read. By focusing on the language used, the goal will be to capture examples of responses that would be appropriate for paraprofessionals to use in their own practice. While none of the studies below directly include
paraprofessionals, they do reinforce the idea that even informal interactions during literacy instruction are important. If fact, many well-known researchers are highlighting how the way we speak and interact with children can greatly impact success. In effective reading classrooms, this type of speech has been found to be less interrogational and more like conversational talk (Allington, 2002, p. 744).

**Language to support literacy development.** A critical component of learning is that it is social in nature and supported by the quality of interactions we have with others (Halliday, 1975). This may be why, as seen in the research of the SEEL curriculum, that the social-emotional engagement of young readers had a positive impact on early literacy learning (Bingham, et al., 2010). To respond and teach directly to children’s individual needs, we need to move beyond packaged, scripted programs (Allington, 2002). These programs often include theoretical assumptions about literacy learning that neglect the students who may not learn in the anticipated way of a program’s design (Clay, 1991). Instead, among factors influencing success in school, including contributions from the student, the home, the school, the curricula, and the methods, it is the teacher who has been shown to have the greatest impact on learning (Hattie, 2009). Hattie (2012) has found a connection between achievement and how a teacher’s “belief and commitments are the greatest influence on student achievement over which we can have some control” (p. 25). Hattie’s (2009) work draws on more than 800 meta-analyses and is supported by over 50,000 empirical studies. The New Zealand research, spanning over two decades, has demonstrated “what is most important is that teaching is visible to the student, and that the learning is visible to the teacher” (p. 25). Our theories of how learning takes place are important, Hattie goes on to say, “the more the student becomes the teacher and the more the teacher becomes the learner, then the more successful are the outcomes” (p. 25). Hattie
recognizes that effective teachers see learning through the eyes of their students and continually make hypotheses about how learning is taking place inside the minds of their students. At the same time, successful students have ownership over their own learning, and by giving and receiving feedback, the process of learning becomes visible to both.

A teacher who sees through the eyes of a student is able to move from evaluating what a child does in terms of correct or incorrect, to hypothesizing how a child may be thinking and using knowledge (Fisher, Fray, & Hattie, 2017). To be able to make a hypothesis however, an understanding about the types of processes and effort required for literacy acquisition are necessary. What we see depends on what we are looking for and every reader deserves to be seen for what they can already do. Through skilled observation, we can “figure out the complicated and beautiful ways readers think and work” (Goldberg, 2016 p. 43). Before we can begin to see students in this way however, our own beliefs need to be evaluated about our students’ abilities to succeed. In 2016, Slavin found that “the evidence establishes, beyond any doubt, that nothing about [struggling readers] means they are doomed to fail in reading” (p. 61). To help these children, researcher Marie Clay has been urging those who are working with young readers to be responsive to each learner, as Clay reminds us, “children experiencing literacy difficulties do not follow predictable paths of progress” (2016, p. 2). To be responsive, the research shows that literacy learning must be seen as a process-based, effort-oriented activity.

**Process-based.** While there are many researchers of early reading behaviours, the work of Clay (1993, 2005) points to children’s specific reading processes (i.e., reading strategies). Clay’s work has drawn importance to self-monitoring, or children overseeing their own thinking while reading. Self-monitoring happens when a reader is aware of when they have successfully read the text and/or when something is not quite right. Contributing to self-monitoring, Clay has
highlighted early strategies to include searching, cross-checking, rereading and self-correcting. While separately labelled, these strategies are often used together, especially as readers become more proficient (Clay, 1993). Searching refers to the multiple sources of information a child may draw from while reading. While this is often automatic and invisible, it can sometimes be seen when a child pauses and scans a page to look more closely at the print or the picture. When a child is searching for more information, they may also be accessing their own background knowledge. By comparing what they know to what they see on the page is what Clay refers to as cross-checking or using multiple sources of information to arrive at what they believe would make sense. Cross-checking often leads to a child making changes as they read, or self-corrections. When a child changes a letter/sound, word, phrase or whole sentence, they are often using new information (from searching) to keep with the meaning of the text. Another way a child works to maintain the meaning of the text is through rereading. Rereading gives the child a chance to confirm if what they have read makes sense, sounds right, and looks right (Clay, 1993).

The use of these early reading processes is critical in becoming a proficient reader but many young readers are often unaware of them. Martin and Kragler (2011) found that while students in kindergarten and grade 1 can and do use reading strategies, they need support to develop their awareness of these strategies. Interviewing and observing 109 children in the Midwestern United States, the researchers found that while most students were observed using some strategies, many were unable to identify the strategies they were using (Martin & Kragler, 2011). For example, while 74% of kindergarten and 68% of first grade students were observed using pictures to support their reading, when asked what they were doing to understand the story, only 20% of kindergarten and 29% of grade one students reported using the pictures. In fact, one
A WORKSHOP FOR PRE-SERVICE PARAPROFESSIONALS

Kindergarten student even reported that he cheated by looking at the pictures. The awareness of reading processes is “especially important for beginning and struggling readers who have naive or vague understanding about strategies they can use while reading” (Paris & Flukes, 2005, p. 121). As seen in the example of the student who thought he was cheating by looking at the pictures, students may not realize they are allowed to certain behaviors like pausing, rereading or looking at the picture. To identify these misconceptions and move students along in their reading, we need to draw attention to the beneficial strategies they are using and provide feedback to support their ongoing use (Paris & Flukes, 2005).

Conscious and deliberate use of new concepts can be nurtured through socially shared experiences (Vygotsky, 1962). Fountas and Pinnell (2015) are imploring educators to “change what you’re noticing and teaching to support self-monitoring, self-regulating systems” (found in Burkins & Yaris, 2016, p. 15). However, a student’s initial awareness and purpose of self-monitoring may be undeveloped. Interested in how to support these undeveloped processes, Paris and Flukes (2005) reviewed existing research and found that for beginning readers, especially, it is best to focus on informally embedding a small number of key strategies into daily interactions. While reading authentic texts, the researchers advised that first graders benefit most from prompts to support decoding unfamiliar words. For instance, if a student was stuck on a word, they suggested prompts such as, “What can you do to figure that word out?”, “Can you break it apart?”, “Are there any word or sounds in that word that you recognize?”, “Can you say the parts and then say them all together?” (Paris & Flukes, 2005, p. 133). By providing these types of prompts and indirect help, the researchers believe that students are able to develop insights into their own strategic problem solving, an awareness that supports independent reading (Paris & Flukes, 2005).
By sharing the process of reading, social interactions support students’ growing ability to identify and monitor their own reading strategies (Paris & Paris, 2001). To be effective, the language to support these strategies must be clearly defined and consistently used (McCarney & Wunderlich, 2006). Interested in the quality and impact of these interactions, Lee and Schmitt (2014) studied eight students in Reading Recovery, an intensive, one-to-one intervention for first grade students experiencing literacy difficulties (Clay, 2016). The advantage of assessing a Reading Recovery program was based on the teachers’ use of consistent and prescribed prompts supporting problem solving strategies. Focusing on eight student-teacher pairs across four elementary schools in the mid-western United States, positive correlations were found between the type of teacher’s instructional language and the students’ adoption of reading strategies. In addition to using the Reading Recovery subtests to measure reading achievement, students’ own knowledge of their strategies was assessed using metacognitive interviews (Schmitt, 1998). These measures, taken at the beginning of the intervention, as well as after the 15th lesson, were combined with the transcribed and analyzed audio-taped recordings of each lesson. From this data, a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores emerged from the metacognitive interviews. The researchers concluded that the instructional language contributed not only to an advancement of reading ability but also to an increase of students’ awareness of their own use of reading strategies.

Lacking an experimental design, the results of Lee and Schmitt’s (2014) study need to be cautiously interpreted. However, their findings can be supported by a larger study also assessing students’ use of reading strategies in a Reading Recovery program. McGee, Kim, Nelson and Fried (2015) compared strategy use of students who were successful in Reading Recovery to those who were unsuccessful. Sampling the running records of 57 first grade students taken by
22 teachers, it was revealed that students who were successful in the program monitored 52.3% of their errors and made self-corrections 40.9% of the time. In comparison, the students who were still below first grade reading level monitored only 37.3% of their errors and self-corrected 23.9% of the time. By analyzing the running records, the researchers recognized that students who self-monitored were more likely to correct an error by rereading, applying their knowledge of letter sounds and word parts, using contextual clues and asking for help. Self-monitoring, the researchers noted, must precede self-corrections as students first have to “notice something is not going right, which causes them to make a decision to take some further action” (McGee et al., 2015, p. 273).

Effort-Oriented. To support the self-monitoring processes necessary for reading, Fountas and Pinnell (2015) are suggesting less teacher talk and more student engagement and empowerment as readers. More attention is needed to the ways in which we move students from “other-assisted (i.e., controlled by teacher language) to self-assisted (i.e., independently controlled)” (Lee & Schmitt, 2014, p. 46). While more research is needed, teachers who use process and effort-oriented language have been found to be more successfully able to move students to self-assisted (Johnston, 2012). Our interactions need to be intentional as “children offer us opportunities to say something, or not, and the choices we make affect what happens next” (Johnston, 2012, p. 4). There are consequences for the type of feedback we use with children and this feedback, if given in a purposeful way, can have the ability to deepen students’ critical thinking skills and sense of agency (Johnston, 2012).

Shifting the way we think about intelligence and motivation, Dweck’s (2007) research on Growth Mindset has uncovered the impact of how we perceive and respond to learning. If effort and processes are not recognized, Dweck (2006) warns that a fixed mindset about learning may
develop. A growth mindset and independent problem-solving skills are supported by allowing students to experience their own cognitive dissonance. To allow for this, we must hold back on heavy prompting and praising of students when they are faced with challenging work. Language that conveys confidence in our students’ abilities to act for themselves, and that help to see themselves as responsible for their own learning, is critical to success (Johnston, 2012). A result of offering feedback about effort and improvement is increased student motivation to read (Allington, 2002). The problem is that adults tend to take on too much of the problem identification and solving when instead, we should be using “prompts that help students think about the tricky parts of the text, reflect on their reading processes, and follow generous wait time” (Burkins & Yaris, 2016, p. 136).

Even children entering kindergarten are likely to come with many literacy skills including general book knowledge, meaning-making strategies and early approaches to print (Lysaker & Hopper, 2015; Martin & Kragler, 2011). Acknowledging this, some researchers are concerned that an overemphasis on isolated decoding skills are devaluing what children have been learning about literacy long before they arrived in the classroom (Dooley & Matthews, 2009; Lysaker & Hopper, 2015). All of these skills are useful when working with print but the risk is that children’s already developing literacy skills are being set aside when the goal should be to connect their early meaning-making experiences with print (Dooley & Matthews, 2009). While it is possible to observe students using strategic literacy processes, noticing them ourselves is not enough. As seen in the research by Paris and Flukes (2005), students need to be made aware of these strategies and the effort used to get to them. As children become aware of their own thinking, strategy use during reading leads to the ability to self-monitor, with the self applying to the personal effort that is needed. Therefore when we use validating questions such as, “How did
you figure it out?” the student is affirmed in his own ability to act independently (Johnston, 2004). Not only does this message contribute to a sense of student agency, it also prompts the student to think further and articulate the processes he used (Johnston, 2004). On the contrary, the overly used responses of “nice job” or “well done” only limits opportunities for further reflection and pays little attention to the effort and processes required for success (Dweck, 2006; Johnston, 2004).

**Summary of language to support literacy development.** Recent research of literacy development supports Hattie’s (2009) research review that conditions for success happen as the student becomes more of the teacher and the teacher becomes more of the learner. When students are aware of the processes and effort that are required for learning they move towards self-regulated learning, or, has Hattie puts it, becoming their own teacher. In reviewed literature, we see that students who self-monitor are more successful readers (McGee et al., 2005). How a student moves into self-regulated literacy actions, however, relies on the actions of a teacher to support the student by drawing attention to the process and effort required (Paris & Flukes, 2005). While children likely arrive in kindergarten with some existing strategic reading processes, they most likely do so unknowingly or naively (Martin & Kragler, 2011). It is by making these processes visible, through social interactions, which draw students’ attention and builds self-monitoring systems (Paris & Paris, 2001; Pinnell & Fountas, 2015). For young readers, strategies to support decoding unfamiliar words is especially useful if informal instructional language is imbedded in informal social interactions throughout the day (Paris & Flukes, 2005). Not only do reading scores improve when intentional and consistent language is used to highlight problem solving strategies, the students’ own awareness of their strategies matures (Fountas & Pinnell, 2015; Lee & Schmitt, 2014).
To use language to provide feedback supporting self-regulated learning requires knowing what to look for. For this reason, we need to grow to admire the complex ways literacy develops by being responsive to each child (Clay, 2016; Goldberg, 2009). Responsiveness means seeing through the eyes of our students and hypothesizing about the processes that may be happening by looking for visible signs of learning (Hattie, 2009). Feedback is important, and knowing when to step in, and just as importantly, when to step back, is what deepens critical thinking and builds independence (Johnston, 2012). Just as students need to have support in bringing their awareness of the processes and effort required for learning, they also need opportunities to solve problems on their own. The teacher becomes the learner when they talk less, and when they do talk, the language supports the processes and effort required for self-regulated learning (Fountas & Pinnell, 2015).
Chapter Three: Project Overview

This project is created to specifically target the quality of interactions around literacy that students are having with paraprofessionals. *Relating to the Mystery of Literacy: Tips for Paraprofessionals in Supporting Young Readers* is a project devoted to preparing pre-service paraprofessionals to respond to young readers using language that supports the processes and effort required for self-regulated learning. The goal of this project is to create learning objectives for a workshop that go beyond offering technique by encouraging the participants to reflect on their own attitudes and understanding of literacy. To begin the workshop, techniques for informally supporting young readers will be presented and explained using current best practices along with specific examples of responses and prompts that can be used by paraprofessionals. The ultimate goal will be to have paraprofessionals use these responses and prompts with students, recognizing that the language they use in practice will be largely dependent on their own experiences and attitudes about literacy. Therefore, the intentions of this workshop will be to go further by encouraging participants to reflect on and extend their own understanding of how we learn to be literate. Looking at who is doing the teaching “often goes unasked even in the places where teachers are educated and employed” (Palmer, 2017, p. 4). Having teachers turn inward to consider their own attitudes and beliefs, and to evaluate their own impact, “should be asked wherever good teaching is at stake, for it honors and challenges the teacher’s heart, and it invites a deeper inquiry than our traditional questions do” (Palmer, 2017, p. 4). This chapter will begin by describing the purpose of the project, its goals, and how knowledge will be transferred to the participants of the workshop. Then I will articulate the rationale and supporting research that shaped the design of this workshop. Next, the major steps of this project with a timeline to completion will be offered. I will then identify the learning objectives of the workshop with
support from secondary sources and finally, potential challenges will be explored.

**Project Description: Purpose, Goals, and Transfer of Knowledge**

“For an artist there is no more serious and, at the same time, more joyous task than to create, through art, a new aesthetic, and ultimately, a new way of being”

-Karel Zeman

Teaching is an art and the purpose of this project is to teach. More specifically, the goal is to teach pre-service paraprofessionals to prepare for shared experiences with young readers. The information in this project will be presented in a workshop-style to participants of the SD62 Educational Assistant Training Program. The project will focus on creating lessons to be shared across a single-day, six-hour stand-alone workshop. At the time of the presentation it is anticipated that the participants will be a month and a half into the program which began in January, 2019. As part of the qualifications for the program, participants will have had to complete English 12 or equivalent, 50 hours working or volunteering with children, shown proof of computer literacy, and have strong communication skills. In addition to these qualifications, acceptance into the program required participants to go through an interview process with preference given to candidates who had experience working with children with exceptionalities. The year-long program adheres to the breaks in the SD62 school calendar making it a 9-month long program. This program will include a practicum and the successful candidates will receive a completion certificate, a prerequisite for working as an EA in School District 62.

**Purpose.** The purpose is to have paraprofessionals using purposeful, consistent language when interacting with young readers. It is worth considering all levels of support students are receiving as research demonstrates that early literacy levels influence behaviour and later success (Allington, 2000; Levy & Chard, 2001; Pinnell & Fountas, 2009; Selznick, 2009; Vaughn et al,
Recognizing Vygotsky’s (1960) claim that the quality of our social interactions impacts our capacity for cognitive problem solving, the quality of interactions between paraprofessionals and young readers must also be considered. Investing in the quality of these interactions could not come at a more crucial time. In addition to the research indicating a connection between early literacy and later success, there is a concern that our increasingly digital world is threatening our capacity for literacy processing (Wolf, 2018). In *Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World*, Wolf (2018) reminds us that humans were never born to read. As a species it has taken thousands of years to carve out the neural pathways that over time have led to the development of highly sophisticated reading and writing systems that we continue to pass on today. Her concern, however, is that our evolutionary wiring is being threatened by our fast-paced, digital world. The neural networks needed for deep reading processes are being traded for highly stimulating, superficially digested information, a trade which Wolf sees as leading to a potentially irreversible cognitive impatience. In schools, paraprofessionals will undoubtedly find themselves involved in helping young children to develop cognitive patience while reading. This project aims to highlight the importance of paraprofessionals to direct children’s attention and problem-solving abilities while reading, as well as to improve the quality of these interactions by explicitly teaching how to do this. Drawing attention to the processes needed for reading creates “profound differences in how we read and how we think depending on which processes dominate the formation of young child’s reading circuit” (Wolf, 2018, p. 8).

**Goals.** Focusing on supplemental instruction, as found in the guidelines created for paraprofessionals, the goals of this project are centered around ways paraprofessionals can informally support reading instruction, including listening to and re-reading stories with students, reinforcing skills, and answering questions (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011). In relation to
literacy learning, this project will “discuss specific techniques, strategies and appropriate language” as is expected of paraprofessionals by both the BCTF and CUPE (2009, p. 7). While examples of prompts may be useful, they are unlikely to be effectively used if they are not understood. In fact, high quality literacy instruction requires teachers to make complex decisions based on their understanding of literacy learning and instruction (Clay, 2001; Schwartz, 2005). During literacy instruction the “decision process can be as complex as that engaged in by trial lawyers or emergency-room doctors” (Schwartz, 2005, p. 443). While this level of expertise is outside the anticipated role of the paraprofessional, they are still likely to find themselves in positions of responding to young readers. Exclusively focusing on informal support, a greater understanding of the techniques will be explored by building a foundational understanding of literacy by offering opportunities for the participants to relate their own understandings of how literacy learning takes place.

**Transfer of knowledge.** The way knowledge is transferred is an act of teaching and an art. Reflections that go beyond technique are what affect the quality of our teaching (Palmer, 2017). This does not mean that technique is not important. In *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*, Palmer (2017) maintains that although technique is an essential element to good teaching, he highlights the importance of considering the deeper question of who is doing the teaching (2017). Similarly, Hattie’s (2012) decade-long meta-analysis supports that above all other factors, the teacher themselves has the greatest impact on learning. Applied to this project, it may also be said that a paraprofessional’s “beliefs and commitments” about literacy learning could have the “greatest influence on student achievement over which we can have some control” (Hattie, 2012, p. 25). To influence beliefs and commitments, the transfer of knowledge will aim to engage three distinct realms identified by
Palmer (2017) - the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual - as places where good teaching comes from. None of these realms can be ignored he says, as all three realms are “interwoven in the human self and in education at its best” (Palmer, 2017, p. 5). While none of these realms will actually be named in the workshop all three have been considered in the creation of the learning objectives. For instance, in the intellectual realm, this is the way we think about teaching and learning, how we know the nature of literacy as a subject, and how we believe literacy learning happens. Apart from transferring techniques of how to respond to young readers, the information shared in this workshop intends to stimulate the intellect by briefly considering the science behind what we know of the reading brain. To connect to the emotional, something Palmer (2017) considers to be related to how we feel when we teach, the intention of the information shared in the workshop will be to empower the participants to see themselves, through the feedback they give to students, as capable of having an impact on learning. The spiritual realm will take it a step further by relating to the “longing to be connected with the largeness of life” (Palmer, 2017, p. 5). By placing what we know about literacy learning in the web of the larger world, connections between what we know about literacy will be related to other scientific disciplines. The purpose of connecting literacy with other great mysteries of life is rooted in the hope that it will influence new understandings about literacy learning and, in this process, create new ways of being.

Support for the Project

Rationale. Inclusive education systems now mean that educators are increasingly working within a network of professionals, an example of which can be seen in the dramatic increase of paraprofessionals working in the field (Suter & Giangreco, 2009). With this increase comes a major shift in roles and responsibilities of special education, something which
researchers are urging us to closely consider (Giangreco et al., 2010). As an advocate for narrowing the roles and responsibilities in the field, it was important to first consider how the role of the paraprofessional fit within the interconnected education system. Evidence from the examples reviewed in the literature have shown that it is not uncommon to rely on paraprofessionals to deliver tier 2 reading instruction (Slavin et al., 2011). However, in the literature reviewed it was discovered that the levels of training and ongoing support needed for paraprofessionals to effectively deliver formal reading interventions are far beyond the scope of this project. Recognizing the limitations of this workshop, the reviewed research of paraprofessionals delivering tier 2 interventions was critical for avoiding “the now widespread practice of employing paraprofessional to work with struggling readers” by making the mistake of designing learning objectives “where the important role of instructional expertise is largely ignored” (Allington, 2001, p. 121).

For paraprofessionals to feel a sense of pride in their job it is important that they feel qualified and understand the purpose of the roles they are assigned. Low job satisfaction is related to paraprofessionals filling roles that have traditionally been that of teachers and this has led to high rates of dissatisfaction and attrition in the profession (Giangreco et al., 2010; Giangreco & Broer, 2005). The role of the special educator is also impacted when it is expected that they become managers and trainers of increasing numbers of paraprofessionals (Drecktrah, 2000; French, 2001; Suter & Giangreco, 2009; Wasburn-Moses, 2005). Therefore, without disrupting the roles of those already working in the system, this project will exclusively prepare paraprofessionals for the informal interactions they are likely to have with young reader. These interactions, however, should not to be undervalued as research has found that early reading strategies are most effectively nurtured on a daily basis through informal interactions (Paris &
Flukes, 2005). These interactions are most effective when common language is used to share expectations and students are consistently supported with the processes and effort required for success (Biggs et al., 2016; Dweck, 2006; Johnston, 2012; Lee & Schmitt, 2014; McCamey & Cummins Wunderlich, 2006; Morgan, 2016).

**Literature supporting the design of the project.** There are six lessons in this workshop, one for each level of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956) is based on increasingly complexity of cognitive levels of critical thinking, with lower levels of thinking in the areas of knowledge and comprehension, moving to middle levels of applying and analyzing and increasing to higher levels of critical thinking in the areas of synthesizing and evaluating. Taking these principles into account, the learning objective of the first lesson uses lower level thinking skills to recall the recommended ways of supporting young readers. By the end of the second lesson, the objective is to have participants summarize the main ideas behind effectively supporting young readers. Moving up in skill level, the third lesson offers an opportunity to make connections between transfer for ownership and the consistent use of prompts focused on the reading processes. Further analyzing this, the fourth lesson will offer a chance for participants to survey their own literacy processes to discover that they can infer that others use similar literacy processes. For some, this may reframe their understanding of literacy in the fifth lesson as they come to admire the processes and effort required for literacy, processes which Wolf (2018) has said are so often easily taken for granted. The final lesson will encourage participants to evaluate any new perspectives they may have gained about literacy learning and consider how this may impact the way they support young readers. It is my hope that scaffolding participants’ learning through the critical thinking skills of recalling, summarizing, connecting,
inferring, reframing, and evaluating, that the formation of an opinion on literacy learning will have the greatest impact on determining whether or not they go on to use these techniques.

The diversity of the audience, as seen in the qualifications for admission into the EA program, is guaranteed to be large. With this in mind, concepts from the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model will be paired with Bloom's Taxonomy. In education UDL is a framework for teaching and learning based on planning for an entry point with all learners in mind. It is based on the idea that diversity is predictable and adjustments should be made in the planning stages based on that predictability (Glass, Meyer, & Rose, 2013). After designing something accessible for everybody, the principles of UDL narrow to consider where some, but not all, will be able to take their learning by further extending the foundational concepts. By planning for universal access to learning, not only is it anticipated that all students will benefit, but in my own experience, the teacher is better able to articulate and reinforce the foundational learning. For this project, the examples and importance of using consistent prompts focused on processes and effort will be reinforced regularly. This is the learning I want every participant to walk away with, making it the entry point that will be continually returned to in subsequent lesson.

**Project Design**

**Secondary sources.** Given the amount of evidence in the literature supporting Clay’s (1991) Reading Recovery program it made sense to choose the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) as a source of information for this project. While it is not the intention to train paraprofessionals to deliver the same quality of instruction as a Reading Recovery teacher, the RRCNA website does offer a few ways of informally supplementing instruction. Written originally for parents, the RRCNA provides informal tips that will be shared in the first
lesson of the workshop by suggesting that children need to: a) be given time to think; b) be reminded to check the picture and think about the story; c) be encouraged to go back and reread; d) be helped to think about the story; e) be asked to start a tricky word with the first sound and; f) be helped to find a part of the word they might know. While these techniques may initially appear simple, the underlying principle can be seen in the transfer of ownership, a skill paraprofessionals need to be proficient in, especially as Broer, Doyle and Giangreco (2005) have found paraprofessionals often over assist and do the work for the student. Clay (1991) has stressed the importance of ownership by saying the goal is to have the students doing most of the work. Each child must build their own reading circuit of which they can either build a simple circuit at a basic level of decoding or they can develop highly sophisticated reading processes over time (Wolf, 2018). The tips recommended by the RRCNA help to support the developmentally appropriate reading processes children need to create self-sustaining circuits.

The language used to effectively transfer ownership over to students while reading requires the use of clear and consistent language (Lee & Schmitt, 2014). To support this, examples of prompts and responses will be provided in the second lesson. In addition to using some of the prompts recommended in Clay’s (2016) *Literacy Lessons for Individuals*, the recommendations of current day literacy guides, such as those found in Goldberg’s (2016) *Mindsets & Moves: Strategies that Help Readers Take Charge*, as well as Burkins and Yaris’s (2016) book, *Who’s Doing the Work? How to Say Less so Readers Can Do More*, will be used to promote paraprofessionals transferring ownership of the reading to students. Just as Clay (2016) urges us to praise the partial right, these authors remind those who work with young readers to honour and admire the effort and processes required for reading. Complementing these perspectives, concepts of student agency promoted by Johnston (2004) in *Choice Words: How*
our Language Affects Children’s Learning and Growth Mindset from Dweck’s (2006) Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, will be blended into the third, fourth and fifth lessons of the workshop. Taking a step back in the fifth lesson and wishing to maintain a connection to the largeness of life, the participants will have an opportunity to admire processes and effort by being reminded of one of the oldest examples of literacy we have, the cuneiform writing styles of the Sumerian civilization. By admiring literacy acquisition as “one of the most important epigenetic achievements of Homo sapiens” in the final lesson, it is hoped that the participants will be encouraged to see their own impact of supporting the literacy development of a younger generation (Wolf, 2018, p. 1).

To engage critically and to reach the diversity of the participants, I will apply the three principles of UDL, multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement in the workshop design. I hope to engage the participants and reach a larger audience by drawing connections between the research of literacy learning and other scientific disciplines by weaving segments from the documentary film, The Most Unknown, into the series of lessons making up the workshop. Directed by Emmy-nominated and Peabody Award-winning filmmaker, Ian Cheney, the documentary presents some of humanity’s biggest questions by inviting nine scientists to engage in dialogue with one another. In addition to an obvious respect and admiration for their disciplines of study, what emerges is a shared understanding that there are many unanswered questions to life's mysteries. One of the central themes of the documentary that I hope to make clear is that we have to keep wondering. For paraprofessionals working with early readers, I want them to keep wondering what is going on in the minds of the young readers they are supporting. Just like scientists I want them to hypothesize what a reader is thinking, what the reader’s behaviour is telling them and how they, as the paraprofessional, can influence
the child’s reading behaviours. With this bigger picture in mind I hope to avoid overloading the participants with methods of literacy instruction that go beyond their levels of qualifications and instead inspire a renewed admiration and curiosity about reading. As Palmer (2017) asks, “Why do we keep trying to cover the field when we can honour the stuff of the discipline more profoundly by teaching less of it at a deeper level?” (p. 125). The purpose of showing this film is to open up dialogue and demonstrate that, just like any other area of study, there is much to be discovered. The important part is that we keep asking questions and understand that, as the microbiologist in the film, Jennifer Macalady states, “we’re slowly creeping towards understanding but we’re sort of towards the beginning”. By presenting these understandings using uncomplicated language the documentary invites a general audience to engage with some of these questions concerned with the largeness of life. Imagining as if literacy researchers and educators were invited into these conversations taking place in the film, the participants will have an opportunity to make connections between literacy research and the larger world. For instance, in the film, cognitive psychologist, Laurie Santos recognizes that “part of our task is to put the pattern together of what works and what doesn’t”. This is relevant to the research into children's’ metacognitive awareness during reading. Clay (1993), Martin and Krager (2011), Paris and Flukes (2005), and Paris and Paris (2001) have helped us to get closer to realizing that children can and do use reading processes very early on even if they unaware of them. Effective literacy support means we need to find out what works and what doesn’t by “trying to understand how the child is using the information on the printed page and relating it to information in his head” (Clay, p. 12, 2016). Looking for what works and what doesn’t is at the heart of Clay’s (1991) internationally renowned Reading Recovery program. By analyzing what works in this specific program, researchers have found individualized instruction and consistent use of
prompts to support reading processes have been successful (McGee et al., 2015). While research may only offer a glimpse of what may be going on inside the minds of young readers, Astrobiologist, Luke McKay reminds us that we get a step closer by examining the surface to see “a connection to the subsurface world”. Of course, we are cognitively limited in what we are able to know of the processes and effort children use while reading but we have to do our best by using and responding to what we see on the surface.

Conclusion

To respect the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, as well as avoid overwhelming the audience, a narrow focus on literacy methods will be avoided. While ultimately the measure of success will be having the participants following the techniques shared in the first lesson, it would be naive to think all they need is to be given a list of ways to do this. The subsequent lessons are meant to inspire the participants to internalize the importance of using these techniques by stimulating their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual connections to what we know about literacy learning. By teaching less at a deeper level it is hoped that the participants will be able to see the value of supporting young readers. It is likely that the participants are going to work in classrooms where they will see numerous methods for teaching literacy and may be asked to support students with reading in various ways. Regardless of the methods used, if the participants have been able to develop their beliefs and commitments about literacy, they may be more likely to see the value in their role, a variable Hattie (2009) describes as having an impact on student learning. If a paraprofessional supporting a young reader can see literacy as a great human achievement while recognizing the link between early literacy and later success, they may be more likely to regard their position as meaningful. If they can understand the processes and effort that are required for reading, they may be more likely show admiration
for the students in front of them. Further, if they know what language to consistently use to focus a student’s attention while reading, they may be able to positively impact a student’s independent reading long after they have stopped supporting them.
Chapter 4: Reflection

Summary

The purpose of this project was to investigate how to improve the quality of literacy support that young students receive from paraprofessionals. The importance of this has become evident as the number of paraprofessionals working in our schools is increasing and research indicates that they are mainly working with students who struggle with reading. The concern, as confirmed in the research, was that paraprofessionals do not receive enough pre-service training and professional development to prepare them for this role. To identify and define appropriate skills for paraprofessionals to support young readers, research was conducted on their roles and responsibilities in relation to other professionals in the field. Clearly emerging from this research was the lack of definite roles and responsibilities in special education, an issue which is impacting the quality of support that students are receiving. For example, it was found that special educators are often responsible for managing paraprofessionals and preparing them to work with the students who traditionally have been supported by the special educators themselves. The impact of this shift in roles was quite evident in the research regarding paraprofessionals delivering literacy interventions. The interventions delivered by paraprofessionals which had a positive impact on student achievement required intensive ongoing training and supervision by experienced educators.

Recognizing the limited scope of this project, the research helped to define appropriate skills for paraprofessionals by focusing on those that would be the least disruptive to the roles of other professionals and isolating those which would not depend on extensive training and ongoing support. With this in mind, one important aspect found in the research was an educator’s understanding of the processes and effort required for literacy. As demonstrated in the research,
A WORKSHOP FOR PRE-SERVICE PARAPROFESSIONALS

our beliefs about how learning occurs can have the greatest impact on student achievement. Therefore, it became the purpose of this project to help develop the perspective that paraprofessionals use to view literacy learning. If paraprofessionals are helped to understand some basic reading processes, they will be more prepared to guide students towards developing their own awareness of these processes, something which the research indicated was a key factor to success. In other words, understanding some basic principles of literacy development will encourage paraprofessionals to use the type of language needed to draw students’ attention to the reading processes necessary for them to building strong reading skills. Specifically, the research indicated that young students benefit most from limited but consistent, process-oriented feedback and praise focused on a small number of reading strategies. It was also found that supporting what a student is already doing by acknowledging the effort they apply while reading has a positive effect on the continued success of the reader.

Discussion

Given the lack of professional development opportunities that became evident from the research, this workshop would also be appropriate to share with paraprofessionals currently working in schools. The need for this research was confirmed when the instructor of our district’s EA training program expressed to me that the paraprofessionals in our district need additional strategies beyond saying “sound it out”. Knowing the time-sensitive importance of young readers developing foundational literacy skills, we must try to improve the quality of support some of our most vulnerable learners are receiving. Therefore, the purpose of creating this workshop was to better prepare paraprofessionals for the informal interactions they would most certainly be having with students and text. By teaching paraprofessionals what to look for when reading with a child (e.g. rereading, looking to the picture) this would help equip them to
A WORKSHOP FOR PRE-SERVICE PARAPROFESSIONALS

offer appropriate feedback to the developing reader. The workshop was designed for the participants to not only walk away with six reading strategies they can support young readers with, but also with a new perspective of literacy learning. An appreciation for the complex development of the reading brain was shared with participants to help them see the importance of helping students develop the processes and effort required for reading. Further, demonstration of how the brain integrates print with meaning processes was outlined so participants could see the impact of using consistent feedback to support a balance of these strategies. Finally, the workshop addressed the issue raised in the research which found that paraprofessionals do too much of the work for students. Interspersed throughout the workshop were ways paraprofessionals could encourage young readers to become active participants in their own learning by transferring the ownership to the students themselves.

Reflection

As the number of paraprofessionals increase, in some cases even outnumbering teachers, such as at the school where I work, more training opportunities need to be provided. Paraprofessionals are the ones who are most commonly available to provide one-on-one support, and yet from my observations, we underestimate the powerful learning opportunities that occur during this time. We are making the mistake of assuming that sitting down with a child to read a book is something that requires little technique and that therefore, our paraprofessionals need little preparation for. Only recently through my training as a Reading Recovery teacher, as well as through the development of this project, I have found that this couldn’t be further from the truth. I’ve learned that the feedback we give students through the daily interactions we have with them can have a very great impact on the formation of their reading habits.
Imagine if all the feedback young readers received exclusively focused on only a small number of reading processes. While I understand the level of support a paraprofessional can offer a child is limited when compared to the support that can be provided by a literacy specialist, the reality is that these continual interactions between children and paraprofessionals are happening regardless. We need to bridge the gap of instruction by also training paraprofessionals to look for some of the basic reading processes children use. For instance, the six strategies that were outlined for the participants during the workshop were adapted from a list of ways parents could support their children created by the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA). If the RRCNA believes that parents are capable of supporting their children with these techniques, surely, we can train paraprofessionals to be capable to doing the same. As I have discovered though, providing crucial feedback to help direct a child’s attention to possible strategies takes more practice than one might initially think. In my experience, we have a habit of reverting to what is familiar (e.g. “sound it out”, giving them the word) which then deprives the developing readers of the important problem-solving opportunities necessary to growth and success. It is not enough to simply give paraprofessionals a list of ways they can support a young reader, they need to understand the purpose and impact of these supports as well as ample opportunities to put them in practice.

Limitations

While the participants of the workshop acknowledged that they learned more about literacy than they had realized, and that by the end of the workshop were able to recognize the importance of process-oriented feedback, they also discovered that it takes much more practice than they had anticipated. The participants used the final 30 minutes of the workshop to practice their newly learned skills and, during this time, it is was gratifying to observe many of them
integrating a balance of print and meaning strategies in their feedback with each other. However, many participants admitted to also reverting to their old habits. It was satisfying to see the participants reflecting on the type of support they were providing although it did demonstrate, as I anticipated, that much more practice will be needed. For this reason, one limitation of the project is that it is a single-day, standalone workshop. Another obvious limitation is that the practice the participants did have was contrived and not actually done with children authentically trying to make sense of a text. These limitations are unfortunate realities considering that “quite simply, only sustained professional development with ongoing support and dialogue can have positive effects for teachers and students” (Green, Gonzalez, Lopez-Velasquez & Howards, 2013, p. 28). A further limitation of this project was the lack of research of paraprofessionals supporting readers through process-oriented feedback. While many studies evaluated the impact of paraprofessionals delivering literacy interventions, there were no studies found which specifically measured the impact of the feedback paraprofessionals use to support students with reading. This could be seen as a limitation since this project relied on research which only measured the quality of feedback given by certified teachers and, therefore, we do not yet know if paraprofessionals are capable of having the same impact.

Conclusion

This project contributed to the training opportunities for preservice paraprofessionals by helping to prepare them for the interactions they will be having with young readers. To achieve an even larger impact, I believe this workshop could be adapted and shared with both current paraprofessionals and certified teachers. An obvious fact emerging from the research conducted during the development of this project was that the roles and responsibilities in education today are very much interconnected. Not only are more professional development opportunities needed
for paraprofessionals, but for teachers as well, to further train in ways to provide ongoing support for paraprofessionals. Focusing on ways teachers can support paraprofessionals with informal interactions with young readers is one way teachers can support paraprofessionals without taking time away from their own instructional time with students. In this way, sharing this workshop with paraprofessionals and teachers could enhance the collaboration around the shared responsibilities of supporting young readers. If teachers and paraprofessionals alike are able to use common language and work together to consistently offer students explicit feedback focused on the processes and effort required for literacy, the quality of literacy support students receive will most certainly improve.
References


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Suter, J., & Giangreco, M. (2009). Numbers that count: Exploring special education and


• Welcome, purpose of the project and structure of the day

• The focus is on supporting *young* readers because students who fail to develop foundational literacy skills are likely to continue to struggle – more likely to misbehave and less likely to graduate (Allington, 2000; Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).
• Introduce self (involvement in the district, teaching experience)
• Personal purpose for the workshop
Lesson One: Guiding Question

What are effective ways of supporting young readers?

- Hand out note-taking templates
- Read guiding question – we all have our own experiences that contribute to what we know about supporting young readers
- Allow time for pairs to discuss their own experiences with literacy (personally/professionally), as well as the guiding question
- Invite responses, validate all responses to be valuable, especially when time spent reading generally improves reading (Allington, 2000).
• Children arrive with a diversity of language and literacy experiences (Dickinson et al., 2003).

• Significant differences with prerequisites for reading – some children will continue to quickly build on these skills while other may develop early reading difficulties

• As EAs, working with students who have reading difficulties is now one of the most common roles (Wasburn-Moses et al., 2013).
  • 80% who have learning disabilities in reading also have challenges with reading (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006)
  • Students who struggle with emotional or behavioral problems are at a higher risk of having reading difficulties (Selznick, 2009, Vaughn et al., 2002)

Why Now?
• Some literacy researchers are concerned with how our increasingly digital world is threatening our capacity for literacy processes (Wolf, 2018). Explain how Wolf (2018) believes we may be losing our cognitive patience for deep reading.

---

**Purpose**

**Why is it important?**

**Why now?**
As an EA, what will my role be?

• Understanding roles and responsibilities is important, especially in inclusive education systems where there are many interconnected roles

• Offer examples of how many people may be involved with a students program

• Learning our roles means we are better able:
  • Collaborate around shared responsibilities
  • Have consistent expectations for students
  • Offer different perspectives
  • Develop a positive staff culture (Morgan, 2016; Biggs et al., 2016).
“In order to foster a co-operative, respectful working relationship, teacher assistants need to be aware of those responsibilities that are specific to teachers”

(BCTF/CUPE, 2009 p.5)
### Whose job is it anyway?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Shared</th>
<th>Educational Assistant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reviews and reinforces learning activities for concept and skill development.</td>
<td>Review learning resources together to clarify and share experiences and expectations.</td>
<td>Reviews and reinforces learning activities using lesson plans and learning strategies developed by the teacher/team to help students master concepts and skills.</td>
</tr>
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(BCTF/CUPE, 2009, p.6)

- Reinforce the teachers’ roles to develop learning activities for concepts and skill development
**Whose job is it anyway?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Shared</th>
<th>Educational Assistant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defines the use of specific techniques, strategies, and appropriate language as required in individual situations</td>
<td>Discuss specific techniques, strategies and appropriate language</td>
<td>Implements specific techniques, strategies and appropriate language as discussed or demonstrated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(BCTF/CUPE, 2009, p.7)

- Stress that this workshop is to learn how to provide informal support and not cover specific concepts and skill development (e.g. phonics)
- Offer examples of where EAs may be providing informal reading support
Activity: Back-to-Back

1. Each person will receive one tip for supporting effective readers
2. Once you had read it, when the music starts, take your tip with you and begin to move around the room freely*
3. When the music stops listen for the instruction (e.g. “back-to-back”) and move to find a person to stand with “back-to-back”.
4. On the instruction “turn and talk”, turn towards your partner and share your tips with each other.
5. Once tips have been shared, exchange pieces of paper with the tips and wait for the music to move freely* again. We will rotate through this sequence, finding a new partners and exchanging tips each time.

- Using key strategies adapted from the parent tips offered through the Reading Recovery Council of North America

- Read instructions, pass out tips to each participant
Effective Ways of Supporting Young Readers

- Give them time to think
- Remind them to check the picture
- Encourage them to go back and reread

Adapted from RRCNA

- Allow time for participants to write each tip
• Relate strategies to guiding question

• Upcoming lesson will explore these strategies further (purpose, how to use them, what to say)
• To learn more about the effectiveness of these tips we are going look further at what literacy educators and researchers are saying

• To connect this to the larger world, we will go further by connecting research in literacy to what is being said in other disciplines

• The Most Unknown
  • Presents some of humanity's biggest questions by inviting 9 scientists to engage in dialogue
  • Common themes are also found in literacy research
"The history of science is full of examples where an understanding has been developed for something that seemed previously entirely mysterious. The reason it can do that is because it is a cumulative enterprise, you don’t start from scratch every time in science, you are building on a whole tradition, not only of knowledge but also methods and techniques.”  - Anil Smith, Neuroscientist

"Human beings were never born to read. The acquisition of literacy is one of the most important epigenetic achievements of homo sapiens.”

(Wolf, 2007 p. 1)

Make connections between the quotes

- The fact that we are capable of reading, and that we have system for it, is something easily taken for granted but is something worth marveling at (Goldberg, 2016; Wolf, 2018).

- It has taken us thousands of years to carve out neural pathways needed for our highly sophisticated writing system. While the system is passed on, each person has to continue to carve out their own neural pathways (Wolf, 2018).

- Show film segment 1:08-1:16 (8 min)
• Take a moment for the participants to recall the recommended ways of supporting developing readers.

• To help remember, have the participants draw a symbol of each way of supporting young readers on their note page
Lesson Two: Guiding Question

What is at the foundation of supporting young readers?

• Have the participants share the symbols they came up with

• Read guiding question
“No learner can afford to be dependent on the teacher for everything that needs to be noticed, so teachers have to teach children to look for possibilities”

(Johnston, 2004, p.17)

• Ask: when we look at the tips for supporting young readers, how could they be summed up into a single sentence?

• Have participants revisit tips, work in pairs and share out

• “They can’t get away with being passive participants when they are the ones doing the thinking” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007, as found in Goldberg, 2016, p.16).
**Activity: Mindful Tasting**

- Purpose: to experiment with what is possible when someone helps to support the activity of our brains by directing our attention.
- Hand out chocolate, read the script (Appendix 2.1)
- Ask: how the prompts for mindful tasking are similar to the recommendations for supporting young readers?
- Relate:
  - Were you given time to think about the chocolate?
  - Were you reminded to draw your attention to the taste?
  - If your mind wondered, were you encouraged to return your attention back to your senses?
  - Were you helped to keep your focus?
  - Was the task broken down so that you could direct your attention to one thing at a time?
  - Were you helped to sense things that might otherwise go unnoticed when eating chocolate?
Researchers found that while most students were observed using some strategies, many were unable to identify the strategies they were using (Martin & Kragler, 2011). Eg. 74% of kindergarten and 68% of first grade students were observed using pictures to support their reading when asked what they were doing to understand the story, only 20% of kindergarten and 29% of grade one students reported using the pictures. In fact, one kindergarten student even reported that he cheated by looking at the pictures (Martin & Kragler, 2011).
Thinking about the activity of the brain while children are reading – or, the “reading processes” they are using

Researchers have found that students who are aware of the strategies available to them are more successful readers (McGee et al., 2015).

Have participants return to the six strategies to become more aware of these strategies as reading processes. By drawing attention to these processes we are helping students with directing their attention and building these processes

Use the board to turn the six strategies into examples of reading processes children use
Make connections between the quotes

• At the heart of science is measurement, with reading, it is how we know if our instruction is effective and where we need to provide support

• In this clip, even something like time can not be fully measured. With reading, it is much the same, we can measure a reading level, but that is not the end. If we go beyond this we can start to see what is happening below the surface by looking at the processes readers are using.

• Show film segment 1:06 - 1:08 (2 min)
A Note on Measuring Reading Skills

- Observations, running records, class assessments
- Fountas & Pinnell Reading Assessments
- WJIV Reading Assessments
- Psycho-educational Assessments

- Note that measuring reading skills to see what is going on inside the minds of readers is not an easy task

- Briefly describe the types of measurements that we use to determine reading skills
• Reading levels are common measurements

• Students can enjoy all levels of books for different purposes
  • The type of support we provide varies on the purpose of the activities
  • EAs work with readers in a variety of situations (offer examples)

• The idea behind levelling is that the students are exposed to material within their range of reading independently or with some instruction

• Accuracy rates – teacher’s responsibility to measures/selects materials, however something to be aware of (e.g. if 90% of more of the text is challenging, we may want to confirm the purpose of the activity with the teacher). Keep in mind that independent is not always the purpose.

• Always avoid overwhelming the student. If the text appears to be too difficult: a) preserve the enjoyment by sharing the reading/taking over etc. b) let the teacher know to confirm the purpose and give feedback
• Take a moment to summarize the main idea(s) behind supporting young readers by returning to the sentence starter from the beginning of the lesson. This time, feel free to make changes or add more detail.
Lesson Three: Guiding Question

What can we say to support the formation of reading processes in young readers?
By sharing the process of reading, social interactions support students’ growing ability to identify and monitor their own reading strategies

(Paris & Paris, 2001)

• Revisit the reflection question from the second lesson and allow time for participants to share (e.g. by helping draw awareness/attention, transferring ownership, teaching students to look for possibilities, building reading habits etc.)
The differences in how we read and how we think will depend on which processes dominate the formation of the reading brain

(Wolf, 2018)

- It’s not about what reading level children are at, it’s about the way children read.
- By providing prompts that support reading processes we are helping to direct their attention and form the processes that are required for deep reading.
For beginning readers especially, it is best to focus on informally embedding a small group of key strategies into daily instruction. Research has advised that first graders benefited most from prompts to support decoding unfamiliar words. (Paris & Flukes, 2005)

- Although support is helpful, it ultimately requires a student’s own effort
- Transfer of ownership is part of the learning processes (Johnston, 2004)
- A small group of key strategies need to be consistently used to build independence
- Decoding does not mean only focusing on visual, we want to go beyond the print, have students think about what makes sense and sounds right (Clay, 1991). E.g. *the dog pulled on his ______*. *The sun was about to go _______*.
- Activity: Display posters (Appendix 3.1). Have the participants travel around the room to match the prompts to the strategy. When they return, stress the fact that the exact wording is not as important as the consistent use of the prompt. We also want to try to use a balance of strategies so the child develops many strategies of decoding unfamiliar words.
Make connections between the quotes

• The subsurface world is like the activity of the brain we can’t see while a student is reading.

• We use what we can see, however, by watching for evidence of students using strategies to hypothesize what is happening in their brains while they read.

• We need to continue to look for evidence, but we first need to know what to look for (e.g. strategic activity during reading).

• Show film segment: 27:30 – 32:10 (5 min)
• The main idea behind supporting students with reading is that we transfer the problem solving to the students.

• Take a moment to make a connection between this and the importance of using prompts like the examples given.
Lesson Four: Guiding Question

What can we infer about the literacy processes others are using?

- Reading guiding question – what do we know* is happening in the brains of others while they are reading?
  *of course we can’t know for sure (measure & observe, hypothesize, survey our own thinking)
Readers need to integrate both print and meaning strategies to make sense of the text (Burkins & Yaris, 2016).

- To simplify what research is saying is happening in the brain draw a balance Print/meaning Venn Diagram on the board (Burkins & Yaris, 2016, p.18).

- In education, there has been an ongoing debate as to which area is the best to focus on. Briefly explain the phonics (print) vs whole language (meaning) approaches to teaching literacy. While the debate remains, it is now more commonly accepted that both are equally important.
“I’m H_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Granger, by the way, who are you?
She said this all very fast.
Harry looked at Ron, and was relieved by his st_ _ _ ned face that he hadn’t learned all of the course b_ _ _ _ by heart either.
“I’m Ron Weasley,” Ron mut_ _ _ _ _ _ .
“Harry Potter,” said Harry.
“Are you really?” said H_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ .

(Activity
• As the participants read the passage, have them try to pay attention to their own thinking

• Have them note what they recognize themselves doing to figure out the missing words

• Have pairs compare strategies used

• Reveal correct answers: Hermione, stunned, books, muttered, Hermione

• Go over the list of possible strategies that were used, most likely a balance of print and meaning strategies were used)
Fluid retention and edema have been observed in some patients taking NSAIDS, including CELEBREX. NSAIDS should be used with caution in patients with fluid retention or heart failure. NSAIDS, including CELEBREX, may diminish the antihypertensive effect of angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and angiotensin II antagonists, and in some patients can reduce the natriuretic effect of furosemide and thiazides. (Pfizer, 2015)

Activity
- Reliance on reading processes and effort become more obvious when reading something we are unfamiliar with.

- Have participants read the passage

- Explain that it is probable that given a lack of prior knowledge about medical terminology related to arthritis, they had to rely on print information.

- Draw a Venn Diagram on the board with Print being the dominating circle (Burkins & Yaris, 2016, p.20).

- Ask: while reading, where you able to ask yourself if made sense or sounded right? Probably not, with little background knowledge, it’s difficult to tell.
After all I’d heard about her, I expected to meet a ________ of a woman. But this tiny, birdlike old lady with bright blue eyes met me at the door wearing __________ and a long dress and she was totally charming. I helped her __________ some ________ and she talked me into buying three dozen ________ that I didn’t even want. A lot of them were ______________.

Activity
• Have participants complete the passage
• Reveal correct answers – giant, gumboots, chop, wood, eggs, bad
• Have participants return to the 6 strategies to think about which strategies they used.
• Ask:
  • *Time to think* - did they need uninterrupted time to think and test things out for themselves?
  • *Check the picture* - would a picture have helped?
  • *Go back to reread* - was it helpful to reread?
  • *Think about the story* - did you try to put it into context? To visualize? Would more context have helped?
  • *Use the first sound* - would having an initial letter helped to narrow possibilities?
  • *Find a part of the word you know* - would having partial words or knowledge of how long the word was helped to narrow possibilities?

• With no letters to assist in figuring out the words in the blanks, the only choice as a reader is to insert words that would make sense and sound right based on what is known about the context of the passage (Burkins & Yaris, 2016).

• Draw a Venn Diagram on the board that shows an overreliance on meaning (Burkins & Yaris, 2016, p.23)
We need to put equal spotlight on print and meaning by balancing our use of prompts.

Print dependency = students always sound out words (superficial reading, not thinking about the story)

Meaning dependency = students overlooking the print (may interpret the authors message)

Have pairs return to the 6 tips to consider whether they support print, meaning or both. Go over the answers as a group and explain why each one supports print (P) or meaning (M)

- Time to think – P, M
- Check the picture – M
- Reread – P, M
- Think about the story – M
- Use the first sound – P
- Find a part you know – P
Make connections between quotes

- How do we help students to the point of expertise? We use what we believe may be going on inside the minds expert readers (e.g. reading processes – print/meaning strategies) and then help novice readers to develop the same habits.

- Show film 17:40 – 23:00 (6 min)
Take a moment to survey your own literacy processes in relation to what you may not infer others may be using. In other words, what can you say about the strategic activity that may be happening in the brains of readers?
Lesson Five: Guiding Question

What is there to admire about the role of supporting literacy learning?

• Read guiding question – it is easy to take something for granted when we are proficient and when we are immersed in it

• Reading and writing plays such a big part of our lives that most of the time it goes unnoticed

• Automaticity prevents us from recognizing process and effort

• Have participants imagine an illiterate world. Then allow time to discuss and record in pairs of list of purposes or examples of where we use reading and writing

• Go over some of the examples and encourage participants to take a moment to recognize the importance of passing down a skill that we so heavily rely on. By recognizing this importance we can begin to see the greater purpose for supporting literacy.
To look further at what we can admire about literacy learning, we are going to go back in time to “see the world of literacy in a clay tablet”
• Across the world and back in time to 3000 BCE in Sumer, now Southern Iraq, between the Tigris and Euphrates

• One of our earliest sophisticated writing systems, known as cuneiform.
• Early writing systems were catalysts for the intellectual development of our species (Wolf, 2008, p.2)

• Cuneiform was set apart from other writing systems as it became abstract
  • Using symbols to represent individual sounds in oral language
  • Attending to individual sounds (phonological awareness) would have been a whole new cognitive challenge.
  • Using symbols to represent these sounds (phonics) continues to be the basis of our writing system today (Wolf, 2008).
How do we know?
- Late 19th century
  - Tablets excavated by University of Pennsylvania Museum
  - Herman Hilprecht was famously known for analyzing these tablets, often recorded by bureaucrats, scribes, businessmen and royalty

- Distinctly different tablets were found massed together in tablet houses or “e-dubbas”
  - It was obvious that they were the work of novice scribes (clumsy/awkward)
  - Years of explicit teaching was required, a great amount of effort over many years can be seen.
  - Commonly contained one side of the teacher’s inscription and the other side where a student would practice (Tinney, 1998).
Did Sumerians take a phonics (print) approach or a whole language (meaning approach)?

- They took both, we know this because two types of text were found:
  - Lexical – list of words arranged by meaning (e.g., common vocabulary) or by textual relationships (e.g., root words)
  - Literary – Myths, hymns, praises to gods, cultural narratives (Tinney, 1998; Wolf, 2008).
- Since 3000 BCE, we have known that we need to be aware of how learning happens and explicitly teach with a balance of print and meaning strategies
- There are obvious advantages to forming a writing system for business, politics, agriculture etc. but what about the cultural myths and narratives? What value did these bring and why were they included in the tablet houses?
- One famous example is the popular Sumerian narrative – Gilgamesh.
  - Similar stories are still told today with common themes of greed, competition, romance, compassion, friendship, forgiveness.
- Literacy allows us to find connection and meaning, something important even in the earliest stages of literacy learning. This is the reason why the 6 strategies are focused on supporting students with meaningful, authentic text and not on teaching the rules or memorization of the English language.
Literacy learning is more than just learning how to “break the code”

Deep reading is about connecting with imagery, empathy, personal experience and background knowledge, and critical thought.

In a digital world, Wolf (2018) is concerned about the kind of reading we are doing (skimming, rapid internet searching) and how this is changing the way we relate to the world through literacy. Thus, we can admire the importance of taking quiet moments to sit with a child and support them in connecting with some of humanity’s most timelessly shared experiences through text. In today’s day and age, it may be more important than we realize.

Make connections between the quotes

If we can learn what to look for, to see the processes and effort needed for reading, we can begin to admire the magnificent ways the brain works and the greater purpose of supporting literacy.

Show film 0:33 – 3:30 (3 min)
• It is helpful to ask ourselves what processes can we see the child using? We can frame these as questions.

• Have the participants revisit the tips and write the strategies as questions to ask themselves. Complete as a group but have the participants complete their note page. When a child gets stuck, are they: Taking time to think? Looking at the picture? Going back to reread? Thinking about the story? Trying the first letter sound? Saying part of the world they know?

• Reflection question – now that you have had an opportunity to admire the role of supporting literacy learning, take a moment to reframe any new understandings of literacy you may now be having by writing a sentence or two beginning with the statement: Supporting literacy learning is _________________.

Reflection and Movement Break
Lesson Six: Guiding Question

How can our perspective of literacy learning influence the way we support young readers?
• Two lenses to look through
  • Deficit lens – looking for what the student doesn’t know how to do
  • Admiring lens – looking for what the student is already doing

• The lens we chose to use is important as “a teachers beliefs and commitments are the greatest influence on student achievement over which we can have some control” (Hattie, 2012, p.25)
• Return to question written in previous lesson
  • By focusing on these questions we are able to focus our attention on the processes

• We can teach strategies to develop growth mindsets by giving students feedback teaching them how to solve problems and apply effort

• Growth mindset – Dweck’s (2007) research has shifted the way we think about intelligence and motivation

• Fixed vs Growth Mindsets

• Fixed – explained as something you have or do not have, either good at reading or not good at reading, little you can do to change your reading ability, fear of making mistakes while reading; if your good at reading you shouldn’t need to try, afraid of selecting new and challenging books

• Growth – ability as something to develop (through effort), a wanting to become a better reader, a willingness to make mistakes while reading, selects new and more challenging books.
We need to keep focused on process and effort!

- Students need to able to see themselves as active participants in their learning. If we can help students to recognize
  - There are multiple ways of solving problems; they need to see themselves as problem solvers (Johnston, 2004).

- The language we use has an impact on this.

- If the task is within a students control, we need to avoid jumping in too soon
  - Instead of offering empty praise, like “good job”, we can help them gain the strategies they need “by keeping them focused on the process” (Dweck, 2007, p.39)
  - One way to do this is by giving them credit for the work they are doing though process-oriented praise (ie. good for you, you looked to the picture!)

- Many readers are unaware of what they are doing so it helps draw their awareness and demonstrates that naming our processes is helpful for becoming independent (Goldberg, 2016).
Activity
• Have the participants complete the table of process-oriented praise to the correct strategy. Display these examples around the room on poster paper (Appendix 6.1).

Activity
• Pair up the participants and pass out PM books. Have the participants take turns being the teacher so they can practice using some of these prompts. Have the student get stuck on some words to allow time for the teacher to prompt, as well as figure some tricky words on their own to allow the teacher to provide feedback on what they saw them doing.
Make connections between the quotes

- The way we look at how things work depends on the lens we are looking through.

- If we can admire the processes and effort students are using while reading we are able to offer feedback to help the student see what works and what doesn’t.

- Show film 1:17-1:28 (11 min)
• Take a moment to evaluate any new perspectives you may have gained about literacy learning and consider how they may impact the way you will support young readers.
“The future of the human species can best sustain and pass on the highest forms of our collective intelligence, compassion, and wisdom by nurturing and protecting the contemplative dimension of the reading brain”

(Wolf, 2018, p.14)

- Thank participants
References


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## Lesson 1 Note Taking Template

### Guiding Question: *What are effective ways of supporting young readers?*

An Educational Assistant implements specific _____________________, _____________________ and _____________________

as discussed or demonstrated (BCTF & CUPE, 2009, p.7)

**Tips for supporting young readers:**

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 

**Reflection:** Take a moment to recall the recommended ways of supporting developing readers. To help you remember, reread the list of tips and draw a symbol for each one in the space below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Lesson 2 Note Taking Template

Guiding Question: *What is at the foundation of supporting young readers?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We can support young readers by</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

While research has shown that students in kindergarten and grade 1 can and do use reading strategies, they need ___________ to develop their ________________ of these processes.

Examples of reading processes young children use:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Levels</th>
<th>If the reading material appears to be too hard for the child, I could:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>__________ - Independent</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__________ - Instructional</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__________ - Hard</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflection: Take a moment to summarize the main idea(s) behind supporting young readers by returning to the sentence starter from the beginning of the lesson. This time, feel free to make changes or add more detail if you wish.

We can support young readers by
___________________________________________________________________________.
### Lesson 3 Note Taking Template

| Guiding Question: What can we say to support the formation of reading processes in young readers? |
|__________________________________________________________________________________________|

#### Examples of prompts to support reading processes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Give me time to think</th>
<th>Remind me to check the picture and think about the story</th>
<th>Encourage me to go back and reread</th>
<th>Help me to think about the story</th>
<th>Ask me to start a tricky word with the first sound</th>
<th>Help me find a part of the word I might know</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Reflection:
The main idea behind supporting students with reading is that we transfer the problem solving over to the students. Take a moment to make a connection between this and the importance of using prompts like these.
A WORKSHOP FOR PRE-SERVICE PARAPROFESSIONALS

Lesson 4 Note Taking Template

Guiding Question: *What can we infer about the literacy processes others are using?*

Readers need to integrate both _______ and _______ strategies to make sense of the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print Dependent</th>
<th>Integration of Print and Meaning</th>
<th>Meaning Dependent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Print Dependent</td>
<td>Integration of Print and Meaning</td>
<td>Meaning Dependent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circle whether the strategy supports print, meaning or both:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Print</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time to think</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check the picture</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go back to reread</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think about the story</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the first sound</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find a part you know</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflection: Take a moment to survey your own literacy processes in relation to what you may now infer others may be using. What can you say about the strategic activity that may be happening in the brains of readers.
## Lesson 5 Note Taking Template

### Guiding Question: What can we admire about the role of supporting literacy learning?

Use the space below to make a list of some of the purposes for reading and writing (try thinking on different scales - personally, culturally, globally, economically, historically etc.):

Reframe the processes we know children to use into question by asking, when the child gets stuck, Are they _________________? Are they _________________? Are they _________________? Are they _________________? Are they _________________? Are they _________________? Are they _________________? If they are _________________, if not yet, _________________!

Reflection: Now that you have had an opportunity to admire the role of supporting literacy learning, take a moment to reframe any new understandings of literacy you may now have by writing a sentence or two beginning with the statement, supporting literacy learning is ________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________.
### Lesson 6 Note Taking Template

**Guiding Question:** *How can our perspective on literacy learning influence the way we support young readers?*

What we _______ depends on what we are ____________ for, and what we are looking for _____________ on the ____________________ we use to ________________ our students. (Goldberg, 2016, p.34)

Examples of praise to support reading processes and effort:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Give me time to think</th>
<th>Remind me to check the picture and think about the story</th>
<th>Encourage me to go back and reread</th>
<th>Help me to think about the story</th>
<th>Ask me to start a tricky word with the first sound</th>
<th>Help me find a part of the word I might know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Final Reflection:**

“As we are able to stand in a new place because we’ve learned something new, we then see other wonders that were not even visible to us before” - Jennifer Macalady, Microbiologist

Take a moment to evaluate any new perspectives you may have gained about literacy learning and consider how they may impact the way you will support young readers.

___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix 1.1: Back-to-Back - Tips to Help Develop an Independent Reader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Give them time to think</th>
<th>Remind them to check the picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage them to go back and read again</td>
<td>Help them think about the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask them to start a tricky word with the first sound they see</td>
<td>Help them find a part of the word they might know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep it positive, enjoy the experience together.</td>
<td>Let your interactions show that reading is about making mistakes and learning from them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2.1 - Mindful Tasting Script

Consider the wrapped chocolate - Does the wrapper make a sound? What colour is it?

Open the chocolate, slowly - Do you feel a sense of anticipation? What physical sensations do you have?

Look at the chocolate - Consider its texture, colour, weight

Smell the chocolate - does the smell trigger any other senses?

If you’d like to close your eyes at this point, you are welcome to.

Bite off a piece of chocolate but don’t eat it yet. Let it start to melt, how does it feel? What is the consistency? What is happening with your mouth, teeth, tongue, lips as it melts? Move the chocolate around your mouth; Does the area of taste change? Does the taste itself change? What is happening to the chocolate?

Chew and swallow what remains of the chocolate. Is there a lingering taste? What sensations are you left with?
Appendix 3.1 - Poster examples of process-oriented prompts

Count to 3 before telling the word

Count to 3 before using another prompt

Look to the picture

Look to the picture, what would make sense?

Let's try going back and rereading

Try reading that again. Does it sound right?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Think about what might be inside of that egg?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He just shared his cookie with her, what might she say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put your finger on the first letter and make that sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get that word started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for a part you might know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Cover part of the word for the student (e.g. inside)

Appendix 6.1 - Poster examples of process-oriented praise

Good for you, you figured it out on your own.

Well done, you looked at the picture to help yourself.

Well done, that helped you go back and reread.

That would make sense, I can see you are thinking about the story!
A WORKSHOP FOR PRE-SERVICE PARAPROFESSIONALS

You got that word started!

You used a part you knew to figure out that word.