Shaping Minds, Shifting Perspectives: Investigating the Evolution of Preservice Teachers' Attitudes Towards Children's Literature

Modelando Mentes, Cambiando Perspectivas: Investigando la Evolución de las Actitudes de los Estudiantes de Magisterio hacia la Literatura Infantil

Modelant Ments, Canviant Perspectives: Investigant l'Evolució de les Actituds dels Estudiants de Magisteri envers la Literatura Infantil

Gina Doepker. The University of Texas at Tyler, USA. gdoepker@uttyler.edu

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5187-669X

Annamary Consalvo. The University of Texas at Tyler, USA. aconsalvo@uttyler.edu

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0250-1901

Abstract

This study followed 44 undergraduate preservice teachers' (PSTs') evolving attitudes towards children's literature in a required course. Initially, numerous PSTs exhibited negative attitudes toward certain genres which often stemmed from negative experiences during their K-12 education. However, the results indicate that through deliberate and strategic exposure, the PST's attitudes evolved towards a greater appreciation and openness to incorporating a diverse range of children's literature, in various genres, into their teaching. This points to the necessity for teacher preparation instructors to remediate PSTs' earlier negative experiences with children's literature while nurturing their shifting attitudes through positive exposure to the different genres.

Keywords: children's literature, preservice teacher attitudes, teacher preparation programs.

Resumen

Este estudio siguió la evolución de las actitudes de 44 estudiantes de magisterio hacia la literatura infantil en un curso obligatorio. Inicialmente, numerosos estudiantes mostraban actitudes negativas hacia ciertos géneros, a menudo debido a experiencias negativas durante su educación K-12 (Primaria). Sin embargo, los resultados indican que, a través de una exposición deliberada y estratégica, las actitudes de los estudiantes

evolucionaron hacia una mayor apreciación y apertura para incorporar una gama diversa de literatura infantil, en varios géneros, en su enseñanza. Esto subraya la necesidad de que los instructores de preparación de maestros remedien las experiencias negativas previas de los estudiantes con la literatura infantil mientras fomentan sus actitudes cambiantes mediante una exposición positiva a los diferentes géneros.

Palabras clave: literatura infantil, actitudes de los estudiantes de magisterio, programas de preparación de maestros

Resum

Aquest estudi va seguir l'evolució de les actituds de 44 estudiants del grau de Magisteri cap a la literatura infantil en un curs obligatori. Inicialment, nombrosos estudiants mostraven actituds negatives envers certs gèneres, sovint a causa d'experiències negatives durant la seva educació K-12 (Primària). No obstant això, els resultats indiquen que, mitjançant una exposició deliberada i estratègica, les actituds dels estudiants van evolucionar cap a una major apreciació i obertura per incorporar una àmplia gamma de literatura infantil, en diversos gèneres, en la seua docència. Això subratlla la necessitat que els instructors de preparació de mestres subsanen les experiències negatives prèvies dels estudiants amb la literatura infantil mentre fomenten les seues actituds canviants a través d'una exposició positiva als diferents gèneres.

Paraules clau: literatura infantil, actituds dels estudiants de Magisteri, programes de preparació de mestres.

1. Introduction & Context

The literature on best practices around teaching reading to elementary students (Morrow & Gambrel, 2018) includes creating text-rich environments in classrooms (Hoffman & Sailors, 2017) to expose students to a wide variety of relevant texts and encourage reading. In fact, Burgess et al. (2011) found that teachers who read most often for personal pleasure, were those whose instructional techniques included "best practices...such as the use of sustained silent reading, recommending specific book titles, and teacher read aloud practices'' (p. 90). Relatedly, a recent study (Broemel et al., 2019) explored teachers' reasons surrounding whether and how they read for professional enhancement:

> The central reasons teachers listed for reading were (1) being required to read by the district or an academic program, (2) staying informed about new policies, (3) informing classroom instruction, and (4) learning for personal growth. The central reasons listed for not reading were related to (1) lack of time, (2) lack of relevant reading materials, and (3) lack of access to professional reading materials. (pp. 11-12)

Practicing teachers need supports like time, resources, and professional development attuned to their particular interests and needs to read for professional growth as well as for personal interest and

pleasure. Arguably, since attitudes and dispositions toward reading are developed long before adulthood, those studying to become teachers should have the guidance and opportunity to become aware of and, possibly, to change their own reading lives. This article, then, describes a semester-long inquiry that explored preservice teachers' (PSTs) preconceived and shifting attitudes toward children's literature and its uses, undertaken in two sections of a required, undergraduate teacher preparation course on using children's literature in the elementary classroom.

Thus, it appears that teachers' attitudes toward reading, and literature do impact their students, indicating that teachers who have deeply engaged reading lives, also tend to model for students the genuine value of reading.

In this study, two instructors each taught one section of children's literature. During the first classes, each instructor invited conversations about whether the university students saw themselves as readers. During class discussion, according to field notes, PSTs who were avid readers, described parents or siblings who read to them often. These readers readily named books they were currently reading, and typically described their physical or digital bookshelves or bedside reading stacks. Closely resembling results of Vansteelandt et al. (2022), we were struck that at least a third of each class shared that they "hate[ed] reading" or that they "used to love books" but had not felt that connection in recent memory. Some of the more specific reasons cited by PSTs included lack of time to read for pleasure due to high demands for academic reading. Also, several mentioned what was, for them, a disincentivizing and lingering effect of K12 rewards-based, packaged reading programs and, like the participants in Sanchez (2019), PSTs mentioned the pressure of the assessments they were required to take after each book. Still, others shared their memories of embarrassment at being made to read aloud. Others told of being "forced [to read] long and boring" texts in English and history classes while attending middle and high school. Comparing notes taken of these early classroom discussions prompted us to discuss whether and how we could help our students to reshape their readerly identities toward those that were more positive both for themselves as readers and especially for their future students.

2. Perspectives: Preservice and In-Service Teacher Attitudes Toward Reading

Research shows that undergraduate college students across disciplines perceive reading assignments in three troubling ways: as marginally necessary to their classroom success (Baron & Mangen, 2021; Hoeft, 2012; Nathanson et al., 2008); as less valuable than lectures (Kerr & Frese, 2017; Murden & Gillespie, 1997); and, as necessary for "getting by and passing exams" (Gorzycki et al., 2020, p. 506). Specifically, those studying to become teachers saw reading primarily as a procedural, work-related task (Davis-Duerr, 2015). Conversations held with our own PST students indicated that most did little

reading for personal enjoyment. This concurs with research which "found that of the nearly 400 elementary education majors surveyed, less than half could be classified as enthusiastic readers" (Applegate et al., 2014, p. 190). Furthermore, in an earlier study, researchers examined attitudes of practicing elementary teachers and "found that 56% of unenthusiastic readers did not have a teacher who shared a love of reading, whereas 64% of enthusiastic readers did have such a teacher" (Nathanson et al. 2008, p. 318). Interestingly, research conducted by Burgess et al. (2011) and more recently by Skaar et al. (2018), indicate that practicing teachers with both robust reading lives and knowledge of children's literature, also tend to use best practices in their classrooms. Thus, it appears that teachers' attitudes toward reading, and literature do impact their students, indicating that teachers who have deeply engaged reading lives, also tend to model for students the genuine value of reading.

While some may say that teachers need to focus primarily on systematic phonics instruction (Ehri, 2020), others advocate for the teacher to serve more as a guide and role model who embodies an informed and impassioned literate life (Ivey & Johnston, 2015; Pressley et al., 2023). Regardless, in real-world classrooms teachers must be able to teach specific skills that support reading as well as be able to guide students toward reading material, inquiry topics, and enjoyment that work together to build toward recreational and academic literacies.

3. Theoretical Framework: Literacy Sponsorship and Betwixt and Between-ness

Literacy sponsorship (Brandt, 1998) and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991, Consalvo & Maloch, 2015) are lenses that spotlight the roles of communities in the acculturation of new or inexperienced members. Brandt (1998) specifically recognizes power relationships at play among and between institutions, and experts and newcomers. Literacy sponsorship, then, is a complex process of various intentions and agendas. Giroux and Penna (1979) observed decades ago that "there is a failure to recognize the complex, intimate relationship between the institution of the school and the nation's economic and political institutions" (p. 21). The teacher, acting as agent of the school, sponsors and mediates the literacy content leading to the students' understandings which are thus worked, reworked, and/or transformed.

The actual process of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) requires any learner to be, at first, a newcomer, or initiand, of a given practice (Cook-Sather, 2006;). Having adapted Turner's (c.f., 1974, 1981) theory on rites of passage as multi-phased experiences that serve as bridges by which initiands become fully fledged adults, Cook-Sather (2006) applied it to the journey of becoming a teacher. Within this liminal phase – of being both and neither at the same moment or "betwixt and between" (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 110) – initiands have the unique opportunity to contemplate "mysteries" (Cook-Sather, 2006, p.

111). With the guidance of the more-experienced sponsor, and with layering of both ordinary and transformative experiences, the learner can become skilled in various ways within that practice. In this study, we argue that liminal moments occurred during several library sessions across the semester. As literacy teacher-educators, we view PSTs as initiands, and ourselves as experts or old-timers who are responsible for guiding them toward successful teaching careers in which their own future students, in turn, will be guided toward rich literacy lives. In other words, we see beginner literacy teachers as PST-initiands and this inquiry is designed to explore pathways of their learning toward becoming teachers. The research question that guided this study was: Whether and in what ways did initiand PSTs' attitudes and knowledge change regarding children's literature, with guidance from more experienced experts across a semester-long course in children's literature?

4. Methodology

4.1. Design

Using a mixed methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), this research used both quantitative and qualitative procedures for collecting and analyzing data in order to study a single research problem. In mixed methods research "the core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the integration of qualitative and quantitative data yields additional insights beyond the information provided by either the quantitative or qualitative data alone" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). Qualitative data consisted of open-ended survey comments, course assignments, and field notes from class discussions. Quantitative data consisted of pre/post survey results.

4.2. Setting and Participant

This study was undertaken in two sections of the same children's literature course, in a regional, comprehensive university in the south-central United States. The mode of interaction in both sections was face to face. The course objectives and content covered, including the textbooks used, were the same for each section, but the required readings (i.e. children's genre selections) and methods of instruction implemented varied somewhat.

The participants for this study identified as male and female undergraduate students and most of whom were PSTs (*N* = 36) in the first semester of their teacher preparation course sequence. The exception to this was one student who was a psychology major and took the class as an elective. This study was IRB approved and informed consent was collect from each participant. All names of participants are pseudonyms in the following discussions.

4.2.1. Classroom One

The first section, taught by Gina Doepker, of the children's literature course had n=22 students, including three students who identified as male and 19 students who identified as female, all in their twenties. Of these, the majority were juniors, a few sophomores and seniors, and no freshmen. Of this group, there were two Black students, two Latina students, and 18 White students. All students (100%) completed the pre-attitude survey and 20 (90.9%) completed the post-attitude survey.

4.2.3. Classroom Two

The second section, taught by Annamary Consalvo, had n=14 students. All identified as female and were in their twenties. Of these, the majority were sophomores and juniors, with one senior, and no freshmen. Twelve students were White and two were Latinas. All students (100%) completed the pre-attitude survey and 11 (78%) completed the post-attitude survey.

4.3. Data Sources

4.3.1 Attitude survey

The pre/post children's literature attitude survey consisted of 12 Likert scale questions on a modified version of McKenna and Kear's (1990) Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. In our survey, using the language reflected in the original instrument, we asked the students to determine their level of "happiness" with each genre/form. The overall directions on our attitude survey specifically stated: "On a scale of 1-4 with 4 being "most happy" and 1 being "least happy," circle how you feel about reading different types of genres/forms of children's literature." For example, "How do you feel about reading picture books?" An additional modification made included providing a text box under each question to invite further explanation regarding the level chosen. The different genres/forms on the pre/post attitude survey included picture books, graphic novels, poetry books, folktales or fairy tales, fantasy, science fiction, contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, biographies, information books, multicultural books, and books that had been challenged which we called controversial books.

4.3.2. Library Sessions

Five library work sessions focused on topics that included identifying genres and forms of books; the types and uses of illustrations in children's literature; understanding the differences between content levels and reading levels; exploring various forms of children's poetry; and broadening their conceptions of diversity in exploring representation of lived experiences through inclusion of multicultural books. Prior to each library session, PSTs were required to complete course readings related to the specific content, view an online flipped lesson (Al-Samarraie et al., 2020) created by the university librarian, and complete an online quiz. All library sessions were held in the university library's

children's literature collection room. During each session, the students considered, reviewed, compared, contrasted, and analyzed selected children's books while completing activity guides. The objective was to give students time to handle, read, visit, and consider books in particular ways. At the end of each session, after a semi-structured whole class discussion, the PSTs completed a written reflection about ways in which their thinking may have shifted and to what extent they may have found themselves considering new possibilities, for themselves as readers and for their future teaching careers because of the library work sessions.

4.3.3. In Class Activities.

The goal of the in-class activities was to actively engage the PSTs with different books that they were reading. For example, in order to expose students to both historical fiction, and a book length work in free verse poetry, PSTs were assigned to read and respond to Karen Hesse's (1997) Newbery Medal winner *Out of the Dust,* in which life experiences of a young teen female protagonist and her family during the 1935 Oklahoma Dust Bowl, are evocatively depicted. Immediately following their completion of the book, PSTs participated in a learning protocol through which they were invited to contemplate "mysteries" (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 111) – the creation of a whole-group, spoken collective poem in three rounds – using different passages from the book. In round one, students isolated from their passages one important, well-written, and/or moving sentence. In round two, students identified one powerful phrase from that initial sentence chosen. Then, in round three, students centered on one key word from that same sentence. The sentences, phrases, and words were read by the students consecutively in a continuous rhythm until the last word was read.

In yet another engagement that PSTs could both enjoy as readers and consider using in their own teaching careers, they prepared for, and participated in, an in-class poetry café. Early in the semester, the preservice teachers chose a children's poet from a list of award-winning poets provided by Gina Doepker. They researched their chosen poet, read numerous poems by the poet, and ultimately selected two poems to recite/perform at the poetry café. In a manner like the open mic nights commonly found in coffeehouses, where resident poets captivate audiences with their verse, the preservice teachers were tasked with delivering poetry performances brimming with emotion and expression to their fellow peers. To prepare for this, each preservice teacher met with Author 1 beforehand for personalized coaching sessions aimed at honing their recitation skills. The first practice recitations were usually monotone, unexpressive, and safe. However, with Author 1's guidance and multiple rounds of rehearsal, they underwent a transformation, feeling empowered and enthusiastic about reciting their poems to the class. During the poetry café event, Author 1 recreated the classroom into a cozy coffeehouse ambiance, complete with soft lighting, aromatic coffee, delectable pastries, and the gentle snap of fingers, fostering an atmosphere of appreciation for the preservice teachers'

earnest attempts at eloquent poetry recitations. This shift in atmosphere facilitated the preservice teachers in shedding their conventional college student roles, allowing them to transcend into a realm of lively and expressive poetry performances.

4.3.4. Out-of-Class Assignments

One out-of-class project was a video-recorded picture book read-aloud using an age – and interest– relevant text with a child selected by the PST. By that point in the semester, PSTs had been exposed to multiple modeling of what effective read-alouds look and sound like and had had explicit instruction on the elements and architecture of effective read-alouds. Furthermore, in this assignment, they were required to review and evaluate their own read-alouds to engage in a professional reflection process toward continual improvement of practice. Across the semester, students also read trade books about which they wrote short one page reflections, in which they considered their own metacognitive experiences as readers as well as to whom they might recommend the book. Also, students met online three times and engaged in discussion forums. The first was in response to the Lobel (1980) book, *Fables,* a Caldecott award book. The second discussion was over the Lewis (2005) book *He-roes and She-roes.* The final discussion was in response to a prompt on book censorship and book banning. The culminating project was the creation of a grade-specific children's literature database comprising 25 books that varied across genres and forms, which were published within the last ten years. For this assignment, PSTs created an annotated bibliography that included the reading and interest levels of the books, ideas for classroom use, and alignment with state standards.

4.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted by each author for her course's data as well as by both, together, to establish results, by averaging the total of each question. The shifts in attitude among preservice teachers (PSTs) were evaluated across various genres and forms, depending on the instructional methods employed by each instructor. First, we compared analyses of both sections looking at the students' attitude changes across all the genres/forms. Undertaken by each instructor for her course section, data analysis for the pre/post surveys followed a content analytical process (Krippendorf, 2018) which began with reading and re-reading the surveys to conduct open coding and consider emergent categories. Second, we tabulated the nominal, numeric responses for each question. We then assembled all the responses, by question, including the PSTs written comments. Third, we created a spreadsheet that recorded the differences between each student's pre- and post- survey response. Then, we sampled comments and scores, using purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), that were shown as emblematic of the kinds of shifts that were observed. Fourth, we re-read the comments, and talked through each entry to ensure inter-rater reliability (Cole, 2023) by using a series of multiple checkmarks to indicate which comments most robustly described shifts that were hinted at by the nominal data.

Once the most robust findings were determined, we returned, yet again, to the qualitative comments for elucidation. Lastly, since categories in the survey often overlapped with those taken up in coursework, we returned to student assignments to look for evidence of knowledge-building and clues to whether and how attitudes toward children's literature may have shifted.

5. Results

In this section, we first present the differences between the pre- and post- surveys. Specific attention is given to the rise or fall of students' levels of "happiness" or enjoyment of various genres and kinds of children's literature. Secondly, the overall findings from the five library work sessions are presented regarding ways in which students' analyses and reflections indicated whether and how any change in thinking and/or new thinking occurred, related to their understanding of children's literature.

5.1. Classroom One – Author 1

5.1.1. Pre/post children's literature attitude survey

Overall attitude changes towards the different children's literature genres/forms from the beginning to the end of the semester revealed responses of nine positive, two negative, and one unchanging. The one unchanged response was for picture books. Participants' attitudes toward picture books remained steady from pre- to post- survey as most indicated highly positive associations with picture books at both points of the semester. The two negative attitude responses were for folktales/fairy tales -0.1052, and for controversial books -0.5. The nine positive attitude responses, from smallest gains to largest gains, are reflected in participants' responses concerning graphic novels +0.07894, science fiction books +0.2368, fantasy books +0.3, multicultural books +0.425, poetry books +0.525, biographies +0.525, information books +0.6842, contemporary realistic fiction +0.7666, and historical fiction +0.825.

Strong emotional reactions accompanied the two overall negative responses that concerned folktales/fairy tales (-0.1052), as well as controversial books (-0.5). Concerning folktales and fairy tales, initially the students were drawing on their happy childhood memories of fairy tales as noted in Marissa's comment on the pre- survey that "fairy tales are fun... [and represent] ...the stories [I was told] ...when I was younger." However, once the students were exposed to more ambiguous, historical versions of folklore, particularly more violent renditions of now-sanitized tales such as Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty, some of the students' "happiness" scales decreased dramatically. In her post- survey, Karen's comment after reading Lobel's (1980) *Fabels* was that "It was creepy, and honestly not a good way to get that moral across to children…. and the ending just made me angry!" Karen's response indicates that she, and possibly other PSTs as well, may have had limited K12 exposure to reading and

discussing fables. Now required by state standards, teachers must teach fables and folklore with breadth and depth.

Negative responses (-0.5) were also noted in the category of controversial and banned books. Students were required to choose one of three banned and controversial Robert Cormier books to read and respond to: *After the First Death* (1979), *We all Fall Down* (1991), or *Tunes For Bears To Dance To* (1992). In the post- attitude survey, the controversial category elicited strong negative responses from students. Hillary wrote in her one-page reflection, "I would never recommend this book [*After the First Death*] to anyone, especially children. To me, reading should be for pleasure, and I found absolutely nothing pleasurable about this book." Hillary's strong response suggests that her understanding of an aesthetic reading response was limited to an either/or like/dislike set of options. While emotional engagement in reading, with all its highs and lows, can have a positive impact on text comprehension as well as providing K12 students motivation to read, it can be difficult to negotiate.

The top two positive attitude responses were regarding contemporary realistic fiction (+0.766) and historical fiction (+0.825). Several of the pre- attitude responses revealed that some of the students were not sure of what contemporary realistic fiction was. In this category, students in both sections had to choose one of four Beverly Cleary's *Ramona* books to read and respond to: *Beezus and Ramona* (1955), *Ramona & her Father* (1977), *Ramona the Brave* (1975), or *Ramona the Pest* (1968). After reading a contemporary realistic fiction book that was aimed at an elementary student, the PSTs' attitudes became more positive (see Table 1).

5.1.1.1 Classroom One: Contemporary Realistic Fiction, Pre/Post Comments, Sampled Students

Student	Pre Attitude Survey Comment & Score	Post Attitude Survey Comment & Score	Difference per Sampled Student
Susan	I'm not sure I know what it is, it sounds boring. (2)	These are fun because they introduce real-life. (4)	+2
Penny	I don't have an opinion. I don't really know what they are. (2)	These are interesting to me because they can actually happen and you can sometimes relate. (3)	+1
Rosa	Not familiar with this genre at all. (2)	I love this genre! I love when the book feels real and I'm able to relate to whatever is going on. (4)	+2

Table 1. Classroom One: Contemporary Realistic Fiction, Pre/Post Comments, Sampled Students

The three excerpts shown in Table 1 are emblematic of many students' pre- and post- responses.

Historical fiction received the highest gains for the students in classroom one (+0.825). On the pre-attitude survey many of the students' responses to this historical fiction echo Darci's sentiments, "Don't like it. It bores me and I lose interest in the book." We believe that a pivot point in PSTs appreciation of historical fiction may have been spurred by a collective poem experience using pre-selected passages from the prose poem novel *Out of the Dust* (Hesse, 1997). Field notes showed, during class discussion, PSTs indicated increasing willingness to consider historical fiction selections for their final bookshelf/database project. Before this time, they seemed disinterested in exploring and selecting historical fiction books required for their project, possibly conflating historical fiction with traditional history textbooks. As further evidence of this attitude shift, their post- survey attitudes regarding historical fiction became more positive as noted in their post- comments (see Table 2).

5.1.1.2 Classroom One: Historical Fiction, Pre/Post Comments, Sampled Students

Student	Pre Attitude Survey Comments & Scores	Post Attitude Survey Comments & Scores	Difference per Sampled Student
Marissa	I don't really like historical text. (1)	Historical fiction is important for learning about things that really happened but in the form of a story. (3)	+2
Nora	Neutral (3)	I began this semester, hesitant on this one. After my bookshelf project I have learned that historical fiction can be a fun connector to history, and interesting storyline (3)	+0
Penny	I am not a history person. (1)	I changed my views on historical fiction! I love them now. *Out of the Dust* was interesting! (4)	+3
Susan	History has been crammed in the heads of students. I find it mostly boring. (2)	I like to read about different historical time-periods. Fictional history can be engaging while introducing a historical way of thinking. (4)	+2

Table 2. Classroom One: Historical Fiction, Pre/Post Comments, Sampled Students

Consistent in the sampled pre- comments from Table 2 is the way the students felt about history and/or the way it was presented to them by "cramm[ing it] in the[ir] heads". These comments indicate

that they may have been inadvertently inoculated, by their K12 teachers, against anything having to do with history. All of the post- comments indicate a realization that historical understanding is important, and that using narrative is a way to learn about and relate to things that "really happened" (Marissa).

5.1.2. Library Work Sessions

The children's poetry-focused library session produced the most robust shift in thinking regarding poetry books for children. In her reflective response, Penny stated, "My thinking has changed about poetry because I have never liked it, but now I do. I have learned about a lot of great poetic authors other than Shel Silverstein that I can introduce to my future classroom." Many students also reported learning something from the genre-versus-form library session. Rosa wrote, "I honestly didn't know the difference between genre and form before today so that's definitely helpful! Knowing the different genres and formats will be extra helpful with choosing books for future lessons in my classroom." The reflections following the multicultural books session showed that most students positively regarded the educational value and impact on their future classrooms by using books about people from diverse backgrounds and experiences conveyed. For example, Marissa stated, "I think it is very important to have multicultural books in the classroom. I will have them so that my students can learn about other cultures and so that they will feel included in my classroom." Multicultural children's literature presented a new reading experience for many of the PSTs and speaks to how urgently such knowledge is needed in the region's K6 classrooms.

> **The reflections following the multicultural books session showed that most students positively regarded the educational value and impact on their future classrooms by using books about people from diverse backgrounds and experiences.**

5.2. Classroom Two – Author 2

5.2.1. Pre/post children's literature attitude survey

The following findings, from classroom two, taught by Annamary Consalvo, illustrate a change in attitude from pre- to post. In order, moving from the smallest to the largest change in attitude, aggregated for the class: Picture books, +0.0909; biographies, +0.1111; fantasy, +0.1818; folk and fairy tales, +0.1818; science fiction, +0.2727; poetry, +0.3636; contemporary realistic fiction, +0.4; informational books, +0.4545; historical fiction, +0.7272; multicultural literature, +1.090; and, controversial books, +1.181. The one neutral (neither increase nor decrease) was in the category of graphic novels. No genre/form saw a decrease in a participant's "happiness" with it. Instead, each category either remained stable, as in the case with graphic novels, or, increased. For the purposes of

this discussion, we will focus in greater depth on the top two attitude increases for multicultural literature (+1.090) and controversial books (+1.181).

5.2.1.1. Multicultural Literature

In classroom two, the average nominal score across all participants, between the pre- and post- survey, for the multicultural literature category are as follows. Three students' responses showed no change; five students' responses increased one point; two students' responses went up two points; and one student's response increased three points (see Table 3). The responses of three students, Fern, Donna, and Alicia, to multicultural literature, whose data are not shown in Table 3, remained stable at 4 in both the pre- and the post- survey. While they do not show growth in the ways that this survey depicts, they clearly began the course with a positive attitude toward multicultural literature and their experiences within the course did not dissuade them. Table 3 shows the pre and post comments from four students chosen using criterion sampling (Patton, 1990) for their representativeness of the whole group, whose so-called happiness index increased.

5.2.1.1.1 Classroom Two - Multicultural Literature, Pre/Post Comments, Sampled Students

Student	Pre Attitude Survey Comments & Scores	Post Attitude Survey Comments & Scores	Difference per Sampled Student
Bonnie	This is just another type of book I have never been interested in. (2)	These are fun to read because some are based on other stories I read as a child. (4)	+2
Isabella	I've never read any multicultural books, but I think it would be interesting to me. (3)	I really like the idea of multicultural books. It gives a feel of a different culture and I have always found that interesting. I have always been stuck in my own ways around [this region], but these books bring other cultures to life. (4)	+1
Naomi	I actually really like learning about other cultures. (3)	These are wonderful! I think multicultural books will be my favorite to have in the classroom. Because they teach children that we don't all fit into a "cookie cutter" type of lifestyle! That we are all unique and different! (4)	+1

Madeline	I don't know. (No Score)	Ever since I learned that multicultural books include protagonists with disabilities, I can honestly say I enjoy multicultural books because some of my favorite books are multicultural books. (3)	No Comparison Score

Table 3. Classroom Two - Multicultural Literature, Pre/Post Comments, Sampled Students

Bonnie's responses indicate that first, she had no experience with, and no interest in, multicultural books. Then, after examining folk tales across cultures, Bonnie reacted positively to the idea that some of the familiar stories were also present across cultures (e.g. Marcia Brown's (1954) *Cinderella*, Rafe Martin's (1992) *The Rough Face Girl,* Tomie dePaola's (2004) *Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella Story*, and Ai-Ling Louie's (1982) *Yen-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China)*. Isabella's responses indicate that she was always interested in learning about other cultures and her post- survey response indicated that through these books she got "a feel of a different culture". Naomi, too, indicated, first, an interest in learning about other people's ways. Then, in her post- survey, Naomi made the connection between the children in her future classroom being from diverse backgrounds and the power of books to affirm their experiences. Lastly, Madeline's post- survey response indicated positivity and surprise to realize that differently abled people are also central to multicultural children's literature. In short, PSTs came to grasp the educational possibilities and power of representation of different experiences by using multicultural literature. Purposeful exposure to multicultural literature "builds their literacy competence but also encourages their critical thinking and cross-cultural investigations" (Campagnaro et al., 2021, p. 2).

5.2.1.2. Controversial Books

Receiving the highest attitude gains for the students in classroom two was the category of controversial books (+1.181). In the pre- survey several students expressed that they did not like controversial books. Harper stated, "I am not a big fan of questionable information." Only one student, Lucinda, had a negative reaction to controversial books from the pre- survey to the post- survey. On the pre- survey Lucinda stated, "I think it is good to... form your own opinions about the books." On the post- survey Lucinda remarked, "I personally HATE controversy. Therefore, when it comes to reading books in my future classroom, I will probably try to stay away from as many questionable ones as I can" (see Table 4).

5.2.1.2.1. Classroom Two - Controversial Books, Pre/Post Comments, Sampled Students

Student	Pre Attitude Survey Comments & Scores	Post Attitude Survey Comments & Scores	Difference per Sampled Student
Gillian	I'm not sure what these are. (No Score)	I have enjoyed a lot of the controversial books, however there are some that I would never bring into my classroom. I will have to make sure I go through each book carefully (which should be done anyway) before I decide to bring them into my room. (3)	No Comparison Score
Donna	I'm okay with reading controversial books. I'm just not a huge fan of having to discuss it with others. (3)	I love controversial books and exposing important topics to students in the right form. (4)	+1
Fern	I typically don't like controversy. (2)	I feel like I want to read them just because they are banned or people wanting to ban them. It makes me want to see why they decided to make them controversial books and decide for myself what I think of them. (4)	+2
Madeline	I don't like them they often only present one side. (1)	After reading our book and finding out that basically any book can be controversial, I have read most of the books on their lists and enjoyed [them] (3)	+2
Bonnie	I don't really read anything controversial. (2)	It just depends on the book. (4)	+2

Table 4. Classroom Two - Controversial Books, Pre/Post Comments, Sampled Students

As to the PSTs experiences with these books, students were invited to select and read one of four Robert Cormier texts, including *The Chocolate War* (1974). Book clubs were formed and met using literature circle roles (Daniels, 2002) to guide inquiry and discussion. In addition, a computer lab session enabled students to explore primary documents in the form of Cormier's correspondence centering on censorship since each of the books had encountered varying degrees of restriction. Using an online exhibit of Cormier's papers (Consalvo & Takehana, 2016), students were given an analytic grid to help guide their inquiries of the documents that included marked up drafts, sets of

correspondence, and reprints of newspaper items. Several reported that, through this exploration, they experienced a better understanding of the author, his life, and his authorial processes.

5.2.2. Library Work Sessions

The three library work sessions in classroom two that generated a shift in attitude were, in ranked order, poetry for children, multicultural literature, and genre versus form. In the poetry session, PSTs were asked to look for, read, and select both fiction and nonfiction poetry, haikus, narrative poems, poems for two voices, limericks, and more. In other words, they had time to explore, choose, read, and recite poems in loosely structured small group settings. Concluding the session, many of the PSTs wrote in their reflections that their most frequent encounters with poems, in their own K12 experiences, were as objects of analysis.

> After going over poetry today I learned it doesn't all have to be boring. There are poems over everything that you can use to teach poetry. I believe I could use poetry more than just for the sake of learning it. You can use it to teach all subjects and can make it fun and engaging. (Fern)

Fern's comment serves as an example of PSTs realizations that poetry can be pleasurable, educative, and relevant to content across subjects.

The PSTs had favorable responses from the library session focused on multicultural books. Their prospective students and their communities will most certainly reflect ever-growing diversity of experience and background in the U.S. (de Brey et al., 2019). Research shows that multicultural children's books are valuable both for children of marginalized communities to see their experiences portrayed with understanding (Limlamai, 2023), and for children to better understand others' perspectives by the "windows…and sliding glass doors" (Sims Bishop, 1990, paragraph 1) qualities of the texts. The inclusion of multicultural literature was intended to introduce PSTs to diverse viewpoints and experiences of communities for which they will serve as teachers (Song et al., 2023; Iwai, 2015; Senyshyn & Martinelli, 2020), as shown by Alicia's reflection at the conclusion of the multicultural library session.

> My thinking has changed because I honestly never thought about the importance of multicultural books. Now, I understand I will have a variety of students from different backgrounds and I would like to have books in my classroom [that my future students]…can relate [to].

While other PSTs' reflections revealed varying degrees of understanding, continuing to provide PSTs with rich opportunities to consider and work with the reality of representation in texts and its educational importance is essential.

Likewise, the *Genre vs Form* and *Content Level vs Reading Level* library work sessions both received a high volume of critical responses. Bonnie stated, "They are a lot harder to pick than I thought. Figuring out the genre was more difficult in my opinion." Likewise Alicia stated, "Trying to find a level for a book is not easy and there is a lot involved." The intention was to teach PSTs to be able to make distinctions among the many forms (e.g. graphic novel, hi-lo book, novel in verse, interactive, picture book, and more) and how those forms and formats would potentially impact their future students' reading experiences. The instruction concerning genre was fundamental to the development of our PSTs' professional knowledge base around textual options. In sum, these library work sessions, along with the sponsorship from the university librarian and course instructor, were necessary to help increase these students' professional knowledge regarding the complexities associated with choosing appropriate books for children.

6. Discussion

While we cannot directly access the perspectives of the PSTs, we remain curious about the potential factors influencing their initial negative attitudes toward various genres of children's literature. Like the respondents in Gorzycki et al. (2019), the statement, "But no one ever read to me" was uttered aloud by a PST in this study at the beginning of the semester.

Limited exposure and lack of positive experiences with children's literature may have a profound effect on PSTs' attitudes towards children's literature and may ultimately affect their desire to seek and use quality children's literature in their teaching.

This one powerful phrase alludes to the notion that this PST had limited exposure to quality children's literature growing up and few, if any, experiences with anyone reading to them. We found, too, that many of our PSTs self-identified as being what Beers (1998), in her fine-grained, five-level definition of types of readers – classifies as *dormant readers*. A dormant reader "[e]njoys reading…[d]oes not make time to read…[i]dentifies self as reader…[d]efines reading as 'neat experience'...[v]iews purpose as entertaining…[h]as aesthetic transactions primarily…[h]as positive feelings about other readers" (p. 8). Author 1 had the PSTs self-identify their current reading habits by participating in a physical line-up activity with "hate reading" at one end and "love reading" at the other. In between the two ends of this continuum, were those that were either closer to loving reading, closer to hating reading, or somewhere in the middle. The students were asked to talk with each other to determine criteria for where they fit in relation to others around them. Every time this reading continuum activity

is completed–including during the semester of the study– the results are similar: few PSTs self-identify as completely loving reading, a few PSTs self-identify as completely hating reading, and a majority of the PSTs are clumped in the middle. Neither loving nor hating reading, those in the middle of the line mostly appear to be dormant readers, or those who know how to read, but choose not to read for reasons like lack of time. College students definitely have to prioritize their reading time to be sure they accomplish their academic reading. Most of our university's PSTs also hold full-time jobs which further limits time and energy. Unfortunately, then, reading for pleasure is let go. By the time they actually have time for reading, a majority of these students are choosing not to read, as if they've forgotten that they once enjoyed it. As stated earlier, at least a third of each class shared that they "hate[ed] reading" or that they "used to love books" like Beers' (1998) *avid readers* but had not felt that connection in recent memory. These readers, who read what they must, but take no pleasure in it– like Beers' (1998) *uncommitted readers* – and who sometimes remember what it was like to enjoy reading, worry us because research (Barnyak & Paquette, 2010; McHardy & Chapman, 2016; McKool & Gespass, 2009) tells us that the habits, attitudes, and feelings toward reading of those who intend to become elementary teachers, matter. Limited exposure and lack of positive experiences with children's literature may have a profound effect on PSTs' attitudes towards children's literature and may ultimately affect their desire to seek and use quality children's literature in their teaching.

7. Conclusions

The apparent lack of experience with and exposure to children's literature of our PSTs came as a surprise to us. As their teachers and their literacy sponsors (Brandt, 1998), we realized that we needed to more actively support our PSTs' to build knowledge of children's literature. To do so, we designed the library sessions specifically to invite PSTs to get to know books, to handle them, to read them, and to think about them in the company of peers and "elders" (Cook-Sather, 2006) possibly

As educators, our work is to ascertain and unpack ways in which teacher educators might help PSTs who do not identify as lovers of reading to become more comfortable, confident, and well-versed in the world of reading for pleasure, for self-advocacy, and for the sakes of their future students.

reigniting pleasure from reading, or introducing for the first-time high-quality children's literature and the worlds that it can open.

Like K16 teachers everywhere, we are working to meet the needs of the students who come to us. Rather than fall back on a deficit perspective of would-be teachers who come to university with marked gaps in their background knowledge, as teacher educators we must provide authentic and engaging learning experiences that provide PSTs with multiple opportunities to interact meaningfully with the

many genres and forms of children's literature. This exposure to books is necessary to help the PSTs to begin to transition away from the student mindset towards the teacher mindset as well as from being an initiand into a fully-fledged teacher (Cook-Sather, 2006). Similar to Simpson's study (2021), "The impact shifted PST attention from personalized negative perceptions of home or school reading practices towards pedagogic awareness of the importance for teachers to read quality literature." (p. 45). As educators concerned with literacy, our work is to ascertain and unpack ways in which teacher educators might help PSTs who do not identify as lovers of reading to become more comfortable, confident, and well-versed in the world of reading for pleasure, for self-advocacy, and for the sakes of their future students.

Recommendations for teacher educators and teacher education programs include:

- Use library sessions to specifically invite preservice teachers to handle and explore children's literature.

- Invite preservice teachers to discuss the books that they explore in the company of one another and experts.

- Provide preservice teachers with support for better lesson planning using children's literature.

8. References

Al-Samarraie, H., Shamsuddin, A., & Alzahrani, A. I. (2020). A flipped classroom model in higher education: a review of the evidence across disciplines. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 68*, 1017-1051. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-019-09718-8

Applegate, A. J., Mercantini, M. A., McGeehan, C. M., Cobb, J. B., Deboy, J. R., Modla, V. B., & Lewinski, K. E. (2014). The Peter Effect revisited: Reading habits and attitudes of college students. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 53*, 188-204. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2014.898719

Barnyak, N. C., & Paquette, K. R. (2010). An investigation of elementary preservice teachers' reading instructional beliefs. *Reading Improvement, 47*(1), 7-17.

Baron, N. S., & Mangen, A. (2021). Doing the reading: The decline of long-form reading in higher education. *Poetics Today*, *42*(2), 253-279. https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-8883248

Beers, K. (1998). Choosing not to read: Understanding why some middle schoolers just say no. In K. Beers & B. G. Samuel (Eds.), *Into focus: Understanding and creating middle school readers* (pp. 37-63). Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Brandt, D. (1998). Sponsors of literacy. *College Composition and Communication, 49*(2),165-185. https://doi.org/10.58680/ccc19983181

Broemmel, A. D., Evans, K. R., Lester, J. N., Rigell, A., & Lochmiller, C. R. (2019). Teacher reading as professional development: Insights from a national survey. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, *58*(1), 1-21.

Brown, M., & Perrault, C. (1954). *Cinderella: or, The little glass slipper*. Scribner.

Burgess, S. R., Sargent, S., Smith, M., Hill, N., & Morrison, S. (2011). Teachers' leisure reading habits and knowledge of children's books: Do they relate to the teaching practices of elementary school teachers? *Reading Improvement, 44*(2), 88-102.

Campagnaro, M., Daly, N., & Short, K. G. (2021). Teaching children's literature in the University: New perspectives and challenges for the future. *Journal of Literary Education,* (4), 1-5. https://doi.org/10.7203/JLE.4.21403

Cleary, B. (1977). *Ramona & her father.* Avon Books.

Cleary, B. (1975). *Ramona the brave.* Avon Books.

Cleary, B. (1968). *Ramona the pest.* Avon Books.

Cleary, B. (1955). B*eezus and Ramona*. Avon Books.

Cole, R. (2023). Inter-rater reliability methods in qualitative case study research. *Sociological Methods & Research, 0*(0), 1-33. https://doi.org/10.1177/00491241231156971

Consalvo, A., & Maloch, B. (2015). Keeping the teacher at arm's length: Student resistance in writing conferences in two high school classrooms. Journal of Classroom Interaction, *50*(2), 120-132.

Consalvo, A., & Takehana, E. (2016). Prying open the oyster: Creating a digital learning space from the Robert Cormier archive. *The ALAN Review 43*(3), 11-21.https://doi.org/10.21061/alan.v43i3.a.2

Cook-Sather, A. (2006). Newly betwixt and between: Revising liminality in the context of a teacher preparation program. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 37*(2), 110-127. https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.2006.37.2.110

Cormier, R. (1992). *Tunes for bears to dance to.* Branton Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

Cormier, R. (1991). *We all fall down.* Branton Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

Cormier, R. (1979). *After the first death.* Dell Laurel-Leaf Publishing Group.

Cormier, R. (1974). *The chocolate war*. Dell Laurel-Leaf Publishing Group.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups* (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032681504

Davis-Duerr, J. (2015). Planning on preservice teachers' affective domains of reading. *Journal of Reading Education*, *40*(3), 17-22.

De Brey, C., Musu, L., McFarland, J., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Diliberti, M., Zhang, A., & Wang, X. (2019). Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018. NCES 2019-038. *National Center for Education Statistics*.

de Paola, T. (2004). *Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella story*. Puffin Books.

Ehri, L. C. (2020). The science of learning to read words: A case for systematic phonics instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly, 22*(S1). S45-S60. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.334

Giroux, H. A., & Penna, A. N. (1979). Social education in the classroom: The dynamics of the hidden curriculum. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, *7*(1), 21-42. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.1979.10506048

Gorzycki, M., Desa, G., Howard, P. J., & Allen, D. D. (2020). "Reading is important," but "I don't read": Undergraduates' experiences with academic reading. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *63*(5), 499-508. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1020

Hesse, K. (1997). *Out of the dust.* Scholastic.

Hoeft, M. E. (2012). Why university students don't read: What professors can do to increase compliance. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *6*(2), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2012.060212

Hoffman, J., & Sailors, M. (2017). Assessing literacy teaching: Using the text environment as a window into the examination of literacy practices. In *Evaluating literacy instruction* (pp. 116-133). Routledge.

Ivey, G., & Johnston, P. H. (2015). Engaged reading as a collaborative transformative practice. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *47*(3), 297-327. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X15619731

Iwai, Y. (2015). Using multicultural children's literature to teach diverse perspectives, *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 51*(2), 81-86. https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2015.1023142

Kerr, M. M., & Frese, K. M. (2017). Reading to learn or learning to read? Engaging college students in course readings. *College Teaching*, *65*(1), 28-31. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2016.1222577

Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage Publications.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge University Press.

Limlamai, N. (2023). Complexities of justice-oriented teaching. *English Journal*, *112*(5), 22-28. https://doi.org/10.58680/ej202332417

Lobel, A. (1980). *Fables*. HarperCollins Publishers.

Louie, A., & Young, E. (1982). *Yeh-Shen: a Cinderella story from China*. Philomel Books.

Martin, R., & Shannon, D. (1992). *The rough-face girl*. G.P. Putnam's Sons.

McHardy, J., & Chapman, E. (2016). Adult reading teachers' beliefs about how less-skilled adult readers can be taught to read. *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, *24*(2), 24-42. http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/lns.v24i2.4809

McKenna, M. C., & Kear, D. J. (1990). Measuring attitude toward reading: A new tool for teachers. *The Reading Teacher, 43*(8), 626-639. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20200500

McKool, S.S., & Gespass, S. (2009). Does Johnny's reading teacher love to read? How teachers' personal reading habits affect instructional practices. *Literacy Research & Instruction, 48,* 264-276. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388070802443700

Morrow, L. M., & Gambrel, L. B. (Eds.). (2018). *Best practices in literacy instruction* (6th ed.). Guilford.

Murden, T., & Gillespie, C. S. (1997). The role of textbooks and reading in content area classrooms: What are teachers and students saying? In W. M. Linek & E. G. Sturtevant (Eds.), *Exploring Literacy* (pp. 87–96). College Reading Association.

Nathanson, S., Pruslow, J., Levitt, R. (2008). The reading habits and literacy attitudes of inservice and prospective teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education, 59*(4), 313-321. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487108321685

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.1097/00006199-199109000-00006

Pressley, T., Allington, R. L., & Pressley, M. (2023). *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching* (5th ed.). Guilford Publications.

Sanchez, V. J. V. (2019). *The Effects of Accelerated Reader on Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Reading* (Master's thesis, California State University San Marcos).

Senyshyn, R., & Martinelli, A. (2020). Learning to support and sustain cultural (and linguistic) diversity: perspectives of preservice teachers. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, *15*(1), 20-37. https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-02-2020-0015

Simpson, A. (2021). Teaching with children's literature in initial teacher education: Developing equitable literacy pedagogy through talk about books. *Journal of Literary Education, 4*, 26-49. https://doi.org/10.7203/JLE.4.21028

Sims Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books in the Classroom, 6*(3).

Skaar, H., Elvebakk, L. & Nilssen, J. H. (2018). Literature in decline? Differences in pre-service and in-service primary school teachers' reading experiences. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 69*, 312-323. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.10.019

Song, K., Consalvo, A., David, A. D., Stefanski, A. J., & Hitchens, C. 2. (2023). Multiple pathways to perspectival learning: Children's literature in preservice teacher education. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education, 19*(2), 1-19.

Turner, V. (1974). *Dramas, fields, and metaphors: Symbolic action in human society.* Cornell University Press.

Turner, V. (1981). Social dramas and stories about them. *In* W. J. T. Mitchell (Ed.), On *narrative*. (pp.137-164). University of Chicago Press.

Vansteelandt, I., Mol, S. E., & Van Keer, H. (2022). Pre-service teachers' reader profiles: stability and change throughout teacher education. *Journal of Research in Reading*, *45*(1), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9817.12378