

Bridging the Divide: Advancing the Science and Art of Teaching Reading in Diverse and Inclusive Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

The fall 2023 issue of the *Georgia Journal of Literacy* delves into a crucial intersection: the empirically supported science of reading and the ever-present need for diversity, inclusion, and multi-modal literacies in our classrooms. As the dialogue around literacy shifts toward science-based methods, the articles in this issue pose a pivotal question: How can these scientifically grounded methods be incorporated into diverse and inclusive learning environments? Our contributors approach this conundrum from multiple angles—examining ESOL co-teaching strategies, leveraging picturebook biographies for inspiration, implementing culturally relevant pedagogies, and providing practical teaching tips for diverse classrooms. Through a carefully curated ensemble of articles, we challenge traditional paradigms and advocate for a literacy education that is scientifically rigorous yet deeply sensitive to the rich tapestry of cultural, linguistic, and cognitive diversity in our classrooms. The content serves not just as a timely response to ongoing debates in literacy education but also as a catalyst for future innovations that harmonize the science with the art of teaching reading. This issue aims to inspire a shift—from mere motivation to deep-rooted inspiration, from monolingualism to multilingualism, and from traditional to culturally responsive pedagogical practices.

KEYWORDS

science and art of teaching reading; diversity and inclusion; multimodal literacies

As we usher in the fall season, we are reminded that the landscape of literacy education, much like the leaves that are metamorphosing around us, is in a constant state of change. In this evolving ecosystem, diversity—of thought, culture, and practice—emerges as an invaluable resource. Educators and scholars are again embroiled in a nuanced iteration of the age-old reading wars, reframed now through the lens of the science of reading. While consensus grows around the empirical evidence supporting science-based reading instruction, the question persists: How do we integrate these insights within a pluralistic, evolving landscape of learners? This fall's issue of the *Georgia Journal of Literacy* aims to contribute nuanced perspectives to this ongoing debate. With a particular focus on diversity, inclusion, motivation, and multimodal literacies, this issue explores pedagogical models and practices designed to respond adeptly to the multifaceted needs of today's diverse student body.

This collection of articles challenges reductive paradigms by presenting multifaceted approaches that align with scientific research while respecting the diversity that students bring into

the classroom—be it linguistic, cultural, or cognitive. The confluence of these themes serves not merely as a response to the evolving debates in literacy education but also as a catalyst for innovative, evidence-based strategies that privilege both rigor and inclusivity and that bridge the science and art of teaching reading (Griffin, 2023; Such, 2021; Young et al., 2022).

This issue pushes the boundary of what reading science means in the context of diverse classrooms, multiple literacies, and culturally sustaining pedagogies. It serves as an invitation for educators, scholars, and literacy advocates to engage deeply with these complexities, inspiring a shift from motivation to inspiration, from monolingualism to multilingualism, and from traditional pedagogies to culturally relevant practices. We hope this issue will serve as both a resource and a call to action, inviting a concerted effort to redefine literacy education in a manner that is as rigorously scientific as it is profoundly artful and inclusive.

Exploring the ESOL Conundrum: Rethinking Co-Teaching

Dr. Megan DeVoss’s comprehensive literature review, “Models of Instruction for Multilingual Learners: Facets of the ESOL Co-Teacher Role,” offers a nuanced examination of ESOL models sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Education. Through a critical lens, Dr. DeVoss weighs the merits and drawbacks of these frameworks, spotlighting the burgeoning prominence of co-teaching strategies. This piece acts as a cornerstone for educators and policymakers aiming to incorporate empirically-backed, effective multilingual instructional practices into their repertoire.

Picturebook Biographies: Beyond Motivation to Inspiration

Advocating a move from motivation to inspiration, Dr. William P. Bintz and Shabnam Moini Chaghervand explore the transformative potential of picturebook biographies in “From Motivation to Inspiration: Using Picturebook Biographies to Inspire All Learners, Especially English Language Learners.” The authors argue persuasively for the pedagogical power of these books, which both teach and inspire, catalyzing a deeper level of student engagement and emotional investment in learning.

Pioneering Multimodal Literacies in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Aligning with multimodal literacies, Dr. Christine Craddock’s research article, “Multimodal Literacies in Elementary Teacher Education: Facilitating Culturally Relevant Pedagogy with Mathematics,” delves into the practical application of multiple modes of expression. Dr. Craddock’s work, based on qualitative action research, uncovers how these modes can enrich culturally relevant pedagogical practices, especially in the teaching of mathematics. In a similar vein, Dr. Laura Szech’s practitioner-oriented piece “Culturally Sustaining Writer’s Workshop for Beginners” offers a detailed framework that encourages students to bring their unique cultural and linguistic experiences into authentic writing exercises.

A Toolkit for Inclusive Teaching: Diverse Strategies for Diverse Classrooms

Our Teaching Tips section offers a triad of insightful articles catering to the diversity of today’s classrooms. Heather S. Riddle examines nuanced methods for evaluating language and literacy skills among students with developmental disabilities in “Assessing Language and Literacy of Students with Developmental Disabilities and Complex Communication Needs.” Dr. Ebony T. Lee’s “Moving Writing Forward Through Peer-Critique Partners” outlines a step-by-step strategy for fostering constructive peer-to-peer feedback during the writing process. Rounding off this

section, Dr. Lina Soares, former editor of the *Georgia Journal of Reading* (the former name of *GJL*), presents “The Open Mind Portrait: An Innovative Method to Promote Reading Comprehension and Critical Thinking,” revealing the underexplored potential of visual art to improve reading comprehension and provoke critical thought.

Final Thoughts

Each article, in its unique way, contributes to a unified vision: transforming the science of reading into an inclusive practice that honors and leverages diversity. From DeVoss’s exploration of ESOL co-teaching models to Bintz and Moini Chaghervand’s shift from motivation to inspiration, from culturally relevant pedagogies to practical teaching strategies, each contribution engages with the complex tapestry of student diversity as an invaluable asset, rather than a challenge to overcome. In so doing, these articles not only provide a wealth of academic insight but also serve as a collective clarion call to all stakeholders—teachers, administrators, and literacy advocates alike. They urge us to fully embrace the abundant diversity in our classrooms and to integrate scientific rigor with cultural responsiveness.

As we navigate this dynamic and ever-evolving educational terrain, let us do so with both the empirical grounding and the compassionate intentionality that our diverse student populations merit. Our collective commitment to this integrated approach will not only elevate educational practices but also profoundly impact the academic and socio-emotional well-being of generations to come. Thank you for joining us in this endeavor. Your engagement with the *Georgia Journal of Literacy* signifies your role in this critical and timely dialogue, a conversation that, at its core, is both deeply scientific and profoundly inclusive.

References

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