The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin

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Judith Merz, EdD, Editor
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The Bulletin, the official journal of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, promotes professional and personal growth of members through publication of their writings.

The Bulletin invites materials appropriate to the Society’s Purposes: position papers, applied and/or data-based research, reviews of literature, program descriptions, and other articles on announced themes or other topics of interest to educators; letters to the editor; book and technology reviews; poetry; and graphic arts.

Prose manuscripts for the Bulletin, a refereed journal, are reviewed by the Editorial Board and the Society editorial staff. Selection is based on relevance of the topics addressed, accuracy and validity, contribution to the professional literature, originality, quality of writing, and adherence to Submission Guidelines (see page 59). Editorial Board members evaluate each submission’s focus, organization, development, readability, and relevance to the general audience of Bulletin readers. Due to the diversity of the Bulletin audience, material that expresses a gender, religious, political, or patriotic bias is not suitable for publication.

Please send materials to bulletin@dkg.org or to Bulletin Editorial Staff, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, P.O. Box 1589, Austin, TX 78767-1589. The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, P.O. Box 1589, Austin, TX 78767-1589.

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Call for Submissions

Members are encouraged to submit manuscripts for consideration by the Bulletin Editorial Board. The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin accepts Action/Classroom Research, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Reviews of Literature, Program Descriptions, Position Papers, Book/Technology Reviews, Graphic Arts, Letters to the Editor, and Poetry for print issues (spring, fall) and online issues (summer, winter). Manuscripts should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise, and appropriate for Bulletin readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable, and free from gender, political, patriotic, or religious bias. For more detailed information, please refer to the Submission Guidelines on page 59 and the Submission Grid on page 60. Listed below are the suggested themes of upcoming issues.

Fall 2014 (81-1) Teaching Performance (Print)
(deadline is June 1, 2014)
Issues of Quality • Professional Teaching Standards • Assessment • Teacher Evaluation • Tenure • Professional Growth

Winter 2015 (81-2) Teacher Leadership in Nonsupervisory Roles (Online)
(deadline is September 1, 2014)
National Board Certification • Mentoring and Coaching • Content-based/Instructional Leadership

Spring 2015 (81-3) Varied Learning Environments (Print)
(deadline is December 1, 2014)
International Assumptions • Access and Equity • Instructional Strategies

Submit all materials to:

Bulletin Editorial Staff
bulletin@dkg.org
Who? Says what? To whom? Through what channel? To what effect? These five questions are often used to analyze, understand, or define virtually any act of communication. They identify the communicator, the message, the recipient or audience, the medium, and—perhaps most importantly—the impact of the communication. In fact, the final query—to what effect?—begs the intriguing question of whether communication actually occurs if the impact on the recipient is not that intended by the communicator. Such a concern for impact is at the heart of the theme of this issue: purposeful communication.

Editorial Board member Quinn initiates the exploration of the theme with her interview of Delta Kappa Gamma International President Dr. Beverly Helms, who reflects on purposeful communication in multiple dimensions: personal, professional, and organizational. Isbell and Szabo share results of a study related to understanding teachers’ concerns about implementing a new professional strategy, in this case Response to Intervention. Their work sheds light on the need for purposeful professional communication to guide change and professional development. Continuing a consideration of professional communication, Stitt and Pula present the position that subjectivity must be paired with objectivity in educators’ grading practices, and Clement argues for purposeful communication by teacher educators and by teaching candidates involved in job searches. Cox considers organizational communication as she describes two models used to meet the complex needs of those in large school districts. Bridging professional and personal communication, Johns and McGrath demonstrate how educators’ professional skills can be useful in the strongly personal area of advocating for senior relatives or friends, and Haggard urges educators and parents to use similar strategies to foster emergent literacy in youngsters, both in the classroom and in the home.

Reviews of three books—two authored by Delta Kappa Gamma members—complete this issue. Medley and Carlson, respectively, discuss two autobiographical works—one focused on a DKG member’s professional experiences in early-childhood education and one on a member’s personal experiences as part of a family divided by events during World War II. In the final book review, Luther and Woods consider the unique story of an American woman who became an African king, recommending it as a work that not only explores the power of personal communication but that can also be used to stimulate important discussion about diversity and the roles of women.

Who? Says what? To whom? Through what channel? To what Effect? As the journal of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, the Bulletin provides a strong channel of communication for members and their professional colleagues to share research, viewpoints, programs, and reviews with an audience of international educators. The 14 authors in this issue both exemplify and explore the theme of purposeful communication in their efforts to craft clear and useful articles that can enhance each reader’s understanding and appreciation of the importance of communication in many settings and dimensions. Ultimately, their purpose—and the desired effect of all who communicate through publication in the Bulletin—aligns perfectly with the DKG mission: to promote the professional and personal growth of women educators and excellence in education. I hope that each reader finds his or her response to this issue matches this purpose!

Judith R. Merz, EdD
Editor
Interview

Effective Communication in a Time of Connectivity: An Interview with Dr. Beverly Helms

By Angela E. Quinn

This interview continues a series initiated by members of the Bulletin’s Editorial Board. The goal of the series is to feature interviews conducted with Delta Kappa Gamma members or other educational leaders on a topic related to the theme of the issue. Here, board member Quinn presents the results of an interview with DKG International President Dr. Beverly Helms, noted for her expertise in communication.

Effective communication is vital to the successful efforts of any team, whether that team is a family, a classroom community, a corporation, or an international nonprofit organization. Technological advances continue to support ease, speed, and access regarding communication. Unfortunately, ease, speed, and access do not ensure that intended messages are fully heard and properly interpreted. In a time of interaction overload, personal and professional communication—the transmission of ideas, thoughts, and emotions to be applied to decision-making in daily lives and workplaces—may be more difficult than anticipated and not as rapidly moving as the literal message.

Through work as a speech pathologist, school and district administrator, and certified master trainer in facilitative leadership, job analyses, interviewing, and effective communication skills, Delta Kappa Gamma Society International President Dr. Beverly Helms has developed a clear understanding of what is entailed in communicating successfully. As we explored a time unique in its unlimited means of sharing information and its effects on DKG members, Dr. Helms conveyed her extensive knowledge and expert advice.

As the international president for The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, you are called to communicate with members from a wide variety of regional, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. What have you found to be keys to communicating successfully?

I am constantly striving to improve my communication skills and apply the use of many principles or segments of knowledge, such as

• being worthy of trust. Often individuals may not disclose, confide, or share their true thoughts and feelings unless they trust me. Transparency, authenticity, and empathy build trust.
• knowing that making a connection is not necessarily communicating. I feel a
responsibility to try to meet the needs and expectations of members—within limits, of course. At the same time, I understand that a superficial connection or networking may not encompass true communication.

- remembering that members have different emotions and aspirations. I try to hear between the lines so that I correctly interpret where they are coming from and why they believe the way they do.
- realizing that, although I am the designated leader, I am here to serve members. My ego has to be intact enough that I do not feel the need to provide all the answers. My heart has to be such that I understand that I accomplish most through service to others.
- remembering that not everyone may be ready to hear or have a specific conversation with me or I with them. Timing is critical, and the response obtained is often dependent on where, in time, the other person is (or where I am) and how ready either of us is to have a specific conversation.
- using adequate specificity and being as behavioral as possible. So often one assumes he or she communicated—only to find out that such communication did not occur. I have always known that meaning is not inherent in words, and I try to be clear enough so that the meaning of the content of the conversation is mutually shared.
- being conceptually flexible. I am really interested in learning what members have to say, getting their opinions, and being open to their ideas—not in forcing my thoughts and ideas on them. I have problems with people who tell me what they think I want to hear rather than their own opinions about what they believe.
- using good observation skills. I strive to pay attention to the process of communication and its related behaviors as well as the content.
- being an active listener and probing to get full understanding. I have a tee shirt that reads Listen and Silent have the same letters. Coincidence? I need to continue to work on active listening skills so that I better know the person with whom I am communicating and am relatively confident the answer or information I gave or received was what was intended.

Beverly H. Helms, EdD, is a professional independent consultant currently serving as International President of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, 2012-2014. Helms’ career has included work in Florida as a speech pathologist, administrator of the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, Director of Administrative Services for the Washington County School Board, and adjunct professor at Baptist College of Florida and University of West Florida. A longtime editor and parliamentarian for Mu State Organization (FL), Helms has served on a myriad of DKG committees and as an officer at both the state and international levels. She was the 2010 recipient of the International Achievement Award. bevhelms@embarqmail.com

Angela E. Quinn serves as Director of Instruction for the Pontotoc City School District in Pontotoc, MS. She is currently completing dissertation work at The University of Mississippi. Chapter President of Alpha Psi, Angela also serves as Zeta State Organization (MS) Northern District Director and is a member of The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin editorial board, 2012-2016. aquinn@pontotoc.k12.ms.us
Everyone has a preferred mode of communication. Talk about yours and how you balance that preference when communicating with people who do not share that preference.

I am a very strong introvert. Written modes of communication appeal more to my personality preference type. However, this mode often inhibits authentic, open communication and dialogue. I have learned that a brief phone call frequently eliminates the need for a lengthy e-mail, reduces misinterpretation or misunderstanding, and accomplishes the purpose in a shorter period of time. Making a phone call can be very time-consuming, but the benefits, in terms of creating relationships as opposed to simply making a connection, are far greater. The book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking* by Susan Cain addresses the balance required of introverted leaders in an extroverted world.

In the same way that certain people have a preference, do you find that certain modes of communication are more fitting for certain situations?

Absolutely. Numerous books address which type of communication is more appropriate, or less, contingent upon the situation. Just as one varies the type of leadership depending on the situation, one must also vary the mode of communication depending on the audience, information, and purpose.

Do you believe that technology is blurring some unwritten rules of what has been acceptable communication in the past?

Technology has made a huge impact on what is considered acceptable communication. When I first learned to text in the same way as a student I was tutoring, I felt a great sense of guilt. I was glad my high school English teacher could not see how I was spelling words, using incorrect grammar, punctuating, and capitalizing—or not! While technology has blurred the rules, so have generational and cultural changes and especially the global affiliations we experience in communicating with the members in DKG’s 18 countries. In spite of the use of English as the official language of the organization, communicating with members from the various countries requires consideration of cultural, linguistic, technological, societal, and generational differences. Engaging the younger generations requires a greater use of technology than ever before and, yes, with the advent of enhanced use of technology in communication and the instant connectivity we enjoy, the rules of what is acceptable or appropriate have been modified.

What do you see as challenges for communication in a time when communication seems, on the surface, easy and immediate?

One of my favorite sayings is attributed to George Bernard Shaw: “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion it has taken place.” Instant connectivity, 24/7, does not necessarily equate to effective communication. Sharing information is far different than communicating. Two individuals talking does not a conversation make. It is difficult to have a time of sharing and effective communication when every individual sitting around a table has an electronic device and is checking e-mails, texting, or tweeting. Being able to multitask is a positive characteristic; however, I am still convinced that eye contact is important.

How can we as educators address these challenges?

I am old enough to have been involved in many curriculum debates as to the necessity or
importance of teaching or grading of certain traditional skills that the advent of enhanced technology seemed to eliminate or, at least, for which the need was reduced. I read books 25-30 years ago that discussed how technology could complement and supplement models of instruction and enhance the components common to any instructional model; those books predicted what the future might hold for teacher education as a result of the use of increased technology. I think as educators we must commit to using as much technology as feasible in preparing our students for the future and for jobs of which we are not even aware. Perhaps we should pair our students’ knowledge of technology with our concern for transforming lives through education, and we would have the best of both worlds.

How have you seen the role of DKG change in regard to communicating its mission, services, and benefits?

Only within the last several years have we delved into social media: social networking, blogging, using Facebook, and tweeting. We continue our printed publications, have increased the number of electronic versions, and anticipate being able to use bulk e-mailing to communicate with our 85,000 members. Unfortunately, only about 55% of our members have furnished e-mail addresses, many of which are not correct or up to date. Even though we believe nearly 85-90% of DKG members have e-mail capacity, getting the information and keeping our database updated requires tremendous effort.

We continually try to balance the need to engage the younger generations and at the same time not alienate or disenfranchise those who helped us become who and what we are as an organization. We have a noble mission of promoting the professional and personal growth of women educators and excellence in education. We are a great philanthropic organization and provide unbelievable benefits both to members and nonmembers, but we continue to struggle with the fact that we have not effectively communicated that to all our members.

If everyone had the same image in her head and the feeling in her heart of DKG that I have, we would not be losing members. We have made some progress in communicating with our members regarding our projects, activities, and benefits, but we still have so much work to do. The Mission and Purposes of our organization are too important not to use every available communication strategy!

How has a diverse membership responded to the changes in communication strategies?

I am pleased with the response of our members regarding the use of increasingly different communication strategies than those with which many were familiar or comfortable. Change is difficult and often painful, but we are making progress. Quite honestly, our membership is not as diverse as I would like. I believe there is strength in diversity, and we continually challenge our members to analyze their chapter membership in terms of diversity.

What books or authors would you recommend to those who are seeking to improve their communication skills?

There are so many books I could share that would be helpful in improving communication. A large part of my background, training, and continued reading, however, involves leadership and communication as well as marketing and sales-leadership strategies. Many authors and books have had a profound influence on me. Many years ago, Stephen Covey’s Seven Habits of Highly Effective People caused me to look at everything with the end in sight and to ask myself how I really wanted to be remembered. The Purpose Driven
Life by Rick Warren motivated me to examine the reason I am here. Neither focused on communication skills specifically; however, in retrospect, I have discovered that, in my desire to be a leader and communicate more effectively, I modified the manner in which I interacted with people, which included communication strategies. Two of the most recent influential books I received as gifts from members of DKG include The End of Membership as We Know It by Sarah Sladek and The Communicators—Leadership in the Age of Crisis by Richard Levick. Sladek will be a keynote speaker at the 2014 International Convention in Indianapolis—a great place for the kind of personal and professional communication that makes DKG so unique and valuable to members!

**References: Books Mentioned in the Interview**


Understanding Secondary Teachers’ Concerns about RTI: Purposeful Professional Communication

By Laura J. Isbell and Susan Szabo

In this study, 10 secondary-education teachers completed diagnostic assessments of their attitudes toward Response to Intervention (RTI) practices and toward implementation of these practices in their inclusive, general-education classrooms. Findings indicated that levels of concern of these teachers were the highest in the Self phase and lowest in the Impact phase. The authors suggest that district leaders should use teachers’ self-reflective communications to plan appropriate professional development that provides the necessary support to implement and to sustain RTI practices even as it addresses instructors’ concerns.

Introduction

In 2004, Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was meant to ensure that all students were provided with high quality, research-based instruction in reading and math and were given time and instruction to acquire proficient English language skills before being labeled as students who had disabilities. With this reauthorization, Congress shifted the responsibility for many students receiving special education services from the special education teachers to the general education teachers. This brought considerable attention to a strategy known as response to intervention (RTI), as teachers in general education classrooms were now required to monitor, observe, and document academic and social outcomes for these inclusion students (Batsche et al., 2007).

RTI refers to a comprehensive, student-centered framework that involves research-based instruction and intervention in order to provide systematic help to students who are having academic learning problems (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The three-tier model of RTI is the most commonly used framework, and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education uses the RTI framework as its primary model for identifying students who are at risk for being diagnosed with a specific learning disability (SLD) and for implementing intervention strategies based on the needs of each student (Bender & Shores, 2007). Academic and behavioral interventions change at each tier of the three-tier model of RTI, becoming more intense as students move across tiers.

In Tier 1, the general classroom teachers apply scientifically proven programs, using intervention and strategies that scaffold all students’ learning. In addition, teachers use established benchmarks to assess students at least three times a year (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).
In Tier 2, the general classroom teachers provide supplemental, small-group instruction to students who respond poorly to group instructional procedures that occur in Tier 1. Tier 2 instruction—usually approximately 20 minutes of extra time per day—provides targeted, systematic interventions for small groups of four to five students (Bradley, Danielson, & Doolittle, 2007).

In Tier 3, specialized education teachers address the child’s individualized needs through pull-out programs. During this intensive instruction, educators use progress monitoring once or twice a week to determine students’ growth and development. During Tier 3, the general classroom teacher provides valuable information about the students—such as work habits, academic skills, and classroom behaviors—to the pull-out, specialized educator. In addition, when students progress well, they are removed from the Tier 3 program immediately.

Research about teachers’ concerns and criticisms of RTI (e.g., criticisms about student placement, teacher training, and teacher attitude toward inclusion and to RTI) has been conducted in a variety of elementary settings (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Hall & Loucks, 1978; Holloway, 2003; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). However, few if any researchers have examined reflective communication by secondary teachers about their problems and concerns in using RTI for inclusion students in their classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

The researchers used the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) instruments and exit interviews to examine teachers’ perceptions regarding the implementation of RTI in their general secondary-education classrooms. Three research questions (RQs) guided the study:

RQ1: What concerns did secondary teachers have about RTI?
RQ2: What levels of RTI usage did secondary teachers implement?
RQ3: What were secondary teachers’ attitudes, and feelings about RTI?

Theoretical Framework

This study was posited within the CBAM, which deals with both Change Theory (Hall, 1979) and Concern Theory (Fuller, 1969). The CBAM contains three diagnostic tools that deal with (a) self-concerns about teacher adequacy, (b) task concerns about teaching methods and performance, and (c) impact concerns about pupil learning needs (Fuller, Parsons, & Watkins, 1973). Change Theory is based on the idea that teachers can change their instructional behaviors and perceptions of self over time (Feiman-Nemser, 1983), while Concerns Theory focuses on purposeful communication with self as well as with others about teaching concerns (Campbell & Thompson, 2007). Ultimately,
teachers’ meaningful change cannot occur without the purposeful communication of these concerns to a professional learning community (PLC) where others can offer varied ideas and support so the change has a positive impact on student learning (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2006).

**Response to Intervention**

RTI is an educational approach that combines a variety of components and three tiers to improve student achievement. RTI has been described as a process in which students are provided quality instruction, their progress is monitored, those who do not respond appropriately are provided additional instruction and their progress is monitored, and those who continue to not respond appropriately are considered for special education services. (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003, p. 159).

As with all approaches, successful implementation of RTI requires concerted effort and commitment from individual teachers, but campus-wide collaboration and communication are also essential. In addition, there are various pros and cons of implementing and using RTI.

Some researchers have praised RTI for its potential benefits as a model for solving problems, for monitoring students’ progress, and for identifying students who have learning disabilities and need extra supports (Canter, 2004; Elliott, 2008; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2008; Stuart, Rinaldi, & Higgins-Averill, 2011). In addition, proponents of RTI have demonstrated that instruction with RTI can promote more effective practices as RTI can help teachers to adjust students’ learning goals to ensure that students continue to succeed both academically and behaviorally (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005; McMaster, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2005; Speece, Case, & Molloy, 2003).

Other researchers have criticized the RTI framework, as all three Tiers must work well together and the sequencing of the three Tiers has many gaps (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003; Kratochwill & Shernoff, 2004). In addition, researchers do not agree on key rules for RTI, including the length of time students should stay in a Tier 3 intervention classroom, the intensity of the intervention, or how long students should stay in the program with no success before being referred to special education (Barnett, Daly, Jones, & Lentz, 2004; Gresham, 2002; Kovaleski, 2003). Finally, teachers need to have engaged administrators who actively listen to their communicated concerns in order to plan appropriate support through professional development and learning communities, as well as to provide time so teachers can make sense of RTI, integrate RTI components, and change their instructional framework (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007).

**Learning Communities**

A learning community is a group of people who work collaboratively to ensure that students learn. Professional learning communities (PLCs) provide teachers with support and collaborative inquiry as they incorporate new classroom instructional approaches, strategies, and activities in order to improve both the quality of teaching and student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1996; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Roseholtz, 1989). As principals and teachers conduct inquiry together through purposeful communication, they become a community of learners who form a shared vision where instructional change can take place in a caring, supportive environment (Hord, 1997).
Instructional Change

One strategy for improving student achievement is improvement of teacher quality (Borko, 2004). Researchers have found that both formal and on-the-job opportunities through learning communities provide teacher learning that promotes instructional change (Parise & Spillane, 2010). However, change for change’s sake is not the goal. Educators do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater but rather to implement change only when it leads to sustained improvement in student achievement.

Teachers in the school in this study adopted RTI to promote instructional change because the approach incorporated research-based interventions at increasing levels of intensity to support students who struggled with reading, math, or behavior. As instructional change was implemented, per the campus improvement plan objectives, RTI specialists monitored students who were in at-risk situations to ensure that the interventions supported those who were struggling with academic or behavioral issues. Using their knowledge of students, these specialists guided campus administrators regarding how to place students in academic situations that were best suited to their unique needs. Teachers who implemented the RTI in their general-education classrooms collected student data to determine whether students met eligibility for RTI tiers or for special education. All involved in implementation of RTI had the ultimate goal of improving student achievement.

Research Methods

We conducted this mixed methods study in a Grade 9-12 high school in a northeast Texas school system; teachers were in their fourth year of RTI implementation. The high school was rated as Academically Acceptable by Texas Education Academy (TEA) based on students’ end-of-year test scores. We collected data across three intervals during a 5-month time frame to investigate secondary teachers’ concerns about implementing RTI.

Participants

We examined the perceptions and concerns of 10 secondary teachers who had at least 3 years of experience using RTI. They were mainly female (70%) and Caucasian (90%) and included two teachers from each core subject—i.e., mathematics (M), English language arts (E), science (S), social studies (SS) and fine arts (FA). Five participants had earned only their bachelor’s degrees, and five had earned their master’s degrees. None of the participants was certified in special education. The average years of teaching experience for the 10 participants was 10.45 years ($SD = 6.87$). Amount of teaching experience was equally distributed between 5 and 20 years, but three teachers had less than 5 years of teaching experience, and one teacher had more than 20 years of experience teaching. The average years of RTI training was 3.80 years ($SD = .63$).
Implementation of RTI

The RTI specialist provided RTI training sessions for and meetings with the high school faculty members. For the first 2 years of implementing RTI, the RTI specialist conducted biweekly meetings with the teachers to share the tracking results of students’ RTI through each of the three tiers. The RTI specialist also met with teachers to discuss RTI strategies they could implement and modify in response to students’ changing needs. Strategies included (a) assigning students with positive peers; (b) assigning seating arrangement; (c) displaying visual cues and objectives on board; (d) providing students with an outline of the lesson; (e) meeting with students who needed extra assistance in small groups and one-on-one; (f) acknowledging positive student behavior; and (g) acknowledging student effort with verbal praise.

Instruments and Data Analysis

We used CBAM instruments to study change and concerns teachers had during the implementation of the required innovation. CBAM instruments were purchased from and scored by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) online services. The model includes three diagnostic instruments, but only two were used for this study: Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoC-Q), which has a reliability of .65-.86 (Hall & Hord, 2006), to answer RQ1; and Levels of Use (LoU) branching interviews linked to a range of observable behaviors to answer RQ2. In addition, we completed exit interviews to learn about teachers’ perceptions of RTI and to answer RQ3.

Stages of Concern Questionnaire. The SoC-Q measured quantitatively the levels of concerns the participants experienced (see Appendix A) while implementing RTI. The participants completed the 35-item questionnaire, which used a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (this statement is irrelevant to me) to 7 (very true of me at this time). The score for each stage ranged from 0-35, with five questions related to each stage. SEDL converted the average score to a relative percentile; the higher the percentile, the more intense the concerns reflected at that stage.

Levels of Use branching interviews. We used the LoU branching interview (Appendix B) to collect qualitative data through interviews in order to determine general, observable patterns of teachers’ behavior related to the RTI intervention implementation (Anderson, 1997). We began the interviews with structured questions:

1. Are you currently looking for information about RTI?
2. Have you decided to use RTI and set a date to begin to use it?
3. Are you currently using RTI?
4. What kinds of changes are you making in your use of RTI?
5. Are you coordinating your use of RTI with other users?
6. Are you planning or exploring making modifications or replacing the RTI?

In the branching structure, if the respondent answered yes, we moved to the next question and continued until receiving a no answer. The number of the branch (1-8; see Appendix C) at which the participant stopped indicated his or her level of usage. High numbers from LoU indicated high levels of use of RTI while low numbers from LoU indicated low levels of use of RTI. Each interview took approximately 10 minutes.

Exit interviews. We conducted an exit interview with each participant in order to gauge teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about their successes, concerns, and future goals with RTI. In addition, data from the exit interviews provided information about the teachers’ concerns and perceptions about RTI, which benefited not only this study but also the
district leaders and especially the RTI specialist. Four questions guided the exit interviews:

1. What is your interpretation of the results based on the data collected?
2. What were your successes with the RTI innovation?
3. What were your biggest concerns about RTI?
4. Where do you think you are headed next with RTI?

All 10 participants reviewed the interview notes and verified that what was written was what they had said. Next, we examined these statements, grouped them, and finally coded them into themes.

Results

Research Question 1. To answer the first research question, which dealt with secondary teachers’ levels of concerns about implementing RTI, we used the data from the likert-scale SoC-Q. The SoC-Q average scores and percentile conversion (Table 1) revealed that more teachers were in Stage 2 at the beginning of all three intervals than any other stage, as it had the highest converted percentile. These findings indicated that, overall, teachers’ concerns were highest in the Self Phase. Thus, these teachers focused more on how RTI was affecting them personally, rather than on how RTI was impacting their students’ learning.

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<td>Interval 2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interval 3</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SEDL provided the converted percentile of average scores as part of its scoring contract.

Research Question 2. To answer RQ2, which examined the levels of RTI usage by secondary teachers, we used the data from the LoU branching interviews. Data were collected at three intervals. Scores represented levels of usage as indicated by stop points on the interview branches.

As seen in Table 2, all the teachers showed maintenance or growth of RTI usage during the course of the three intervals. Six of the ten teachers at Interval 3 were still acquiring information about RTI implementation or trying to implement it daily but not always being successful. In addition, two teachers (MT1 & FAT5) had higher LoU scores than the other teachers at all three intervals. We believed this was due not only to their years of teaching experience but also to their comfort level in the classroom and working with a diverse population of students for years.
### Table 2

**Teachers’ LoU Scores Showing Levels of Usage at each Interval**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interval 1</th>
<th>Interval 2</th>
<th>Interval 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SST3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SST4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAT5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAT6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Score range: 1-8; Interval 1: $M = .002$; Interval 2: $M = 2.50$; Interval 3: $M = 3.30$.

---

Research Question 3. To answer RQ3, which examined the secondary teachers’ attitudes and feelings about RTI, we used the data from the exit interviews. First, we showed the participants their three SoC scores and their three LoU scores. All 10 participants stated they were comfortable with the results they were shown. Second, the participants talked about their successes, their concerns, and their future goals for RTI.

**RTI success comments.** When participants were asked to describe their successes with RTI, four themes emerged: (a) awareness, (b) tutorials, (c) questioning, and (d) repetition. Six participants commented on how their awareness of RTI helped their students. Comments such as the following indicated teachers were aware of RTI and how to implement different strategies to assist student learning in a small group or individually.

- Making myself more aware of kids’ needs and coming up with strategies in the classroom [is important].
- I think I offer many chances for students to succeed; my job as a teacher is to make sure that they have gotten the knowledge.
- RTI encouraged me to assist student learning in small groups and individually.
- Walking around and monitoring student behavior and regularly offering assistance positively guide students’ progress.

Seven participants mentioned some type of tutoring that was happening for their students. Small-group tutoring (e.g., Tier 2 of RTI) offered time to accommodate a student’s needs.

- I offer before- and after-school tutoring
- I write tutoring times on the board to remind students to attend sessions
- Students need to help themselves and take advantage of my tutoring sessions.

Eight participants mentioned the importance of questioning during instruction in helping teachers gauge the difficulties of students who may be struggling.

- I ask questions frequently to check for understanding.
- Questioning allowed me to check students’ progress about a topic and to offer extra supports if needed (Tier level).
- Asking students, What can I do to help or Do you need me to show you again are helpful in guiding students in assignment completion.
Six participants indicated that repetition was important to students’ success. Repetition is used to reinforce learning and to help students who may be struggling to understand the material.

- Making sure the right kids hear the directions repeatedly was a success of RTI.
- Repeat directions on assignments and tests for students who need more help.
- Repeat directions and put directions on board.

**RTI concern comments.** When participants were asked to describe their concerns about using RTI, five themes emerged: (a) collaboration, (b) time, (c) teacher’s role, (d) documentation, and (e) individualization. Four participants described collaboration as a concern. Collaboration with other teachers, administrators, and the RTI specialist was the main concern.

- Making [RTI] more effective by seeing how the program makes direct changes in students would require collaboration with other teachers and would be difficult to coordinate.
- Collaborating with teachers and parents to find interests of students [is a challenge].
- Work with administrators and RTI specialist on different strategies [is a concern].

Three participants stated time or lack of time as a concern in their ability to implement RTI appropriately.

- Spending too much time with RTI and making sure all students get help is a limitation of RTI.
- I feel like I don’t have enough time to get everything in.
- Training takes time and it is not always offered regularly nor well.

Seven teachers saw the teacher’s role in RTI as a concern. Teachers’ voiced their concerns about their role with RTI and thought the administration (principal, assistant principal, and RTI specialist) would be more involved in the RTI process.

- Even after a semester of working with RTI, I am still trying to figure out my role [and] thought the administration would be more hands on.
- Are there new RTI strategies we are supposed to be using?
- Are there other things I should be doing that I don’t know about?

Four teachers reported that documentation was a concern to them, as they did not understand what to document or how to document student RTI strategies used in the classroom.

- Should I document everything?*
- Do I need to turn some form of documentation in to the RTI specialist or to the administrators?
- Where do I keep everything? Do I keep it or do I need to turn it in to someone?

Six teachers indicated individualization as a concern. They were uncertain about how to make each lesson meet each student’s needs.

- The hardest thing [about RTI] is to individualize everything. It seems like the louder the student, the more help they receive. I have such a large class and it is hard to work with everyone.
- Making sure the right kids receive the right services and strategies [is a concern because] sometimes kids who don’t need services are on it.
- I would like to help all the kids and find what benefits each student to be successful.

**Goal statements.** When participants were asked where they thought they were headed with RTI innovation, five patterns of frequently mentioned, related comments emerged: (a) effective strategies, b) continue to try to help students, (c) organization, (d)
communication, and (e) keep things the same. Six participants responded about acquiring effective strategies to continue implementing RTI.

- [I] always try to refine what works with each individual student.
- I would try to figure out what works and make adjustments as I go.
- Making sure all students get help by using differentiation [is a goal].

All 10 participants talked about wanting to continue helping students be successful at learning.

- I will continue to try and help individual students through differentiation.
- I like the idea of having it individualized for every student.
- I will always try and do what is best for all my students.

Four participants reported organization as a future goal to implement RTI effectively.

- It is important to self-correct so RTI is effective for all students.
- RTI is something to work on in the classroom all the time.
- Self-correction and self-acknowledgement in correcting and using it all the time [are important].

Three participants cited staying in communication with other teachers as a way to improve future implementation of RTI.

- [I must] continue to communicate with teachers because they may have more information about specific student.
- Communicating with other teachers and with students' parents to find out more about each student [is important].

Four participants indicated they would keep things the same and not change anything in their future implementation of RTI.

- I assume that RTI is staying the same, but I think I think I will tweak some of the things I have done to make it more effective and collaborative.
- I can't say that I would make big changes in what I am doing, but I need to know that what I am doing is effective.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. The first limitation was duration. Results of this study provided only a snapshot of teachers' concerns about and levels of use of RTI at three different intervals across 5 months. The results may have been different if the study were done at a different time or for the whole school year. Second, the study took place in a suburban school in northeast Texas, and results may be different in different settings. Third, this was the first time the CBAM diagnostic instruments were used with secondary teachers implementing RTI as an innovation. Fourth, it was assumed that the teachers answered all written and oral questions honestly.

Discussion

This study was designed to examine RTI implementation in general secondary education classrooms. Results revealed that after 4 years of implementing RTI at a north Texas school, teachers' levels of use of RTI increased only slightly across the three intervals, except for one participant who remained at the preparation stage. Thus, it appears that this change was difficult for these teachers.

Certainly change must occur if teachers are to find new methods to identify and instruct students who may be struggling. However, consideration of teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors is also important, as "failure to consider those who implement the
change will doom [change] to failure” (Burns, 2007, p. 38). In addition, administrators clearly must become actively involved in providing significant and sustained supports (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007) for teachers in order to change their thinking about innovations (Fuller, 1969) as change occurs developmentally over time (Hall & Hord, 2001).

The exit interview comments supported the findings based on the CBAM diagnostic tools and helped us understand why concerns were stalled at the lowest levels and why levels of use were still so low after 4 years of implementing RTI. Lack of consistent RTI meetings and training became an obstacle for these teachers who, accordingly, expressed concerns about their roles, collaboration, documentation, time, and communication with the RTI specialist and administrators. Participants also expressed concern that scheduling conflicts and assigned extra duties—both controlled by administrators—hindered their ability to implement RTI effectively by taking time away from their planning and training. Furthermore, the priorities of administrators and of RTI specialists were different, causing teachers to be unsure about their roles in RTI.

Successfully implementing innovations such as RTI is especially important given the shift from special education settings to general education settings in support services for students who demonstrate academic or behavior problems that may indicate SLD. Our research in this study supports other research showing that ineffective administrators provide a barrier to improving teaching (Blase & Blase, 2004; U.S. Department of Education Report, 2000; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Results of this study support the importance of administrators’ communicating purposefully about this change, planning for appropriate training, developing collaboration through learning communities, and providing resources in order for teachers to feel comfortable and competent in implementing RTI (Blase & Blase, 2004; Cotton, 2003; Goodwin, Cunningham, & Childress, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). In order to understand and address concerns about an innovation such as RTI, teachers and administrators must engage in purposeful professional communication.

References


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Appendix A

Expressions of Phases and Stages of Concern about Innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 Phases of Concern</th>
<th>7 Stages of Concern</th>
<th>Expressions of Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>6–Refocusing</td>
<td>Generating ideas about innovation that would work better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5–Collaboration</td>
<td>Becoming concerned about my practice relating to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4–Consequence</td>
<td>Affecting learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>3–Mechanical</td>
<td>Spending all of my time getting materials ready for innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>2–Personal</td>
<td>Affecting me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–Informational</td>
<td>Becoming interested in learning more about innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated</td>
<td>0–Unconcerned</td>
<td>Remaining unconcerned about innovation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B
Branching Interview Scoring Guide

[Diagram showing a branching interview process with decision points and questions related to RTI use and innovation]

Note. From *Measuring Implementation in Schools: Levels of Use* (p. 18), by G. E. Hall, D. J. Dirksen, and A. A. George, 2006, Austin TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Copyright 2006©, SEDL. Adapted with permission.

Appendix C
Eight Levels of Use of Innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description of Level</th>
<th>Behavioral Indicators of Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Renewal</td>
<td>Reevaluating quality of use of innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Combining own efforts with those of colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVb</td>
<td>Refinement</td>
<td>Varying use of innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVa</td>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>Establishing patterns of use but making few changes to innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>Trying short-term and day-to-day use of innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Preparing for first use of innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Acquiring information about and exploring value of innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Non-Use</td>
<td>Having little or no knowledge of innovation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From *Measuring Implementation in Schools: Levels of Use* (p. 5), by G. E. Hall, D. J. Dirksen, and A. A. George, 2006, Austin TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Copyright 2006©, SEDL. Adapted with permission.
Voting for Subjectivity: Adding Some Gray Areas to Black-and-White, Objective Grading Practices

by Jennifer L. Stitt and Judith J. Pula

The authors argue that teachers should include subjectivity as well as objectivity in their grading processes. Rewarding such intangibles as effort, attitude, participation, and improvement can help counterbalance grades lowered by test anxiety, for instance, and show that teachers care—and, in so doing, feed students’ drive to succeed. The authors offer steps for adding or reinstating subjectivity into classroom grading practices.

In a society where education focuses on objective learning standards and assessments, teachers are often baffled about whether or not they should include lesson plans, assessment tools, or grading criteria that are not stringently linked to objectivity. Educators should not forget, however, that the gray areas of subjectivity—effort, attitude, participation, improvement, and so on—are linked to the reactions, personalities, and attitudes that reflect the core of human nature: empathy. Although society demands students to become adults who contribute via skills measured through objective standards, relying solely on objectivity seems to forsake a part of humans’ drive to succeed: the empathetic side driven by emotion. Ultimately, teachers are left to ask themselves whether to be only subjective, only objective, or both. Given the purpose of education in relation to the betterment of society and a student’s eventual participation in that society, teachers should impart knowledge, use grade assessment tools, and communicate student performance both objectively and subjectively.

The Grading Divide

Arguably, the root of what may be called a grading divide does not lie with today’s teachers. Because some educators may lack the professional training and development appropriate for implementing their school’s grading systems, “most [teachers] simply replicate what they experienced as students” (Guskey, Swan, & Jung, 2011, p. 53) when they were in grade school. This replication becomes an immediate problem because teachers employed together in the same school likely have varied educational experiences. These experiences impact their perspectives about what should and should not be considered for grades and rarely “reflect those recommended by researchers and align . . . with a standards-based approach” (Guskey, Swan, & Jung, p. 53). Furthermore, students are not the only ones negatively affected by such widely varied beliefs about and approaches to grading.
Inconsistency traps teachers as well, especially when the time comes to defend why a certain student receives a particular grade. In essence, teachers’ perceptions are sometimes the only support offered for grades that are supposed to communicate reflective observation of student progress.

To complicate the grading divide further, educational reforms of the last decade make it difficult for teachers to justify subjective grading. Demands for standardized learning control lesson plans and classroom activities, which leads to an equal demand for measurable methods of imparting knowledge and improving student performance. Logically, such performance can be measured most easily through use of assessment tools that are equally balanced and aligned with standards. This standards-driven system intends to set students up for success rather than failure by removing “the possibility for subjectivity at every link in the educational chain” (Narter, 2005, p. 65). In reality, however, complete removal of subjectivity would reduce humans to teaching and learning automatons, eliminating room for the kind of empathetic communication and development that motivate learners. In a similar way, society may believe that being “objective would prevent biases” (Malouff, 2008, p. 191), but working to prevent biases does not always completely eliminate them. If the betterment of students so they can successfully contribute to society as adults is a key goal of education, then teachers and students should cultivate a classroom that includes both subjective and objective assessment—a classroom where biases can be minimized because both types of assessment can be used as checks and balances for one another.

Implementing Subjectivity Appropriately

Consequently, if educators agree that communication of human understanding is important to the process of education, then subjectivity must rightfully play a role alongside objectivity in grading students’ performances. Teachers can mold students to be active, rule-abiding, expectation-meeting adults in society by requiring them to be accountable for meeting certain requirements even under what some would consider the more subjective categories of grading (“Should student attitudes,” 2002). Some examples of these categories might include

- a participation grade for contributing to discussions, measured through the number of times the student participates within a given time frame;

Jennifer L. Stitt is a recent graduate of Frostburg State University’s Master of Arts in Teaching program. She earned a Bachelor of Science in English (literature) with a minor in theater at the same institution. She is an alumnus member and former president of the campus’s chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honors society. Stitt also worked as a tutor at the campus writing center, where she gained Level II CRLA certification. She currently teaches senior English and creative writing at Hampshire High School in Romney, West Virginia. JL.BryStitt@gmail.com

Judith J. Pula, PhD, a member and past president of the Alpha Alpha Chapter (MD), specializes in teaching composition and reading, particularly to underprepared students, at Frostburg State University in Western Maryland. She believes the freshman-year experience lays a foundation crucial to success in college and beyond, so she strives to bring first-year students to a realization of themselves as self-empowered, independent writers and members of the academic community. jpula@frostburg.edu
• a completion grade for responsibility in completion and retention of long-term assignments, which pairs with an objective grade based on a rubric;
• a preparation grade for coming prepared for performance with all materials necessary, as well as an objective grade for any assignments that were due.

In contrast, teachers should not determine grades based on areas that are not supported easily or that are not relevant to learning, such as a student's being visually attractive, performing at a certain level in previous classes under their instruction, being of a particular gender or ethnicity, seeming to be of a certain intellectual or socioeconomic level, or having some sort of connection to the teacher outside of the classroom setting (Malouff, 2008). Although grading based on any of the above criteria can occur either consciously or subconsciously inside grading parameters, teachers need to be wary to implement consistent definition and application of grading criteria in both objective and subjective realms in order to defend their grading decisions properly.

Steps. Teachers can begin balancing subjectivity and objectivity in their classroom in a few steps. The first step is precisely defining categories related to the existing structure of the classroom's learning and working environments. Teachers are typically aware of the workload they expect students to complete and the conditions under which they wish students to meet learning goals, so the decision of what matters in the way of subjective-grading categories should make sense when paired with objective-grading categories. For example, if a teacher prefers lecturing methods, then students should not be expected to meet the requirements of a participation grade—any more than a classroom fueled by cooperative learning should be without a participation grade.

The second step requires teachers to track students' progress on subjective measures over longer periods, just as objective measures require day-to-day, assignment-to-assignment consideration. In working with subjective categories, teachers must additionally be aware that some students have issues related to elements outside of the classroom affecting their performances, such as emotional distress from home, in different ways over different periods of time. Accordingly, teachers must be patient in developing an understanding of the duration of varied issues and how to deal with them in the classroom (“Should student attitudes,” 2002). Teachers who take the time to understand and know what their students feel and think will quickly be able to distinguish among these issues and the length of their effects.

The third step to proper implementation of subjective grading is determining the percentage that subjectivity counts toward the total grade at the end of a grading period. Subjectively-graded categories should not be major, deciding factors in the grading process; rather, they should serve as support for the grades students have earned through objective measures. Assessment in subjective categories can allow students a chance at bettering grades when their application of knowledge fails due to faults that are not totally under their control. For instance, an effort category worth 10% of a total grade can save a student who has testing anxiety from failing the whole marking period. Of course, this example only works if a teacher tends to favor tests over other assessments such as papers, lab reports, or projects. Hence, the first step of grading subjectively comes into play again: subjective categories should be in alignment with the objective tools being used. With this cycle of steps, teachers are more likely to find success in creating a properly-supported grading system that uses objectivity and subjectivity to balance and check each other.

By using these steps to incorporate subjectivity alongside objective-grading methods already being used, teachers become more than simply vehicles to guide learning; teachers
retain their humanity and indicate that they care. A classroom without such humanity is not a classroom.

Some people may argue that subjectively grading students in addition to grading them objectively will do nothing to improve their performance. On the contrary, we concur with the claim that “students can tell if [a teacher] really care[s] . . . and will work harder on their behavior and studies for a teacher who does” (“Should student attitudes,” 2002, p. 16). Additionally, a grade based solely on performance under objective standards does little to inform parents about their child’s behavior as a student. The aforementioned student who has test anxieties might be mistaken as lazy at home for achieving poor grades. In the classroom, this child may be a teacher’s most diligent pupil, wanting more knowledge and more chances to improve. Therefore, grades in subjective areas provide a bonus: communication between parents and teachers opens further to provide an accurate picture of how the student performs and to stimulate progressive conversation about the student as a whole person. The importance of communication on this topic cannot be forgotten, given that education is not the responsibility of teachers alone. As Narter (2005) insightfully observed, “Education is a dynamic undertaking between human beings within a common culture in which teachers impart knowledge by means of careful selection and concern for” (p. 65) students and parents alike. Meaningful communication around both objective and subjective criteria more fully informs parents in this dynamic undertaking.

Conclusion

Grades based purely on objective criteria leave little room for communication about subjective goals in the classroom that rely on the empathetic characteristics of human nature, and few teachers can prove full objectivity in conscious and subconscious decisions 100% of the time. Accordingly, subjective aspects of grading, teaching, and learning should be addressed instead of simply cast aside. Overlooking these aspects forgets the empathetic core that drives humans to be successful for their own sakes and for the sake of society. If teachers are purely objective in the way they pass on knowledge and assess students, then they should not be surprised if their students are not empathetic to others. Teachers are supposed to be a reflection of the society that the students will join as adults, and blending objectivity and subjectivity will help communicate what well-rounded students should be once they become contributing adults in society.

References


Purposeful Professional Communication by Teacher Educators: Helping Candidates Get Jobs

By Mary Clement

The author explores how purposeful communication by teacher educators and ultimately by their students can aid candidates in successful job searches. She provides specific examples of behavior-based interview questions, as well as strategies and resources to guide educators as they help future colleagues to enter teaching.

The job market for teachers continues to change, and new graduates can no longer expect to get a position in the district in which they completed student teaching or by attending a single campus job fair. “Teaching is not the safe career bet that it once was” (Jacobson, 2011, p. 16), but there are teaching positions available every year. When newly-certificated teachers do not find jobs within a year, they may become discouraged and leave the profession permanently. As newly certified teachers leave the pool of potential new hires, the problem of teacher supply and demand may become what Ingersoll and Smith (2003) have called pouring water into a bucket with holes in it. Teacher educators have many responsibilities in their roles of preparing tomorrow’s teachers, but chief among these is purposeful communication about getting a job to help candidates secure employment upon graduation.

In this article, I explore the possible roles of teacher educators with regard to preparing candidates for finding jobs. I discuss where to fit job searching into an already full curriculum and how to teach all aspects of the search process. Strategies for teaching students to communicate purposefully through resumes, cover letters, portfolios, and interviews are included.

Job Searching as a Part of the Curriculum

Introduction to Education classes. The first place for job searching in the teacher-preparation curriculum may be in the introduction to education class. An easy assignment is to have students find an online employment Web site, such as teachers-teachers.com or schoolspring.com, to see what jobs are listed nationally. Then, students should locate their state’s teacher-employment Web site and read openings. To find the state’s Web site, candidates can use a search engine such as Google and type in teaching jobs and the name of the state, or go to the link on http://www.edinformatics.com/education/employment.htm. With this assignment, students learn about the hiring trends in their state and region.
Every year the American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE) publishes its Job Search Handbook for Educators and includes a summary of its annual survey on educator supply and demand. For example, a quick look at the current data reveals continued shortages of teachers in the areas of remedial and special education, the sciences, mathematics, some foreign languages, English as a second language (ESL), and bilingual education (American Association for Employment in Education, 2013). Additionally, the survey currently shows a surplus of elementary teachers, especially in the early grades, in many areas of the country. For some students who are beginning their teacher-education programs intent on becoming kindergarten or first-grade teachers at this time, seeing this data may not influence their choice of teaching area. However, other students may see the research and learn that adding an endorsement or extra coursework in ESL, reading, or special education may increase their chances of obtaining a position in early-elementary grades.

Because the teacher job market varies widely and preparation is time-consuming, communication about where the jobs are should start early. It may not be the job of the Education 101 instructor to force a change in major upon teacher-education candidates, but it is certainly important that students know this information when entering the program. Although candidates should not be scared into changing their majors based on anecdotal stories, clear communication from professors and other teachers who work with education majors can help students to better understand the possible job market outlook.

One-to-two years before job entry. Where else can job-search preparation be shared with candidates? Clement’s (2013) research on getting a teaching job indicated that it takes a year to find a position. Accordingly, basic information about how to start job searching should be shared in a curriculum or methods class during the spring of junior year for traditional undergraduates and a year before MAT or postbaccalaureate candidates are scheduled to complete their certification programs.

Writing a resume and a sample cover letter can be an assignment for a class in the senior year, well before full-time student teaching begins. Mock interviews should also be done before student teaching. Having juniors serve as volunteers at a campus job fair a year before they will actually attend as job seekers is another idea for preparing candidates for their job search. Many resource books are also available for teacher education candidates (Anthony and Coghill-Behrends, 2010; Clement, 2007, 2010; and Peterson, 2002).

The student-teaching semester has traditionally been the place in the curriculum where candidates have received information about obtaining jobs. Student teaching directors may invite guest speakers to on-campus seminars. School district personnel directors and building principals often make relevant presentations, especially if they share their expectations for strong candidates. Some university supervisors assume mentor roles with regard to helping their student teachers in the job-seeking process, as do some cooperating teachers (Dendler & Edwards, 2011).

Guiding Students to Prepare Their Paperwork

Even as teacher educators must communicate purposefully about the job market, teacher candidates must also learn to communicate purposefully in writing as they apply for jobs. Mary Clement, EdD, is a professor of teacher education at Berry College, north of Atlanta, Georgia. Her primary research area, which has resulted in 11 books, is the hiring of new teachers. Clement is a member of Iota Chapter, Psi State Organization (GA) and serves her chapter as chair of the scholarship program. mclement@berry.edu
for positions. Although almost all job-application paperwork is submitted electronically, candidates still need to create focused cover letters, a resume, and a portfolio.

Cover letters should only be one page in length, directed to a specific person, with his or her title indicated. An introductory paragraph that catches the reader’s attention can make the letter stand out, and knowledge of the school district should be evident in the letter. In contrast, resumes may be one to one-and-a-half pages in length. The candidate’s area of certification and a unique quality or experience should appear on the top half of the first page, as this is all that some administrators and assistants read for initial sorting purposes. A list of teaching experiences is critically important—and field experience and student teaching count as teaching experiences. A resume should be printed on professional-looking paper, without borders of school buses or apples.

The interview portfolio is not the same as the huge binder or electronic portfolio made by candidates for program completion. It should contain only six to eight items: two model lesson plans; a sample classroom management plan; a sample parent or family letter; pictures of a well-organized classroom in which the candidate taught; and a sample rubric or grading scale that has been used. Samples of student work, with all names removed, may also be included. Employers rarely ask to see a portfolio, but, when they do, it should be used as a visual aid by the candidate in response to questions. Having an easy-to-use portfolio helps a candidate to explain relevant past teaching experience.

Preparing Students for Preliminary Interviews

Students also need to communicate effectively and purposefully in initial screening interviews. Long used in the business world, the behavior-based interview (BBI; Deems, 1994; Fitzwater, 2001) is now commonly used in education interviews. Based on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future performance, the interviewer asks a candidate to describe past experience in order to ascertain that the candidate has the knowledge and expertise to do the job needed. Behavior-based interview questions begin with phrases such as tell about a time when, how have you, what was your approach to, or describe. A BBI-style question for a teaching candidate addresses a specific topic of teaching, such as curriculum, lesson planning, assessment, differentiation, communication, or collaboration. Strong candidates answer BBI-style questions by explaining past experience and expertise with the topic of the question. The strongest candidates use their portfolios as a visual aid when answering questions and also discuss what they have learned as a result of their experience with the topic of the question.

In a competitive job market, school district personnel will initially use telephone, online, and job-fair interviews to select the strongest candidates for more complex and demanding onsite interviews. Candidates can prepare for such sorting interviews by practicing answers to the following typical behavior-based questions:

1. Describe your most recent teaching experience and what you learned.
2. How have you successfully managed a classroom with routines, procedures, and a management plan?
3. How have you communicated with parents/families about their students?
4. Describe your experience working with other teachers.
5. Describe a lesson you taught that went well, and explain why it went well.
6. How have you helped to raise student achievement, and how did you know students were learning?
Preparation for Onsite Interviews

Although fashion norms vary from one geographic area to another, career suits remain the standard for interviews. First impressions matter greatly, and a candidate should choose a career suit and accessories carefully. Many campus career centers offer workshops on how to dress for success, and strong candidates attend training on how to dress and communicate nonverbally long before onsite interviews.

The onsite interview may include multiple interviewers. For example, candidates may expect questions from a personnel director, a principal, and teachers. At the building level, teachers in a given discipline or grade level may interview candidates to ascertain specific knowledge, such as fluency in a foreign language. Department chairs and lead grade-level teachers often interview candidates with regard to specific curricular issues and the Common Core State Standards.

Asking a candidate to teach a model lesson as part of an onsite interview is becoming more common. If this is the case, the candidate should be informed in advance and should receive a topic to prepare. To begin a lesson, the candidate should get to know the students a bit by asking names or having students create name cards that stand on their desks. Then, the model lesson should have a clear introduction, middle, and end. A strong candidate makes a demonstration lesson very interesting to students.

During student teaching, candidates should ask the principal of the school in which they are working for a mock interview and for a classroom observation. Although not always possible due to the heavy workload of principals, such experiences help to prepare student teachers for their first real interviews and for possible observations during an onsite interview.

Additional suggestions for preparing for the onsite interview follow:

1. Not all administrators have had training in how to interview and hire teachers. If an administrator asks a vague question, such as tell me about yourself, a candidate should form an answer that highlights past teaching experience.

2. If asked a prohibited question—about family, marriage, race, or national origin—the candidate alone must decide how to answer. The best advice can be to answer the question by turning it around and talking about teaching experience. For example, if the interviewer inquires Do you have a family?, the candidate might answer, Yes, and with my first-hand experience of being a parent, I now know how to communicate with parents. Let me share a sample letter to parents that I will use during the first week of the school year.

3. Candidates should not volunteer too much personal information during an interview. They should discuss teaching—their experience, skills, and knowledge, with specific vignettes that highlight past work.

4. If asked about coming to tour the school or observe a class in session, candidates should enthusiastically agree to do so, as the more they learn about the school, the easier it will be to decide if they want to work there.

5. Candidates should treat everyone respectfully. Every word matters when it comes to interviewing.

Onsite interview questions. When a candidate gets a chance for a final interview, he or she should be prepared for questions that are specific to the teaching position opening. Candidates should know that employers may have a list of written questions and will be evaluating their answers with a rubric or other evaluation instrument. Many interviews will begin with the same types of questions listed earlier as preliminary interview questions. Then, more specific questions related to the position will be asked.
Sample questions for elementary positions may include the following:
1. Describe ways that you have taught reading. Which programs or approaches have you used?
2. How have you integrated subjects so that you are not simply teaching one subject at a time?
3. How have you differentiated a lesson to meet the needs of all students?

For middle school positions, interviewers may ask the following:
1. Describe the maturity, or immaturity, levels of middle school students and what you have done to address their needs as you taught.
2. How have you collaborated or been involved in team-teaching?
3. How have you incorporated reading strategies across the curriculum?

Questions asked of a high-school candidate may include:
1. How have you encouraged students to stay in high school and graduate?
2. What are some methods for teaching your subject that work well for you?
3. Describe your grading scale as if I were a new ninth-grade student in your class. In other words, what do I have to do to get an A, a B, or to just pass?

In addition to knowing that they will be asked specific questions, candidates need to practice their answers to a variety of possible questions prior to interviews. They can begin by practicing answers in front of a mirror, and then they should ask a friend to role-play the interviewer. Mock interviews in the career center or with a practicing teacher or administrator may be even more useful.

Candidates also need to be aware of open-ended questions that often lead to the end of an interview. Such questions include
1. What else do you want me to know about you or your teaching?
2. Why do you want to teach in our district?
3. What sets you apart from the other candidates for this position?
4. What is your biggest strength? Your biggest weakness?
5. What questions do you have for me today?

Candidates should be prepared with some questions. However, these questions should not be ones with answers available on the district Web site. Better questions to ask are ones about the professional development opportunities available to teachers in the district. If nothing has been explained about orientation programs, new-teacher induction, or mentoring, then a question about one of these is completely appropriate. Asking about the availability of one's own classroom and about technology that is available in the school's classrooms is also appropriate.

Most candidates are quite anxious to know when they will hear back from a district. Time frames vary widely but should be explained toward the end of the interview. If they are not, asking is acceptable, but candidates should accept that they may wait weeks to hear back from an interview.

Personal Experience Teaching Job Candidates
For the past 10 years, I have added job-seeking skills to my instructional management classes. My students' misconceptions have informed my research and instruction. I strive to convince my students that getting a teaching position takes a lot of work, research, and persistence. In some parts of the United States, those who get hired are now being hired in June, July, and August. Those who keep seeking jobs during the school year improve their chances as well. Working as a substitute teacher or starting one's career as a paraprofessional
remains a way to get a permanent job.

As my students go to interviews, I ask them to report back to me about their experiences, and they do. Many still report being asked the prohibited questions about marriage, family, and children. Some say that their interviews were not about their teaching skills but more about their personalities. Most report that they get many hypothetical questions and not as many that require them to explain past experience and expertise. They all tell me that learning about the paperwork required to find a teaching job helped them tremendously, especially in a class held the semester before student teaching.

Why Help Candidates Get Jobs?

Perhaps the oldest adage about hiring is to ask oneself, Would I want this candidate teaching my own child? In that same vein, teacher educators should ask themselves, Would I want my own child to receive help in seeking his or her first teaching job? The answer is of course. Teaching about the job search is basically communicating the information that exists to each new generation of job candidates.

Professors of education and classroom teachers who supervise student teachers can purposefully communicate how to start a job search, create the paperwork, and prepare in a focused way for interviews. By asking teacher-education students to talk about their past experiences and successes, teacher educators help develop professional communication skills in their students—skills needed to win a job in an interview. Although professors and classroom teachers are extremely busy with all of their duties, adding components of job searching to teacher preparation will create purposeful professional communication to help candidates start their careers.

References


Increasing Purposeful Communication in the Workplace: Two School-District Models

By Amie Cox

No matter the size of a school district, gaps in communication exist that can make the dissemination of information to stakeholders difficult. A loss of purposeful communication can result in decreased organizational performance for a school district. The author discusses purposeful communication in schools and examines two school districts that model effective approaches to increasing and improving purposeful communication.

Communication for most educators begins as soon as they walk in the door of their workplace, often in the form of a greeting, and purposeful professional communication begins as soon as they sit down at their computers and click on the inbox. Each educator has his or her own process of navigating the daily avalanche of e-mails (in addition to postal and inner-school mailings) based on a perception of what information is valuable. Furthermore, although e-mails might be the primary delivery mode of internal communications in the educational workplace, delivery by other means is increasing as technology innovations continue. As this avalanche of internal communications grows, so does the concern of administrators who wonder if what they are trying to communicate to their stakeholders is actually received. Therefore, the understanding and development of purposeful professional communication in schools and school districts have never been more important.

What is Purposeful Communication?

An individual who has developed the skill of purposeful communication is someone who uses sensitivity and forethought when communicating a clear and concise message with a tone that maintains a positive relationship with others (Wilson Learning Worldwide [WLW], 2007). When an administrator implements purposeful communication, he or she is conveying information for the purpose of completing a task while maintaining a positive relationship with stakeholders. If executed effectively, such communication has a positive impact on the workplace and especially on organizational performance, with higher employee engagement and lower turnover rates (WLW).

However, to be most effective with purposeful communication, it is just as important for administrators to recognize when not to convey certain information (Fiore, 2011). This is a tricky skill for administrators because they must successfully predict not what they deem valuable but what stakeholders perceive as valuable (Fiore). If stakeholders consistently
find that communication from a certain administrator or coworker is not valuable, they
will believe the individual is wasting their time and will create a communication barrier
toward that person (Fiore). Stakeholders might even automatically delete e-mails from
such persons without reading them.

**Purposeful Communication and Educators**

All educators share a mission of working toward student success. How amiable
educators work toward this mission together can be measured by the effectiveness of their
purposeful communication both individually and as a school community (Fiore, 2011).
Based on previous research conducted in Indiana and Illinois in 1999, Fiore asserted that
a connection exists between an administrator’s purposeful communication and school
culture. The tone of the communication—particularly whether it was more personal or
professional in nature—impacted the school culture (Fiore).

In addition to carefully wording written communications to ensure that they are
purposeful, administrators should also evaluate their other forms of communication.
According to Fiore (2011), “We communicate a great deal through nonverbal means.
Therefore, the ability to understand our own nonverbal idiosyncrasies becomes vitally
important” (p. 87). Adler (2009) concurred that an individual’s body language and other
nonverbal modes—including attire, grooming, the look and feel of one’s office space, energy
level, and degree of enthusiasm—are also forms of communication.

Maintaining a positive school culture and purposeful communication in relation to
teachers and staff is important to school administrators for three reasons: “strong external
communication is based upon it; they (schoolteachers and staff) will be more productive
if they feel listened to and appreciated; appreciative internal stakeholders will be more
willing to make constructive suggestions” (Fiore, 2011, p. 93). Content employees equal
powerful advocates in their communities.

Ultimately, understanding how one communicates on all levels is important in
understanding the many factors that might impact a school culture. Adler (2009) suggested
the following principles for individuals seeking to increase their purposeful communication:

- Take stock: evaluate your communications strengths and weaknesses.
- Attend to your audience: analyze stakeholders to know who they are, what they
  already know, their concerns, and how they will receive communications.
- Express your purpose: be clear and concise on what you are trying to achieve
- Manage your messages: be able to communicate about various issues such as
  workplace culture, responsibility hierarchy, time management, financial state, and
  job sense.
- Build credibility: use a communication style that fits the situation.
- Seek surprise: attach a riveting fact or story to increase memorability of information.
- Ready, aim and send: analyze delivery modes for optimum effectiveness.

Amie Cox is a media specialist at Crawfordsville High School, Crawfordsville, Indiana. A
member and past president of Iota Chapter in Alpha Epsilon State Organization (IN), Cox
will graduate from Indiana University in May with a postgraduate Specialist degree, the
equivalent of a doctorate in library science. She was recently awarded a Kentucky Historical
Society Scholarly Research Fellowship to complete research for her book, a biography
titled *A Compass Pointing Home: The Adventurous Life of William Bratton of the Lewis and
Clark Expedition*. acox@cville.k12.in.us
• Keep it simple: simplicity aids in memorability.
• Tell the truth: truthful communications help build healthy workplace relationships.
• Make a plan: a communication plan aids one in thinking long-term.

School-District Models
Because they recognize that purposeful communication is vital, some school-district leaders have already begun planning and implementing purposeful communication practices into their school systems (Walters, 2013). The approaches they use are varied. For example, school boards are using wikis for policy-making; school leaders are creating dedicated employee positions such as internal communications managers; school-district personnel administrators are implementing employee online portals; and principals and school-level leaders are using digital signage (Walters, 2013).

Two school districts in two different states have recently addressed the issue of purposeful communication and provide good examples of achieving communication goals. Each district is large, including more than 30 schools. They provide good insights because purposeful communication might be more difficult to achieve when many stakeholders are involved.

Durham Public Schools. Durham Public Schools (DPS) in Durham, North Carolina, is the eighth largest school district in that state with 4600 employees. According to the DPS district home page, their mission is to provide all students with an outstanding education that motivates them to reach their full potential and enables them to discover their interests and talents, pursue their goals and dreams, and succeed in college, in the workforce and as engaged citizens. (DPS, 2013)
The district has a communications department called the Office of Public Information and Community Engagement (PICE).

As part of their strategic plan, under the category of projects and initiatives, district administrators targeted a need for internal communications protocols to ensure that employees are informed about district news and information in a timely manner. To achieve these protocols, they created an implementation team with a project manager. After collecting data from surveys and observations, the team discovered that

Some of our employees have permanent work stations with easy access to e-mail while other employees are mobile and have no regular access to e-mail. Some of our employees are issued district cell phones that can receive e-mail and/or text messages and others use their personal cell phones or may not have cell phone access. Our administrators tell us that information shared via e-mail can sometimes be lost in the large number of e-mails they receive. Some employees share that they are unaware of district announcements even though the messages were sent via e-mail and posted on the district website. (DPS, 2013)

Based on the above observations and feedback, the team discovered that to improve district-wide internal communications, they needed a variety of reliable delivery modes. To address this need, the team created a communications plan and a measurement tool.
Specifically, they created a District Internal Communications Guide that included an overview of why consistent and multiple delivery modes for internal communication are necessary; guidelines for information delivery to employees; and a timeline for implementing text messaging as another type of delivery mode. They also created a DPS Communications Guide to address communication involving news coverage, website, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, telephone protocol, media relations, special events, critical situations, and relevant policies. The Guide is maintained by PICE.

Follow-up activities by PICE will be extensive. The team will conduct surveys to gather stakeholder feedback and will analyze the resulting data regarding communication. Survey questions include the following:

- Where do you have Internet access?
- Do you have access to the following on your cell phone: e-mail, text, Facebook, Twitter?
- How do you prefer to receive news, memos, and other district information?
- What types of information do you want to receive? (DPS, 2013).

Data will be analyzed annually, and delivery modes and district guidelines will be adjusted as needed. The team will also work to complete the DPS Communications Guide; to continue seeking innovative solutions to communication needs as technology develops; and to complete actions to implement text messaging. Overall, because DPS uses stakeholder feedback, DPS distributes purposeful communication valuable to its stakeholders.

**Pinellas County Schools.** Pinellas County Schools is the 7th largest school district in Florida and the 26th largest school district in the nation. The school district is the largest employer in the county with 16,000 employees (Home page, 2013). The mission of Pinellas County Schools is to “educate and prepare each student for college, career, and life” (Home page, 2013). The school district has a communications department called the Office of Strategic Communications (OSC; 2013).

The OSC was created to provide accurate and timely information to stakeholders—school board members, employees, families, business leaders, community members, and the media. The vision of the OSC is to provide 100% effective and purposeful communication, (OSC, 2013). The mission of the members of the OSC is “to advance the vision and mission of Pinellas County Schools through the delivery of clear, concise, consistent and accurate communication that increases awareness of district goals and programs” (OSC). Core values are “agility, valuing workforce partners, management by fact, focus on results and creating value, student-centered excellence” (OSC). The other duties of the OSC are

- to inform school board members of district programs and initiatives;
- to coordinate and direct communication of strategies, projects and activities of critical importance to the school system;
- to work towards improving public perception of PCS and to generate engagement and support for the education of Pinellas County children;
- to assist district departments with their communication efforts to schools and the public;
- to coordinate media coverage for the district and individual schools;
- to provide media training to employees;
- to execute the district’s emergency communications plan; and
- to respond to media requests. (OSC)
In addition to promoting purposeful communication through the OSC, the district leaders use its Web site to provide access to live Web streaming of school board meetings, video archives of past school board meetings, and past agendas and minutes. The Web site also contains a dashboard of school district data and the strategic plan. Thus, through the comprehensive mission of the OSC, the district meets the needs of stakeholders for up-to-date, relevant information about the goals, programs, and achievements of the school community.

Conclusion

Purposeful communication is most effective when it is valuable to stakeholders. The way information is conveyed to employees in schools and to other stakeholders can have a direct impact on school culture. Every school district, whether large or small, should evaluate annually how effectively communications are transmitted as technology innovations continue. Being prepared for these innovations is vital because, no matter the focus of technology use today, tomorrow may bring a whole new gamut of technological possibilities. Being prepared to use these innovations for purposeful organizational communication is vital to school district leaders.

References


Using an Educator’s Skills to Advocate for Senior Relatives or Friends in the Medical World
By Beverley H. Johns and Mary Z. McGrath

An increasing number of DKG members care for senior friends or relatives. The authors focus on the organizational and communication skills that educators possess and how they can utilize those to advocate effectively for seniors. Educators can capitalize on their skills in attention to detail in record-keeping, positive and purposeful communication, patience, and time management.

Educators spend their careers advocating for their students’ needs. The ability to determine and meet others’ needs also effectively serves educators in their lives outside of school. As many educators face the challenge of caring for medically challenged and aging parents or spouses, they choose to advocate for them effectively utilizing skills learned in education. These include attention to detail in record-keeping, positive and purposeful communication, patience, and time management. The professional communication skills that educators have learned to utilize in education can be transferred to the communication challenges that are necessary when caring for a senior relative or friend.

In the schools, educators may have believed they were working within a bureaucracy that was slow to move on behalf of children. As caregivers, they are working with the overwhelming features of mega bureaucracies, health insurance, hospital stays, and coordination of plans. This article is designed to connect what educators have learned as professionals with how they can navigate the medical system for senior relatives or friends.

Teachers who are patient while nurturing and caring for vulnerable students are equally capable of doing so for elderly individuals needing protection and care within the medical world. With the increasing population of senior citizens, it is critical that they have capable advocates. By 2030, the US population aged 65 and older is expected to double (Dilworth-Anderson, Pierre, and Hilliard, 2012). Japan has the longest life expectancy in the world. Over the last 50 years in Japan, the percentage of the elderly population has grown fourfold (Arai et al., 2011). At the same time, advocacy in the field of aging has become a difficult challenge (Binstock, 2004). Caregivers provide needed support but do so at considerable cost to their own well-being (Barbos, Figueredo, Susa, & Demain, 2011). This article outlines how advocacy can be made easier.

Attention to Detail in Record Keeping
Monitoring medications. For students who take medications at school, the teacher and school nurse are responsible for working with parents to ensure that these young
people have an adequate supply and take the medication on time; they must also monitor any side effects. In a similar way, when working with elderly individuals, advocates must be aware of medications, determine if they are updated, and assess whether any have been added without approval. The average number of filled prescriptions for the elderly was 30 in 2000 (Wright & Hill, 2009).

Knowledge of the individual’s medications and schedules is particularly important when a senior patient arrives at a hospital unable to communicate such information. Furthermore, as medications are prescribed at the hospital, an advocate can protect the patient from a drug with which prior interactions have been negative. By being alert to medications listed on arrival, changes in medication, and possible unwise choices based on the patient’s prior history, an advocate is able to offer helpful information.

**Keeping information accessible.** As educators keep critical student information accessible, so do advocates for seniors. Many opportunities occur to provide medical information. If a friend or relative needs blood work, is visiting a new doctor, or ends up in the emergency room (ER), the caregiver will begin to feel like a broken record repeating the same information in each new situation. He or she will save personal and facility-staff time by having information such as names of medication and dosage, brief medical history, critical dates, and allergies to certain medicines.

A caregiver who carries a small notebook containing important information is well prepared and less stressed in a crisis. When calling an ambulance or checking into an ER, thinking of everything is difficult; but with the notebook handy, the caregiver has necessary and basic information available. We suggest carrying such a notebook in a hospital situation and recording what each health care professional said, what time he or she said it, and what he or she did. In particular, if the caregiver is not sure why an individual is coming in to see the relative, asking what he or she will do and then recording the individual’s name and pertinent information is important. For example, a physical therapist might come in and do an evaluation of the relative, and the caregiver will need the results of that evaluation in order to get services. The caregiver should ask what types of testing are being done and request results and recommendations.

Kelly (2006) found that individuals who are older and have cancer had three goals with respect to treatment decisions when they were temporarily or permanently incapacitated.

*Beverley Holden Johns* is a member of Alpha Phi Chapter of Lambda State Organization (IL) and has served as her chapter president, secretary, and newsletter editor. She has also served as corresponding secretary, first vice president, second vice president, and chair of several committees for the state organization. Johns is a learning and behavior consultant and an adjunct instructor for MacMurray College. Chair of and presenter at varied international conferences, Johns is the lead author of 11 books and coauthor of another 4. She and her husband have served as caregivers for her mother-in-law for the last 3 years. beverley.johns@mac.edu

*Mary Zabolio McGrath, PhD,* is a former member of Alpha Pi Chapter of Tau State Organization (MN). She taught in the Bloomington, Minnesota, public schools for 31 years and has served as national secretary for the Council for Behavior Disorders and on the board of the Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children. McGrath has authored and coauthored educational books, most recently the second edition of Surviving School Politics with Beverley H. Johns and Sarup R. Mathur. info@maryzmcgrath.com
They wanted to involve their family, to be treated consistently with their preferences and values, and to minimize the burden to the family (Kelly, 2006). The caregiver should know the individual's goals and record them in case of crisis. By being prepared in advance, knowing and recording the individual's preferences, the advocate can meet the individual's needs.

**Making a list of questions before the stay.** Before a teacher receives a student in her classroom, she reviews records and asks questions. Before accompanying someone to the clinic, an advocate can take time to assemble questions for the doctor, such as questions about dosages and side effects of medication. Then, meeting with the doctor, the caregiver can address the physician's thoughts and suggestions. Of course, if a question needs a more immediate answer, the caregiver can call the clinic.

When one receives a phone call—from a care center, for example—because a friend or family member is going immediately to a hospital, the advocate likely has no time to list questions. In this case, the advocate should formulate questions mentally during the drive to the facility. Then, at the ER, one can list additional questions as they come to mind, even on a scrap of paper. As information is shared and questions answered, all can be compiled with more clarity and detail in the health notebook.

**Positive and Purposeful Communication**

**Connecting with the right people.** In schools, staff members often partner with one another and parents to benefit students socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and academically. Student growth and progress are commonly held values for those who, as a team, address students' needs. Hospitals provide an official advocate, knowledgeable about hospital procedures and practices, to partner with family and friends working on behalf of the patient. Whatever the concern, these willing listeners know how to work within the hospital system to access the right staff and services. Rather than struggle to understand and navigate an intricate and complex hospital system, relatives and friends should work with these site-based advocates.

**Establishing rapport and affirming positives during and after any hospital stay.** Educators learn the importance of building positive relationships and recognizing students who are behaving appropriately. In addition to being an important presence when a senior relative is in the hospital or rehabilitation, a caregiver must also ensure that the relative receives quality care. Anthony (2007) described the challenges of decreased length of stays in the hospital and how concerns for efficiency and cost effectiveness do not allow health care professionals to address the unique individuality of each patient.

In order to receive the best possible care for a senior, one has to establish a positive relationship with the staff to ensure that the lines of communication are open. The caregiver should convey genuine interest in each health care professional as a person to whom she is entrusting the care of the patient and should be mindful of time constraints on services by refraining from bothering personnel for minor situations. As an example, when an individual comes in to draw blood, the caregiver might comment: “Wow, you sure seem to do that well. How long have you done this job?” Such an approach establishes rapport without becoming too personal. When the relative has to press the call button, the caregiver should be sure to comment about how quickly the individual responded, if that is the case. The caregiver should let the worker know that he or she appreciates their attention and care by making a comment such as, “You are really so gentle with my mother: I appreciate this. Mother really likes you.”
Supporting communication through shift transitions. Educators have learned how difficult schedule or staff changes can be for students and for themselves. They like routine and structure and get used to dealing with certain individuals. If the senior is in the hospital, long-term care, or rehabilitation, the caregiver recognizes shift changes in the morning and in the evening and from day to day. Such changes may be difficult for the caregiver and the patient because they have established rapport with the individual(s) in a given shift.

Furthermore, even though staff members take time to leave notes or meet during the shift change, a potential for communication breakdown exists. Educators can remember how irritating it was when a student said, “Well, last year’s teacher didn’t make me do that.” Likewise, it will be irritating to compare staff. For example, although the favorite nurse has taken extra steps to make the patient more comfortable, the new nurse may not do this. The caregiver does not want to say, “Well, the other nurse did it this way,” but she may want to say something about how the patient likes the pillow positioned when sitting in the chair. All medical professionals have their own style of working and communicating, and patient caregivers need to respect that while providing helpful information.

When the caregiver meets new staff members at shift change, she may want to give them a brief recap of what happened with the patient during the last shift. She can do that in a nonthreatening, conversational style. For example, she may say that she was asked to watch for signs of bladder changes and she had not seen any to this point, thus alerting the staff to such a possibility during their shift.

During the evening, the caregiver may experience some fear because, unless she is staying overnight, she is going to leave the individual alone, hopefully in good hands. She will definitely want to leave a phone number where she can be reached overnight. When she returns in the morning, she will want to watch for signs of patient agitation and ask staff what type of night the individual had. For example, when one of the authors left her relative overnight in the hospital, she found the relative still on the same bedpan.

Diverting the attention of both caregiver and patient to topics beyond the illness. Educators have learned to focus on students’ strengths and provide hope to students through the use of positive topics. When confined to a room in a hospital or other facility, seniors may feel that their world is growing more limited. As they mostly see medical staff and focus on their condition, they may lose sight of the broader world. Thus, a caregiver can watch for a particular news story to discuss when sharing the daily newspaper. For example, one of the authors shared the weather with a relative, making sure to select cities where this person had traveled.

Although bringing flowers to the sick is an old custom, it remains popular. Looking at a bright bouquet or a plant that can change daily brings life to someone who cannot get out into nature. Bringing in objects from the house or telling about the condition of the lawn or the neighbors’ new car helps bring the patient beyond the facility’s four walls.

Balancing the information that is shared. Educators know the importance of keeping students calm and providing factual information about what is happening yet, at the same time, not providing more information than the youngsters are able to handle. Educators can utilize such classroom lessons when assisting a vulnerable adult with health issues. Although the advocate wants the individual to know what is happening, he or she also wants to provide facts, not emotions such as anger or disgust with the system. The caregiver may be upset because another relative fails to show up on time, but speaking ill of that person will only upset the patient. Educators learned the importance of professionalism, and maintaining that demeanor in a caregiver’s role is critical.
Caregivers need to remain calm yet assertive. Knowledge is power, so the specific information critical to the well-being of the individual must be communicated. At the same time, the caregiver should appear nonjudgmental while stating specifically what needs to be done. As an example, the caregiver may observe that a health care provider is speaking condescendingly to the friend or relative or is ignoring them. Instead of getting angry, the caregiver should state in a calm manner, for example, “This is what my mother needs.”

Patience

Practicing patience with the individual who is ill. The patience that educators have learned to exercise with students also serves them well as caregivers. Some individuals become irritable when they are sick and may be hard to please. Utilizing empathy is critical. Refrain from denying their feelings. Instead, ask questions about what they say. A relative might say, “That nurse is looking at me funny” or “I think someone has gotten into my bank account.” The caregiver may want to say, “Now you know that’s not true,” but such a statement will only agitate the relative more. Instead, the caregiver should ask a question: “Why do you think that?” or “Can you tell me more about that?” These statements neither deny nor affirm what the patient is saying. These statements gather more information.

When the individual becomes agitated, the caregiver can help by remaining calm and speaking more softly. If the patient is engaging in inappropriate behaviors, such as raising his voice or throwing her pills across the room, the caregiver should let the patient know these behaviors are unacceptable but should not become angry as such a response will only worsen the situation. Caregivers may want to divert the individual’s attention from the negative behavior and refocus the individual to something more pleasant or productive.

Practicing patience with the individuals responsible for health care. Caregivers must also be patient with the many adults they will encounter within the health care world. For example, they may have to wait through the lengthy process of discharge. All necessary forms must be completed, and, at times, the caregiver may feel he or she has had to give the patient’s history repeatedly each time a new individual is encountered.

Time-Management Skills

Preparing well for phone calls and appointments. Good educators know the importance of scheduling and allowing enough time to conduct an activity with students. They are used to multitasking and have a good opportunity to use this skill. For example, the frustration of getting the complicated telephone menu when trying to talk to a real person is exacerbated when the caregiver has the challenges of caring for a relative or a friend. Using a phone’s speaker option will allow the caregiver to do other tasks while waiting for a response.

In a similar way, the caregiver must expect delays when accompanying the patient to an appointment and, like a good educator, plan ahead by bringing a magazine, book, or notebook and looking forward to the waiting time as an opportunity to catch up. The caregiver might also take the wait-time opportunity to have the friend or relative reflect on key life events or travel destinations, or engage in a hobby such as knitting and crocheting. Having the individual focus on a specific task passes time and relieves the stress of waiting to see a doctor.

Allotting sufficient time to handle billing challenges. Math teachers or those who enjoy numbers may be more able to take on billing challenges than a teacher more inclined toward the creative. However, medical billing involves more than comfort with numbers.
Another aspect of addressing medical bills is organization—an area in which teachers manage well because they have had experience working with due dates for IEPs and being aware of when they must be ready for conferences. Knowing when to expect bills and when they are due involves skills that most educators possess.

A more challenging aspect to keeping up with medical bills may be understanding a complex form or waiting for insurance to pay in order to determine how much money the patient owes. This challenge includes making phone calls that can be tedious and time consuming. In recent years, elderly individuals have been expected to access some of their services utilizing automated phone systems and the Internet—challenging tasks for the elderly (Wright and Hill, 2009).

Ultimately, teachers know how to build rapport with other professionals and can use this skill to cultivate a partnership with billing office staff. They can also build a routine with an accountant and together clarify confusing bills and address any inconsistencies that appear.

Summary

As educators who become caregivers work within this phase of their lives, they can stand confident that their educational experience prepares them to face the challenges and make a positive difference for the seniors they are assisting. Armed with a wide array of organizational strategies and trained for purposeful communication, educators are lifelong advocates and positive change agents who can bring a wealth of expertise in meeting the needs of their friends and relatives.

References


Setting the Stage for Purposeful Communication: Fostering Emergent Literacy

By Geraldine L. Haggard

The author defines emergent literacy and describes the elements of instruction that ensure success for children as they enter formal settings for instruction in early-literacy activities. The importance of these early-literacy activities includes all aspects of communicating purposefully in real-world experiences. Aspects of emergent literacy include language skills, phonological awareness, the desire to learn and enjoy literacy activities, awareness of the nature of print, and some beginning letter knowledge.

For eight summers, I directed summer Head Start programs in the Plano, Texas, district and, for the first time, realized that many young children had weak communication experiences and, in particular, no desire to hear books read. Many had limited vocabularies. Some could not sing songs or repeat nursery rhymes. Eight weeks of literacy activities and meetings with parents to explain the importance of reading to their children could not prepare these children for the communication challenges of kindergarten or Grade 1. They needed more time to spend in activities that could prepare them for the communication tasks expected by the district and state. In this article, I provide suggestions for teachers who have children such as these in their classrooms.

Defining Emergent Literacy in Reading and Writing

“Literacy is viewed as the ability of individuals to communicate effectively for real life applications” (Zygouris-Coe, 2001, p. 4). Research based on literacy development in young children can help educators define the teacher’s essential role as he or she provides reading and writing instruction. The Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence Center at the College of Education of University of Central Florida (FLaRE) defined emergent literacy as “a developing range of understanding about print and non-conventional literacy behaviors that begins before schooling and leads into conventional reading, speaking, viewing, and thinking” (Zygouris-Coe, 2001, p. 6). In their seminal position paper, the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children concluded that “learning to read and write is a complex, multifaceted process that requires a wide variety of instructional approaches” (p. 8). Clearly some children come to the school setting without the foundation they need for building more formal skills.

To address the need for early intervention, Sulzby and Teal (1987, as cited by Zygouris-Coe, 2001) trained a group of low-income parents to read to their children and provide opportunities for the children to participate in common literacy activities in writing and conversation. In their seminal work, they documented the impact of such interventions.
through observations of the children as the research progressed. Zygouris-Coe (2001) summarized the results by indicating that these children

- began to learn and read early in life.
- learned the functions of literacy through observing and participating in real-life settings in which reading and writing are used.
- developed reading and writing skills concurrently through experiences in reading and writing.
- constructed their understanding of reading and writing through active involvement in various literacy materials.
- were involved in a developmental process as literacy learners. (p. 7)

The kinds of interventions suggested by researchers such as Sulzby and Teal (1987) are not complex. For example, my two great-grandchildren are now 2 and 4 years old. I have consistently provided new titles for the girls’ library, and the two have heard many books read aloud before bedtime and throughout the day. Their books are seen in every room of their home. Furthermore, they both are involved in everyday activities that promote literacy. Their mother reads the recipe to them as they watch and help her make play-dough or cookies. The two scribble as they add their names to gift cards. The 4-year-old writes titles on pictures she has drawn and reads to her younger sister using the vocabulary of a book she has heard read many times. Both love alphabet books and have developed letter knowledge without formal instruction. They love books and visit the local library where they help select books they want to take home. In sum, their excitement and love of literacy activities have been possible because of opportunities provided in daily life. Following these same principles, kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers can make their classrooms exciting and successful settings for children who have not had the experiences available to youngsters like my great-grandchildren.

Essential Early-Learning Elements of Good Early-Literacy Programs

With a better understanding of what students need to be successful readers and writers as they enter formal schooling, educators can look at the components of instruction in classrooms designed to support the more needy learners. Discussing the essentials of early literacy instruction, Roskos, Christie, and Richgels (2003) shared seven teaching strategies with strong research links to early-literacy skills: (a) rich teacher talk; (b) storybook reading; (c) phonological awareness activities; (d) alphabet activities; (e) support for emergent reading; (f) support for emergent writing; and (g) shared book experiences. Each strategy can be easily implemented by teachers, as well as by parents.

Geraldine L. Haggard, EdD, is a charter member of Mu Beta Chapter in Alpha State Organization (TX). Her career included 11 years in small, rural schools in Denton County, Texas; 37 years in Plano ISD, where she was district Director of Reading for 20 years; and teaching reading courses for TWU, University of Texas in Dallas, and OSU. In addition to her formal degrees, Haggard earned certification as a Teacher Leader for Reading Recovery and as a school administrator. A volunteer reading tutor in Plano and an officer in the Plano Retired Teachers’ Association, she received The Lifetime Impact Award from the Collin County Junior League in 2012. ghaggard@verizon.net
Rich teacher talk. Conversation with children should include new, rare words, and teachers should encourage the students to use descriptive words and grammatically correct statements. More challenging vocabulary from content areas such as science and social studies can be included. The teacher must listen carefully to what the students say and model language patterns.

Storybook reading. Children need to be exposed to stories, poems, and expository literature. Conversations between the teacher and children can occur before, during, and after readings. Repeated readings of favorite books can encourage the children to read the books.

Phonological awareness activities. These auditory activities increase the children’s awareness of the sounds of language. They include playing games and listening to stories and songs that involve rhyme, alliteration, sound matching, blending sounds, and hearing syllables.

Alphabet activities. The children should use materials that promote identification of letters and their sounds, such as ABC books, plastic letters, puzzles, and charts. The teacher can follow direct instruction for each letter’s formation and its sound with simple use of the letter in reading and writing activities. The teacher models and encourages correct formation of the letter and provides reteaching when observation indicates a lack of mastery by a student or students.

Support for emergent and early reading. A large classroom library that contains simple caption books and books for beginning readers is a necessity. Visits to the school library are also important. The teacher should read aloud books connected to classroom content areas to help students develop new vocabulary and concepts.

Support for emergent writing. Children should be encouraged to label drawings and write sentences using invented or temporary spellings. The teacher can use language experiences and shared writing to model and encourage writing. A writing center in the classroom with writing materials can be made available.

Shared book experiences. Teachers can use big books and other books with enlarged type. The students read along with the teacher as left to right, parts of the book, simple sight words, and letter knowledge skills are discussed. The teacher models fluency. Vocabulary development and a desire in the children to read the book on their own can result. The use of shared books provides an opportunity for all class members to participate.

Conclusions

Teachers need to understand how different children are in terms of their readiness and literacy experiences and use this understanding to provide an appropriate literacy environment in the classroom. Some of the suggested activities can involve the entire class, but some may require help in small groups or one-on-one instruction. Additionally, as teachers conference with parents, they can demonstrate how home involvement can provide extra literacy practice for the child based on activities and skills being taught and modeled at school. The teacher should ensure that parents understand that books for the child to read at home should be simple and familiar.
As a teacher or parent demonstrates excitement and pleasure in the acts of reading and writing, he or she can make literacy activities exciting for the students. Observing the new skills and excitement of needy readers as they begin to grow is exceptionally rewarding. Ultimately, however, the goal is for all children to be successful as they grow in literacy skills and become skilled and purposeful communicators.

References


Educating Young Children with Different Abilities: A review of *Missy Hamilnook Reflects on Early Childhood Education*

By Susan Medley


The author reviews an engaging memoir about a DKG member’s 20 years as an early-childhood educator with both at-risk and normally developing preschool children in a university speech and hearing clinic and research department. The book provides both a philosophy and a model for educating young children with different abilities.

In this thoughtful memoir, long-time Delta Kappa Gamma member Alicita Hamilton shares thoughts on 20 years (1962-1982) of bringing her talents as early-childhood educator, child psychologist, and mother to a program designed to help small children with communication disorders integrate into broader society. *Missy Hamilnook Reflects on Early Childhood Education* serves as a classic source of down-to-earth philosophies and methodologies for drawing out the best from every child.

Hamilton’s two decades with the University of Denver began during a research study that assessed and confirmed the effectiveness of the then-new concept that many hearing-impaired young children could develop speech and language if they were fitted with hearing aids and provided a normal preschool experience in a language-rich environment that encouraged teacher narration in addition to speech therapy. With such an impetus, the memoir will interest teachers, educators, and parents, as well as professionals in related fields such as pediatrics and psychology.

The title of the book was inspired by a small boy who renamed Mrs. Hamilton as Missy Hamilnook, a name thereafter adopted and often used by colleagues. Her work included planning preschool activities and serving as principal teacher and as a member of the university’s clinic staff and teaching faculty. She became a leader among early-childhood educators in Colorado during the 1960s as a founder and early president of the Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children.
The preschool program at the University of Denver evolved over the years to helping children with other communication problems and then to fully integrating the children at risk with normally developing children. The narrative richly details Hamilton's interactions with university faculty and graduate students, as well as with children and parents.

Through emphasis on the preschool environment and experiential presentation of curriculum, Hamilton focuses on the theme of play as the primary vehicle for learning by young children: “Play with other children in carefully planned experiences immerses children in the learning process” (p. 2). The book includes 19 often-poignant cameos of preschool children. The author's observations of these individual children are narrated also in excerpts from letters she wrote to her mother, also a renowned educator, and retain the wonderful moments teachers want to remember but tend to lose with time. The cameos, contemporary letters, and 100 candid photographs that capture the rapt involvement of children in imaginative play enrich the memoir and make it much more than the usual review of early-childhood education principles and practices.

The author weaves throughout the first six of the seven chapters the added themes of “the interface of a professional life with a personal world, and the impact of social change generated by the civil rights and women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s” (back cover). All who taught in these exciting decades, as early intervention and programs such as Head Start caught the attention of educators and parents alike and as mainstreaming brought special-needs children into normal classrooms, will find this a fascinating retrospective on the changes educators have seen.

In the final chapter, Reflections, Hamilton summarizes the perceptions she gained regarding issues in early-childhood education today:

There is presently pressure to stress academic programs earlier in life. I believe this is counter-productive…The demands of increasingly sophisticated technology require that special attention be directed toward developing creative critical thinkers …[Although] no single plan can fit all…[essential elements are] nurturing a love of books and stories, experimenting with materials, and playing imaginatively and vigorously indoors and outdoors…[because] the foundation for symbolic and abstract thinking is laid in the play of young children interacting with each other as they explore their world. (pp. 79-80)

As this reflection suggests, readers will find provocative ideas about educating young children with different abilities as well as wisdom and inspiration in this memoir.

Susan Medley, MEd, is a retired early-childhood, special-education resource teacher in Colorado. She is a member of Alpha Chapter of Omega State Organization (CO). smedley131@comcast.net
Powerful Personal Communication: A Review of Lives Divided: My Family Torn Apart by WWII and the Russian Gulag
By Judith B. Carlson


The author reviews a recently published autobiographical account by a Delta Kappa Gamma member who shares the trials and triumphs of her family’s experiences in World War II. She recommends this personal story as a sobering look into the period of World War II and its impact on the lives of so many who were affected.

Purposeful personal communication is always a challenge—and writing a book to illustrate an idea through one’s own story is particularly daunting. In Lives Divided: My Family Torn Apart by WWII and the Russian Gulag, Delta Kappa Gamma member Birgitta McGalliard meets and exceeds the challenge as she shares a sobering look into the period of World War II and its impact on the lives of so many who were affected.

The Story
Lives Divided is a personal account of McGalliard’s life as a very young child, growing up in Sweden without her father. An Austrian diplomat in the service of the German Foreign Office after Austria’s annexation in 1938, he was captured by the Soviets in Sofia, Bulgaria, where he was stationed. He spent 5 years in Lefortovo Prison in Moscow before he was sentenced without a trial to 25 years of hard labor in a mining camp in Vorkuta, Siberia. McGalliard’s Swedish-born, pregnant mother and two sisters were left behind, facing great uncertainties and the challenge to endure and courageously hope for his well-being, his safe return, and a better tomorrow.

McGalliard was born in Austria just days before her father’s capture, so they had never met. After the war ended, her mother returned to Sweden with her three daughters and, with unflagging courage, relentlessly pursued the whereabouts of her husband. For nearly 9...
years the family heard nothing. Finally, in 1952, they received word from a returning POW that McGalliard’s father had likely died. After giving up hope that her husband would ever return, McGalliard’s mother was about to remarry—and then the first postcard from Siberia arrived. Two years later, McGalliard met her father for the very first time. She was 11 years old. This true story stirs the emotions of readers with its heightened sense of overwhelming human suffering and tenacity.

The Power of a Personal Story

McGalliard believes that her father’s story became her family’s story. With a passion for sharing this story with others, she promised her father that it would unfold as a lasting legacy. Her foundation for writing was sturdily based on collections of personal letters, hundreds of newspaper articles from war time, her father’s handwritten manuscript in German, her mother’s notebooks, and a direct link of communication with her two older sisters.

The story of a family being torn apart by WWII and the Russian Gulag is presented as a very human one. Readers will be drawn to the poignant sharing of experiences and real-life events that have strong appeal. For example, readers can empathize with a mother having to bear responsibilities alone as she raises three children and can be heartened by the happy outcome. Each individual has his or her own story and can draw inspiration and insight from hearing the stories of others.

Message and Audiences

The intended message of the book is that ordinary people can suffer through no fault of their own. McGalliard reveals incredible empathy for her mother, who waited endlessly to know what had happened to her husband, where he was being held, and if and when he would return. She shares her own curiosity in hoping for the return of a father whom she had never really known but idolized nevertheless. The audience for this book could well be teenagers, as McGalliard would guide them to have faith, to use adversity to their advantage, to remain hopeful, and never to give up. Women in particular will respond with sensitivity to the responsibilities that faced McGalliard’s mother, raising three children alone and coping with great uncertainty. Furthermore, many readers will find this war story inspiring in its depiction of courageous acts and great strength.

The book also conveys a message about the power of communication. In a recent interview, McGalliard shared the strong togetherness that existed among the sisters and their mother. Family was a priority, and strong traditions were upheld. Dinner table conversations and open discussions on numerous topics were commonplace. When family members were apart, they wrote notes and shared detailed letters with one another.

Judith B. Carlson, EdD, is a retired professor from Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, where she worked 22 years in undergraduate Teacher Education in Physical Education and chaired the graduate Master Teacher track. Active in Alpha Gamma Chapter and Eta State Organization (NC), where she was state president, 1991-1993, Carlson also served DKG on international committees, chairing Travel and Study and Professional Affairs; participated in the Leadership Management Seminar; authored several Bulletin articles; and attended and presented at Society conferences and conventions. Her incentive for writing this review was a belief in the importance of supporting and honoring the achievements of colleagues in DKG. judithb125@gmail.com
Through such personal communication, the strength of the family connections endured.

When McGalliard’s father finally returned home, it was like he and his wife had never been apart. As a father, he had missed 11 years of the growth and development of his daughters, but he was soon busy rebuilding his life as a career diplomat and shaping his role as a parent in an effort to make up the years he had missed. He did not begin writing his memoirs until his retirement. Regrettably, he did not complete his writing before he died, leaving to his daughter the hope that the world would hear about his trials as a Soviet POW—a goal accomplished at least in part in this book.

Insights into the Author

Members of McGalliard’s chapter in Delta Kappa Gamma were all deeply touched when she shared a glimpse into her life for a chapter program and were, accordingly, most supportive and encouraging that she make the writing of the family story a priority. After drafting the initial chapters, sharing the work, making important and viable contacts, finding an editor, joining an area writer’s guild, and persisting, McGalliard saw Lives Divided become a happy and much anticipated reality and a gratifying accomplishment.

Understandably, McGalliard acknowledges that she was strongly influenced by her mother. She has always been concerned for others and their well-being. She portrays herself as an observer, not a confronter, and asserts she was the peacemaker in the family. Maintaining harmony within her family and in her classroom was important to her. As a mother, she put emphasis on doing what is right! Her 34-year teaching career as a high school and middle school language arts teacher was rich and varied. McGalliard speaks four languages, loves history and geography, enjoys studying maps, and has been a lover of books since her early childhood. She is also spiritually strong. She lost her mother to breast cancer; when she, too, was diagnosed with the disease, she maintained a positive and optimistic attitude.

Through writing this book, McGalliard learned that she was able to prove her own tenacity, carrying through with a project and finishing the task of getting her book published. Lives Divided is a real story, not fiction, and its writing involved extensive research, time, and patience. A strong support network was also essential, and her family members were able to share, respond, and offer needed nurturing.

McGalliard was gratified to accomplish the publication of her family story. She insists that each individual has a story to tell and believes each should get that story written down for the sake of the family for posterity. McGalliard would like to see Lives Divided be a resource in schools, perhaps for students who are studying WW II. Her father’s story is still not fully told, and she hopes to continue to write, with more to tell! She anticipates publishing a second book, with the working title Life as a POW in the Soviet Union, in the near future.

All readers—but particularly those who value the bonds of Delta Kappa Gamma—will be enriched by reading this book. Ultimately, McGalliard provides a purposeful sharing of a relationship that stirs readers based on common experiences and concerns. She helps readers continue to recognize the qualities that are unique to women, to nurture their unity, and to draw strength from one another.
Perfect for Stimulating Discussion of Diversity: A Review of *King Peggy: An American Secretary, Her Royal Destiny, and the Inspiring Story of How She Changed an African Village*

By Frances D. Luther and Ada Woods


The authors review the unique autobiography of a Black woman working in the United States who became king of an African village. They provide insight into the work, recommend its use in book clubs as a stimulus for discussions of diversity, and offer additional resources to support the use of the book.

Introduction

For several decades, promoting diversity in the workplace has been a concern for corporate diversity consultants, but little improvement has occurred globally in leadership roles (Dmitrieva & Alexander, 2013; Huppke, 2013; Sandberg, 2013). Even though women are obtaining higher educational levels, men are still outpacing them in leadership roles (Sandberg, 2013). *King Peggy: An American Secretary, Her Royal Destiny, and the Inspiring Story of How She Changed an African Village* is an autobiography of a Black woman, working as a secretary at an embassy in the United States, who became king of an African village and subsequently underwent both a professional and personal transformation.

In this article, we offer an overview of the content of the book, a critique, and recommendations for using the book in a book-club setting. We contend that the author of the book purposefully communicated her
experience in order to inspire others and that the book may be used purposefully in various settings to encourage communication about the challenges faced by women in leadership roles.

Content

Working as a secretary in the Ghanaian Embassy in Washington, DC, in the United States, Peggielene Bartels received a phone call telling her that she had been made king of her hometown of Otuam, Ghana, Africa. She decided to accept the leadership role and all the challenges that accompanied that role, such as dealing with poor health standards and corruption in the community. She relates certain principles that worked for her as a woman in a leadership role in a traditionally male-dominated society. Bartels knew that to be successful in her new leadership role, she needed to be transformed in her thinking and actions: “Once she was king, she would have to become a king” (p.17). She used the purposeful communication of her village and family elders to achieve this transformation. She was advised to practice walking “majestically” (p.73), not to frown, and to stop being so volatile and fighting with people in public: “Give just a hint of a smile, they said, showing regal serenity” (p.73). In the midst of all these transformations, however, Bartels knew that she had to remain true to her mother’s advice: “She [Bartels] must be strong, but always remain humble” (p. 26).

Bartels also used professional and personal communication to transform the thinking of the village men and women. She told the men to see her as a man. She chided them,

“You may see me as a lady and think that because of my gender I am weak. But, you must understand that my thoughts are those of a man. I am as strong as a man. I am as smart as a man. I demand the absolute respect of a man. If you understand this, we will get along well.” (p. 151)

She also used nonverbal communication to be perceived as a man. She wore “…royal kente cloths of the late king who was in the fridge, thrown over her left shoulder the way men wore them” (p. 49). Bartels used traditional communication methods to attract village women to leadership roles in her government: “…[she] told the town crier to roam about banging his drum and letting people know that anyone who wanted to join the council—including women—should show up…for an interview with the king” (p. 215). In a recent interview, Bartels added that she admonished the village women, “You don’t have to sit down and think that you have to wait for a man to succeed in life. If I am a woman and doing this, you can also do it” (NPR, 2012).

Bartels also relates the intrinsic rewards that came from ameliorating chronic problems that persisted in the community, such as wife beating: “It was overwhelming to think that thousands of people, farmers, and fishermen, housewives and small business owners, would love her, who had felt unloved for so many years” (p. 324). She was able to create a clean water supply and help to build better roads: “To bring clean water from the ground was a microcosm of African transformation, a microcosm of African transformation, a...
symbolic event for everything good that could happen” (p. 325). The story ultimately takes a surprising twist that shows the path as king was not always smooth for Bartels.

Infused throughout the story is Bartels’s struggle with the “cultural dissonance” (Bailey, 2013, p. 232) that inflicts many minority women who try to cling to their traditional culture while at the same time embracing the dominant culture in which they work and live. Bartels grappled with integrating Christianity and traditional African religion into her personal and professional life and with making sense of the differences in affluence and poverty in the two countries. Photographs in the center of the book depict improvements made by Bartels as king in her home community.

Critique

Bartels’s story is powerful. The personal and professional principles she relates, such as being seen as a man, could have global implications. King Peggy’s life is adventurous and difficult, yet her long campaign for justice is lighthearted and inspiring. Her readers cheer as she gets a chance late in life to create justice by reducing corruption and improving the plight of women in her home town.

The book is interesting and easy to read. Humor is employed throughout the narration, such as the numerous references to the dead “king in the fridge” (p. 23). When advised that witches were surrounding her in Africa and had been in the Ghanaian Embassy in the United States, Bartels muses, “…this could explain a lot of things” (p. 74). Instead of a coronation, she refers to her “enstoolment” (p. 23), showing her ability to avoid taking herself too seriously in this time of transition.

Recommendations

We particularly recommend using King Peggy in book clubs as a stimulus for meaningful consideration of the topic of diversity. The need for a change in diversity in workplace leadership roles is well documented, with women and ethnic minorities being underrepresented in these roles (Huppke, 2013; Sandberg, 2013). Although a mix of races and genders may be more apparent in corporations at the lower levels, this cannot be said for diversity farther up the corporate ladders (Huppke, 2013). Oppression within organizations is not always the factor that hinders women and minorities in advancement within organizations (Sandberg, 2013). “Companies have realized not only that diversity is the right thing to do from a fairness standpoint; it’s also good for business, because diversity of workforce brings a diversity of ideas” (Huppke, 2013, p. 5).

Spar (2013) contended that conflicting personal and professional roles often keep women from advancing to leadership roles. King Peggy, however, believed that her story might serve to provide a role model to help women ascend to and be successful in leadership roles (NPR, 2012). Bloggers who have read the book attest to the story’s interesting and purposeful communication to provide a role model for women aspiring to leadership roles (Maryland Humanities Council, 2013).

Another reason for considering this autobiography for use in a book club is that
this story has received international, national, regional, and popular culture recognition. King Peggy was interviewed for television, and the videos have been made available at the international level (CNN, 2013). The story of King Peggy was featured in a book talk at a national press gathering (King, 2012). Regionally, the book was selected from a list of approximately 140 titles by a committee for a reading-promotion program under the theme a pivotal moment in time to showcase Bartels’s decision to embrace her kingship despite the challenges (One Maryland One Book, 2013). The story also has received pop culture buzz as reports circulate of a movie deal starring award-winning actress Queen Latifah as King Peggy (see http://blogs.indiewire.com/shadowandact/queen-latifah-to-play-king-peggy -based-on-secretary-turned-ghanaiian-royalty-bio). Bartels has confirmed the movie deal (Andrea Lewis, personal communication, October 16, 2013).

**Selected resources.** Selected resources (See Appendix), in addition to the ones cited above, can assist in the use of the book in adult and high school book clubs. These selected resources include author interviews that can be used to introduce the main character and readers’ blogs that could provide useful extension activities for book club members.

**Reservations.** Although we highly recommend *King Peggy* for use in adult book clubs, we recommend it with reservations for use in high school book clubs. These reservations include questionable interest level and promotion to teenagers of a potentially confusing role model who embraces Christianity along with her traditional practices of animism and ancestral communication.

**Conclusion**

In *King Peggy*, Bartels purposefully communicates her experience in order to inspire others. In turn, the book may be used purposefully in various settings to encourage communication about the challenges faced by women in leadership roles.

**References**


Huppke, R. W. (September 1, 2013). Diversity fades up corporate ladder: We’ve gotten content with improvements, but a lot more work remains from ground up. *The Baltimore Sun, Business & Jobs*, p. 5.


Appendix

Selected Resources

- Authors’ websites:
  - Peggielene Bartels: www.kingpeggy.com
  - Lady King Peggy: http://ladykingpeggy.com/
  - Eleanor Herman: www.eleanorherman.com

- Brief biographies:

- Adaptation (in 3065 words):

- Video interviews:

- Audio interviews:

- Photographs of King Peggy:


- Readers’ reviews/blog:


- Shiloh Baptist Church, Landover, MD Web site: http://www.shilohbc.org/fmm_history.php

- Ghanaian Embassy Web site: http://www.ghana-embassy.org/
Bulletin Submission Guidelines

Submissions from members will be accepted for review provided that:

• The submission is not being considered concurrently in whole or substantial part by another publisher.
• The Bulletin has exclusive option of possible publication for a period of 6 months following receipt of the submission.
• The author assumes responsibility for publication clearance in the event the submission was presented at a professional meeting or is the direct product of a project financed by a funding agency.
• Authors are responsible for accurately citing all quoted and bibliographic materials and for obtaining permission from the original source for quotations in excess of 150 words or for tables or figures reproduced from published works.
• Co-authors are permitted. At least one author must be a Delta Kappa Gamma member.

Manuscript Preparation

• Although there is a suggested theme for each issue, manuscripts on all topics are welcome.
• Manuscripts should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise, and appropriate for Bulletin readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable, and free from gender, political, patriotic, or religious bias. Topic headings should be inserted where appropriate.
• Please see Submission Grid on the following page for specific requirements of the types of manuscripts appropriate for publication.
• Double space the entire manuscript, including quotations, references, and tables. Print should be clear, dark, and legible. Pages must be numbered.
• References should refer only to materials cited within the text. Nonretrievable material, such as papers, reports of limited circulation, unpublished works, and personal communications, should be restricted to works absolutely essential to the manuscript.
• Abbreviations should be explained at their first appearance in the text. Educational jargon (e.g., preservice, K–10, etc.) should be defined as it occurs in the text.
• Place tables and figures on separate pages at the end of the manuscript. Use Arabic numerals and indicate approximate placement in the text.
• Photos, graphics, charts, etc. that may enhance the presentation of the manuscript may be included. Contact the editorial staff (bulletin@dkg.org) for information regarding the use of photos.

Submission

• One submission per author per issue.
• Submit electronically, in Microsoft Word format, to bulletin@dkg.org. Do not submit PDF files. For a manuscript, include definitive abstract, photo of author(s) [see below], and biographical information. Biographical information must include author(s) name(s), occupational position(s), Society and professional affiliations (list offices held), address(es), phone number(s) and e-mail address(es).
• Electronic/digital photo files must be saved in JPG or TIFF format and must be a minimum of 1.5” x 1.5” with a 300 dpi resolution. For photos submitted to enhance text, include caption/identification information.
• For poems and graphic arts, submit name, address, and chapter affiliation. A photograph is not required.
• All submissions will be acknowledged and assigned a review number within 2 weeks. Contact the editor at bulletin@dkg.org if you do not receive timely acknowledgement of your submission.

Publication of Submissions

• Published authors will receive five complimentary copies of the Bulletin in which their article appears.
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• The editorial staff reserves the right to make changes of a nonsubstantive nature.

For evaluation rubric, please go to the Bulletin page in the Library at www.dkg.org.
### Bulletin Submission Grid

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<td><strong>Action/Classroom Research</strong>: Organized, systematic, and reflective observation of classroom practice that also addresses areas of concern.</td>
<td>1,500-4,000</td>
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<td><strong>Qualitative/Quantitative/Mixed Methods Research</strong>: Essentially narrative with nonstatistical approaches and a focus on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meanings from their experiences (Qual)/Gathers and analyzes measurable data to support or refute a hypothesis or theory through numbers and statistics (Quan)/Utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data to explore a research question (Mixed).</td>
<td>1,500-4,000</td>
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<td><strong>Position Paper/Viewpoint</strong>: Defines an issue; asserts clear and unequivocal position on that issue, and argues directly in its favor.</td>
<td>1,000-1,500</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Required</td>
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<td><strong>Review of Literature</strong>: Presents supporting and nonsupporting evidence on a topic of interest and value to educators; synthesizes and critiques the literature; draws conclusions; describes procedures for selecting and reviewing literature; may include narrative review, best-evidence, synthesis, or meta-analysis.</td>
<td>1,500-3,000</td>
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<td><strong>Program Description</strong>: Provides an overview and details of a single program in an educational setting. Goals, resources, and outcomes are included. No marketing or promotion of a program is allowed.</td>
<td>1,000-1,500</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
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<td><strong>Book/Technology Review</strong>: Combines summary and personal critique of a book, Web site, or app on an educational topic or with educational relevance.</td>
<td>400-700</td>
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<td><strong>Letter to the Editor</strong>: Responds to materials previously published in the Bulletin; must include author’s name and chapter/state of membership.</td>
<td>200-300</td>
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<td><strong>Poetry/Graphic Arts</strong>: Original expressions in any brief poetic format or through drawings, sketches, etchings, woodcuts, photographs, cartoons.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Not required</td>
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**NOTE:** More detailed explanations of each category may be found on the Bulletin page in the Library at www.dkg.org.