

Expanding Literacy Horizons: Inclusive, Diverse, and Innovative Approaches

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ABSTRACT

The spring 2023 issue of the *Georgia Journal of Literacy*, “Expanding Literacy Horizons: Inclusive, Diverse, and Innovative Approaches,” aims to inspire and inform K–12 literacy educators, researchers, and stakeholders by offering valuable insights, research, and resources. The issue emphasizes collaboration, creativity, and critical reflection and is divided into sections by article type, including a literature review on inclusive literacy ideologies; practitioner articles exploring interdisciplinary approaches, reading aloud, and the use of cluster texts to celebrate diversity in education; and teaching tips offering guidance on organizing author visits, fostering classroom community, and transitioning to digital interactive journals. The issue encourages readers to reflect on how inclusive, diverse, and innovative approaches can be integrated into their practices to create more equitable, dynamic, and engaging learning environments.

KEYWORDS

literacy
advocacy;
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and inclusion;
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approaches

In an ever-changing landscape of literacy education, it is paramount for educators, researchers, and stakeholders to actively pursue and embrace approaches and strategies that embody our collective commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and innovation (Banks & McGee Banks, 2020; Grote-Garcia & Ortlieb, 2023). The spring 2023 issue of the *Georgia Journal of Literacy*, aptly titled “Expanding Literacy Horizons: Inclusive, Diverse, and Innovative Approaches,” endeavors to serve as a beacon of inspiration and knowledge for a wide array of literacy advocates. From K–12 literacy teachers, teacher educators, and researchers to educational leaders and policymakers, this issue offers literacy advocates a wealth of valuable insights, timely research, and practical resources designed to empower and enrich literacy education across the spectrum.

With an emphasis on collaboration, creativity, and critical reflection, the diverse contributions in this issue aim to ignite meaningful conversations and foster transformative learning experiences within and beyond the classroom. As we navigate the complexities and challenges of literacy education in Georgia and throughout the nation, it is our hope that the ideas, practices, and perspectives presented in this issue will serve as a catalyst for cultivating more inclusive, diverse, and innovative approaches in literacy education, ultimately benefiting learners of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Literature Review: Inclusive Literacy and Ideologies

Our issue begins with Dr. Alexandra Lampp Berglund's literature review "Diverging Ideologies of Disability: An Examination of Literature on Inclusive Literacy," which delves into the concept of inclusive literacy and its implications for students with disabilities. Through a comprehensive literature review grounded in Critical Disability Studies, Berglund highlights the need for continued research and advocacy in this area. Readers can hope to gain an understanding of how disability ideologies are present in research on inclusive literacy practices, ultimately encouraging educators to consider more inclusive approaches to literacy education.

Practitioner Articles: Bridging Diversity and Innovative Strategies

This issue features three practitioner articles that skillfully bridge diversity and inclusion with innovative teaching strategies. In "A Passion for Fashion: Studying Fashion through Children's Literature," Dr. Sharryn Larsen Walker and Maggie Walker showcase a unique interdisciplinary approach to engage students' interests in the fashion industry. They expertly demonstrate how children's literature can be utilized to build background knowledge, offering readers a wealth of literary resources and strategies that can be integrated into English Language Arts, career education, or arts courses.

Dr. William P. Bintz's insightful article, "Reading Aloud to Children: A Cautionary Tale," serves as a powerful reminder that reading aloud is an art form requiring skill, intentionality, and sensitivity. Through this piece, readers will delve into the complexities of reading aloud, gaining a comprehensive understanding of research on the topic. The article equips educators with a variety of recommended texts and strategies to optimize the benefits of this practice while ensuring that it is inclusive and meaningful for all students.

Finally, in "Beyond the Single Story: Utilizing Cluster Texts to Celebrate Diversity," Dr. Lisa Parker and Jenny Malec emphasize the importance of representation and inclusivity in the texts shared with students. They expertly guide readers through the concepts of intertextuality and cluster texts, offering practical examples of how these resources can be employed to present a rich tapestry of stories and experiences that reflect the diverse world in which we live.

Teaching Tips: Practical Approaches and Innovative Strategies

The final subsection of the issue features three insightful teaching tips pieces that offer practical guidance for educators. In the first article in this section, "Tips for Planning a Successful Author Visit," Drs. Tiffany Watson, Nicole Maxwell, and Danielle Hartsfield share their expertise on organizing and executing memorable author visits. These visits have the potential to inspire students' love for reading and writing, and the authors outline the key steps involved in planning such events. Readers can expect to learn not only how author visits can support learning outcomes but also how to foster an authentic connection with the world of literature through these unique experiences. Additionally, the article delves into strategies for overcoming financial barriers by exploring various funding opportunities that can make these enriching author visits a reality for schools and campuses.

Dr. Kathleen Crawford and Heather Huling present two teaching tips articles. In "Building Classroom Community in Elementary Literacy Methods Courses," they introduce the practice of "Tell Me Time" (TMT), an adaptation of morning meetings that fosters connection and communication among students. Readers will discover specific examples of TMT activities and learn how to successfully implement this practice in their courses. Crawford and Huling's second

article, “Out with the Old, in with the New: Digital Interactive Journals in an Elementary Language Arts Methods Course,” explores the transition from traditional to digital interactive journals. Readers can expect practical guidance on implementing this strategy in the classroom and learn how to integrate technology into literacy instruction.

Final Reflections

This issue of the *Georgia Journal of Literacy* presents a diverse array of perspectives and insights on literacy education, with the overarching aim of inspiring readers to broaden their own horizons and foster meaningful learning experiences for all students. We are deeply grateful for the invaluable contributions of our authors, as we believe that their collective work will ignite meaningful change within the realm of literacy education.

As you delve into the articles in this issue, we encourage you to contemplate the myriad ways in which inclusive, diverse, and innovative approaches can be seamlessly woven into your own practice. Reflect on the strategies and resources our authors have thoughtfully presented, and ponder how they might be adapted or tailored to suit your unique context (Cremin et al., 2022). By embracing the spirit of collaboration and the shared pursuit of knowledge, we can all contribute to the creation of more equitable, dynamic, and engaging learning environments for our students.

It is our hope that “Expanding Literacy Horizons: Inclusive, Diverse, and Innovative Approaches” will prompt you to challenge traditional assumptions, welcome novel ideas, and continually evolve as a literacy advocate. As we collectively strive for a more inclusive, diverse, and innovative future within literacy education, the *Georgia Journal of Literacy* remains steadfast in its commitment to support you on this transformative journey.

References

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