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About the Journal

Founded in 2013, the Journal of Teacher Action Research (ISSN: 2332-2233) is a peer-reviewed online journal indexed with EBSCO that seeks practical research that can be implemented in Pre-Kindergarten through Post-Secondary classrooms. The primary function of this journal is to provide classroom teachers and researchers a means for sharing classroom practices.

The journal accepts articles for peer-review that describe classroom practice which positively impacts student learning. We define teacher action research as teachers (at all levels) studying their practice and/or their students' learning in a methodical way in order to inform classroom practice. Articles submitted to the journal should demonstrate an action research focus with intent to improve the author's practice.

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“NOT ONLY WERE THE STUDENTS LEARNING ... BUT SO WAS I”: INTRODUCING PRESERVICE TEACHERS TO GRAPHIC NOVELS AS PART OF A MULTIMODAL LITERACY FRAMEWORK

Lisa Delgado Brown
Saint Leo University

Elizabeth Sughrue
Deer Creek Schools

Abstract Researchers have found graphic novels to be effective teaching tools to improve both traditional and visual literacy skills. However, preservice teachers (PSTs) report feeling hesitant and/or unprepared to integrate graphic novels into their future classroom curriculum. The purpose of this qualitative pilot study was to understand what supports PSTs need to feel prepared to integrate multimodal texts with students, if experience using graphic novels as teaching tools could expand PST’s thinking/understanding of multimodal texts as a teaching tool, how PSTs can use graphic novels as a teaching tool to promote authentic writing opportunities, and what challenges PSTs face when incorporating graphic novels into the curriculum. This action research study took place as PSTs worked with elementary-aged students as they participated in Enrichment Clusters, a school-wide initiative designed to explore an area of interest for the students outside the standard curriculum. Participant reflections indicate that PSTs gained significant experience and confidence with graphic novels from having an opportunity to utilize them to teach writing skills to a diverse classroom of learners. While this was designed to be a pilot study followed by a larger subsequent study, the follow-up research took place in the spring of 2020 and was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: teacher action research, preservice teachers, preservice teacher education, graphic novels, literacy, multimodal literacy, new literacies

Introduction

A recent International Literacy Association’s (ILA) *What’s Hot survey* (2018) highlighted a gap between the “importance and attention” given to teacher preparation (p. 13). This biannual survey was sent out to 1,600 literacy professionals and asked them to rank 25 trending literacy topics to better understand the issues most important to high-quality

literacy instruction. According to the results, *Teacher Preparation* was only listed twelfth among the hot topics; however, it received a remarkably high ranking of third in overall importance by the same respondents. ILA (2018) maintained that this response reflected “respondents’ views that new teachers often enter the classroom without the skills needed to foster literacy success” (ILA, 2018, p. 7). These are troublesome statistics for those of us involved in preservice teacher (PST) preparation, and for PSTs themselves. Teacher educators must increase their focus upon integrating current literacy methodologies into the curriculum.

Researchers have heralded the importance of expanding PST’s existing views of literacy to include more multimodal texts and practices (Albers, 2006; Block, 2013; Clark, 2013; Cook & Sams, 2018). Multimodal literacies involve the study and understanding of language utilizing multiple modes of meaning (Mills & Unsworth, 2017). Education has traditionally been dominated by two modes of communication—text and speech. However, the world students must learn to navigate requires more flexibility in communication. Students need exposure to multiple modes of communication within their classrooms if they are going to successfully negotiate those same modalities outside of the classroom. According to the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), multimodal literacy instruction should become an “increasingly important component of the English/Language Arts (ELA) classroom” (NCTE, 2005, p. 1). Modern society is increasingly visual, and teachers have felt the need to foster new approaches to teaching reading that will help their students better navigate the expanding literacy demands of our highly visual culture (Luft, 2019). A prevalent type of multimodal literacy platform that has continued to increase in popularity is the genre of graphic novels. Graphic novels are written and illustrated in the style of a comic book but resemble a novel in both length and narrative development (Scholastic, 2018). These novels seem to have struck a chord with young readers. In 2012, school librarians were interviewed and noted that there was a discrepancy in their graphic novel holdings, such that graphic novels accounted for approximately 40% of their overall circulation, but they made up less than 5% of the entire library collection (Lapp et al., 2012). In 2019, not only were two graphic novels (*Guts* by Raina Telgemeir and *Dog Man #7* by Dav Pilkey) at the top of the best-seller list in their first week of release, but young-adult oriented graphic novel titles for readers 6-18 were up 39% in bookstores nationwide (Salkowitz, 2019). Furthermore, graphic novels have continued to increase in popularity so much that the American Library Association declared July as Booklist’s *Graphic Novels in Libraries* Month (American Library Association, 2019).

Not only are graphic novels popular amongst readers, but researchers also find them to be noteworthy. For example, Mathews (2011) asserted that illustrations in graphic novels serve to scaffold struggling readers, engage reluctant readers, and enrich successful readers. It is no surprise, then, that Syma and Weiner (2013) posited that it is inevitable that graphic novels should be used for education, all that remains is “how to use [them] and for what purpose.” Yet, as Lapp et al., (2012) stated, “while graphic novels may be ‘hot’ among their readers and, as these data showed, also among many teachers, their use in the classroom is not as ‘hot’.” With so much evidence of the popularity of graphic novels among readers, librarians, and researchers, what is keeping graphic novels out of ELA curriculum? Although

researchers have established the need to infuse multimodal literacy instruction into the classroom, the inclusion of these topics is seemingly scarce in PST coursework (Cook & Sams, 2018; Jimenez and Meyer, 2016; Yusof, Lazim, Salehuddin, Shahimin, 2020). Further, Mathews (2011) noted that “until graphic novels become legitimized forms of knowledge within educational institutions, teacher educators must help preservice teachers foster the agency to critically examine these curricular materials.”

With these inconsistencies in mind, our research team explored these questions specifically within the framework of undergraduate education to better understand how to include multimodal literacy instruction into the ELA curriculum. This action research study examines the support that preservice teachers (PST) will need as they use graphic novels as teaching tools. To better evaluate the needed supports, we, as literacy education researchers, conducted an action research pilot study that examined the ways in which PSTs could use graphic novels as teaching tools within a local elementary school. An action research methodology was chosen for its relevance to PST participants and its potential to empower them to incorporate graphic novels in their future classrooms.

With this pilot study, we attempted to answer four questions:

1. What support do PSTs need in their coursework to help them to feel prepared to integrate multimodal texts with students?
2. Does the use of multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, push PSTs to expand their thinking/understanding of multimodal texts as a teaching tool?
3. How can PSTs use graphic novels as a teaching tool to promote authentic writing opportunities with young students?
4. What were the most challenging components in using graphic novels to provide authentic multimodal text teaching opportunities for PSTs working with a variety of young writers?

Literature Review

Multimodal Literacy. Kress (2003) has emphasized that regarding print-based literacy as the chief representative force in terms of conveying meaning is too restrictive and does not take into account other equally important modes of representation such as “gestures, speech, image, writing, 3D objects, color, music, and no doubt others” (p. 36). Whereas text-only literacy is one-dimensional, multimodal literacy is multifaceted. Multimodal literacies are texts and practices that include more than just written text, rather they extend meaning into a variety of modes of representation (Jewitt & Kress, 2003). In multimodal literacy, every facet of a given text or practice is conveying meaning to the reader; for graphic novels, this has resulted in a shift from written text being the main source of meaning, to images carrying equal or greater importance (Lutkewitte, 2013). Meaning, then, is made from all of the intersecting modes, which are conveyed through a variety of mediums. To be literate in a world that utilizes a variety of written and visual modes of communication necessitates development of the skills required to read a variety of modes fluently.

Therefore, twenty-first century ELA classrooms are increasingly advised to incorporate multimodal literacies into instruction (Cook & Sams, 2018; Connors, 2010; Fisher & Frey, 2007; NCTE, 2005). In fact, as recently as 2016 and 2018, NCTE recommended that students demonstrate their knowledge via various multimodal platforms to further develop their literacy skills. Researchers have found support for redefining and reconceptualizing literacy instruction so that 21st-century students are better prepared to communicate meanings via and across varied texts (Gavaldon-Hernandez, Gerboles-Sanchez, & Saez de Adana, 2017). As educators continue to advance their instructional goals and techniques, they must find relevant methods for incorporating multimodal literacy into their curriculum.

Graphic Novels. One form of multimodal text which can be used within a variety of K-12 ELA curriculum frameworks is the graphic novel. Populations as diverse as gifted students, struggling readers, elementary students, secondary students, and EL students have benefited from the use of graphic novels as educational tools (Bakis, 2012; Carter, 2007; Chun, 2009; Howard, 2012; Huh & Suh, 2015; Ranker, 2007). Not only are graphic novels beneficial for diverse learners, but also for diverse learning goals. Researchers have determined graphic novels promote literacy, reading comprehension, story writing, and language learning (Brenna, 2013; Carano and Clabough, 2016; Cook, 2017; Walsh, 2017). In a recent International Literacy Association (ILA) blog, ILA author and ELA coordinator Susan Luft (2019) stated that “learning to read the elements of art in graphic novels gives students experience with visual literacy in a way that is engaging and builds meaning” (p. 3). Graphic novels are engaging tools that give students exposure to visual literacy and novel ways to encounter meaning in texts. (Luft, 2019). In addition to literacy instruction, the potential for graphic novels as tools for writing instruction is promising. According to Roll and Vaughn (2019), students are infrequently provided with authentic writing opportunities during their writing instruction. As opposed to contrived essays or short narratives to be viewed only by the student’s teacher, student-generated graphic novels provide an authentic writing context by allowing students to act as author and illustrator.

PST attitudes toward graphic novels. While the potential of graphic novels as instructional tools is well established, their use in the classroom is still limited as graphic novels may not regularly be included as part of the ELA core curriculum. Researchers have identified a number of potential obstacles to PST’s willingness to incorporate graphic novels into their future curriculum, ranging from unfamiliarity with the genre, general lack of curricular options, or its use with diverse learners, to concerns about genre credibility (Clark, 2013; Cook & Sams, 2018; Lapp et al., 2012). One of the more significant of these barriers is the lack of familiarity with graphic novels among PSTs. Rust and Cantwell (2018) discussed the need to provide scaffolded supports to PSTs within their coursework, as they were often learning about the nuances of graphic novels alongside the students they were instructing in a field-based literacy class for PSTs. In fact, according to a study conducted by Block (2013), only 15% of PSTs included in the study had received exposure to graphic novels during their PST training and it was described as brief to very brief. When this unfamiliarity with the graphic novel genre is combined with their infrequent inclusion in current curriculums, it is unsurprising that PSTs are hesitant to introduce graphic novels into their future classrooms. Further, according to Matthews (2011), PSTs need explicit guidance in learning how to

question and use graphic novels as curricular materials. This study was conducted with that recommendation in mind.

Methodology

Participants, setting, and procedures. To explore PST use of multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, we conducted a pilot study in a local elementary school which was located in the downtown area of a mid-sized metropolitan city in the midwest. During the spring 2019 semester, thirteen PSTs participated in a service-learning project where they worked with a small group of students as those students created their own graphic novels. As a course requirement in one of their university classes, participating PSTs volunteered for at least five one-hour Enrichment Cluster sessions over a ten-week period and attended the Enrichment Cluster Showcase held at the school at the completion of the Clusters period. PST participants took weekly field notes and wrote formal reflections at the culmination of the project, which served as the primary sources of data for this research.

Enrichment Clusters. The goal of an Enrichment Cluster is to set aside regular instructional time during the school day to direct all students in the creation of a product, performance, or service for an authentic audience in order to deepen their understanding of a particular topic. Participating elementary students were in grades 1-4 and had expressed interest in creating a graphic novel. In our cluster, Creating Graphic Novels, PSTs helped elementary-aged students explore popular graphic novels. These were used as mentor texts, or models, to help the students as they created their own graphic novels. PSTs met at the participating elementary school once a week on Friday afternoons. The Enrichment Clusters took place during the regular school day so that all students in the school could participate. The weekly action research team consisted of one professor who facilitated the project, five to seven PSTs that rotated regularly, and a consistent group of elementary students (N = 15) of mixed ability, age, gender, and race. PSTs were both excited and nervous at the start of the project. PSTs reported limited experience with the graphic novel genre and for many PSTs this was their first time working with students in an unstructured way; Enrichment Clusters were purposefully designed to be student-led by the elementary-aged participants. As a group, the PSTs brainstormed and had a general plan prior to each session, yet they let the students guide the sessions as they explored ways to scaffold and support participants as they created their graphic novels. During the first couple of meetings, elementary students were given time to read from a selection of graphic novels and began discussing goals for their final product. Most students decided to create their graphic novel on their own, but two students opted to work as a team. Over the next few sessions, students were given time to begin brainstorming ideas. The next step in the graphic novel creation process was for PSTs to help the students think about character and plot using graphic organizers. Both blank paper and blank comic panels of varying styles were made available for the students to begin the drafting and drawing process. Most of the students chose to hand-draw their novels, but a handful of students used graphic novel apps on tablets. Throughout the sessions, PSTs worked with their students as they created their graphic novels. As the project concluded, the students were encouraged to create cover pages and their graphic novels were assembled in presentation folders, using either their hand-drawn pages or

printed pages from the tablets. The graphic novels were then displayed for the Enrichment Cluster Showcase. PSTs were present for every step of the process to facilitate the project and provide support as needed.

Technology Integration. One idea that emerged throughout the early weeks of the project was the integration of technological apps on tablets. PSTs took ownership of this process as well. A few PSTs led and organized the “tech table.” At the tech table, elementary students were introduced to a few apps: Superhero Comic Book Maker, Seedling Comic, and Sketch Book. The PSTs that led the table became quite knowledgeable and there were a few elementary students that preferred creating their stories almost exclusively with the apps. However, only about a third of the elementary students preferred this modality.

PST support. This was a new Service-Learning Project and was the first time that the PSTs had participated in Enrichment Clusters so they were learning as they went through the process. We emphasized ongoing reflection throughout the project and PSTs largely guided the direction that the project would take. First, PSTs began with an informal introduction to graphic novels and how to read them. An introductory Scholastic (2018) guide used within the PST university class discussed how graphic novels supported student learning and provided some insight on how to use them within a classroom. PSTs were provided time weekly within their university class to plan and discuss what they wanted the elementary students to do during each session. Each PST worked with a small group of students each week. Some PSTs worked with the same group for the duration of their participation, however, several PSTs worked with a variety of student groups based on when they were attending. Some PSTs were able to complete their five sessions back-to-back, but most participated more sporadically based upon their personal schedules.

Enrichment Clusters were designed to be student-led on the part of the elementary aged participants, so while PSTs had a general goal in mind to accomplish weekly within their small Enrichment Cluster group, it was very unstructured and varied considerably from group-to-group. For the first session, PSTs decided that they would have their elementary students read novels with them to increase familiarity with the genre and point out textural details such as the ways in which authors conveyed the storylines through text and images. The PSTs had a variety of graphic novels they brought to each Enrichment Cluster session to use for reference. Each PST also administered an informal inventory of student interests while reading and discussing the books with the students. Each PST asked the elementary students questions designed to better understand their previous story writing experiences, story writing interests, and what writing supports students might need. Immediately after the first cluster session, the researchers and PSTs held an informal discussion about what PSTs had learned while working with their elementary students. PSTs also brainstormed goals for the next weekly session. These discussions were shared with the larger group during the next university classroom session and were where the bulk of continued planning took place from week to week. It was truly a group effort and the PSTs were involved with the design of the project throughout the cluster sessions. They continued this process throughout the project.

After a few sessions had been completed, participating PSTs realized they wanted a way to communicate individual student progress to the PST who would be working with the student(s) the following week. A sticky note system was decided upon by the PSTs wherein at the end of each session, the PST would write a brief explanation of what the participating student had worked on that day to facilitate a seamless process for students regardless of the week's group of participating PSTs. Once implemented, sticky notes were left weekly in the students' writing envelopes and provided a summary for the next PST to read.

Data Sources and Analysis. As part of the course, PSTs were asked to write a reflection on their Enrichment Clusters experience. These reflections were the primary data source. We also collected field notes. However, these were not standardized, and the depth varied considerably, so we did not use them in our final analysis. We used an inductive analysis approach to search for patterns or themes in the data collected (e.g., field notes and reflections). First, we selected significant statements from the reflections in order to horizontalize the data. As patterns emerged, we generated a thematic codebook which helped highlight relationships and connections in the data. The process continued until all reflections were analyzed and coded, and then the process was repeated independently by each researcher. Once all statements had been coded again, we met and discussed the data to ensure consistency. We explored any conflicting statements/codes, and any new codes were added to the thematic codebook. This process helped us ensure that all the themes had been explored fully and added depth to our understanding. Summary charts were created for each participant, organized by the overarching research questions. Once the summaries were completed, resulting patterns were identified to address the overarching research questions.

Results

Through this project, we examined how PSTs used multimodal text platforms, such as graphic novels, successfully with learners of differing levels and abilities. This was the first time our university had participated in this service-learning project, so we looked at it as a pilot study designed to be modified and expanded the following year. The follow-up study was initiated in the spring of 2020 but was cut short due to schools closing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Multimodal Texts as Teaching Tools. Many of our PSTs knew little about the graphic novel genre prior to starting this project. In fact, one PST commented that "before this semester I had very little knowledge about graphic novels and how successful they can be with readers. So not only were the students learning during clusters but so was I." This was an interesting statement and illustrated the fact that graphic novels were teaching and learning tools for both our PSTs and the elementary students we worked with. Several PSTs noted high levels of student engagement. One PST commented, "I really enjoyed letting them express themselves in a way that they probably never thought possible." Another said:

the thing I enjoyed the most was seeing how excited the students were about reading or sharing their graphic novels and how insanely creative they were... you can see how engaged the students are when they have choice like that. It certainly

appeared that the students were intrinsically interested in creating their own graphic novels.

An additional finding was that PSTs made connections between this project and how the knowledge gleaned can inform other areas of instruction, including creating a more complete understanding of their learners' specific needs. For example, one PST stated, "the process of creating something, and using multiple mediums to do so, is perfect for tailoring the project to a student's needs in the classroom." Another said, "I was able to realize that each student learns and focuses in different ways and so I had to figure out the best ways for helping them accomplish their desires regarding the project." Participation in the project helped PSTs understand their learners in a broader sense.

Graphic Novels as Authentic Writing Tools. Graphic novels provided a diverse platform for our elementary students to share their own creative ideas. One PST commented that "students had a lot of fun working on their novels and I have been impressed with the range of ideas we saw, from the completely original to the fan-fiction and everything in between." Another commented on the array of unique ideas, saying "no two stories were even remotely alike in style, content or subject. We had such a wide variety and I think some kids really had fun bringing their thoughts and dreams to life during clusters." Some of the elementary students had many ideas that they wanted to share, and PSTs worked to guide them in narrowing their topics. One offered "some students had so many unique ideas we had to actually make them focus down on one, or three." While PSTs guided, they were hesitant to do more than offer an opinion. One PST stated that "the student has control over their creative processes, which is important obviously for their developing creativity, but also for the strengthening of their confidence and individuality within the classroom setting." The elementary students' graphic novels were authentic texts that did not have to follow any pattern or adhere to any particular topic. Students were free to be as creative as they wanted, and they rose to the occasion. One PST commented that "every student got to be creative at their own academic level, and we, as cluster leaders, got to see them share their hearts on the paper."

Some students opted to collaborate to write a joint story; however, most wrote individual tales. One of the cluster leaders of a writing duo commented:

By allowing each child a choice in creative manifestation, one is opening doorways for collaboration among the students, exploration in new artistic mediums, and allowing for complete freedom of imagination, something that is so rare in most classrooms today...both boys I worked with wrote, illustrated, and collaborated on a two-part graphic novel that made sense to them. The sense of ownership that the elementary students exhibited was visible.

Challenging Components to Teaching with Graphic Novels. While the knowledge gleaned through the Enrichment Clusters project was immense, there were certainly challenges we faced. One of the biggest obstacles most PSTs discussed was organization. As one PST pointed out, "something unique to [clusters] is that since no one except Dr. Delgado Brown went every time, we had to communicate well together in order to keep the class on the

same page.” While we had weekly debriefings from the beginning, PSTs decided that we needed more information on each of the individual elementary students which provided the impetus to create the sticky-note system where they left notes for each other. One PST stated that “once we implemented the system of leaving sticky notes for updates, the process of clusters went much smoother.”

Another challenge was working with a range of children across multiple grade levels and of varying abilities. Some of the cluster students had already received some formal writing instruction as a regular part of their schooling, but many of the younger ones had not. One PST pointed out that could be a great benefit to some younger students because of the early exposure, noting “some of them didn’t understand the drafting process, but at least we introduced the idea so that it won’t be a completely new idea when they learn about it in school.” However, some of the PSTs recognized that the broad range of levels left “some students thinking their stories were less than when they [had] mainly pictures compared to a 4th grader who had sentences.”

Finally, using technological applications presented its own set of challenges. Students were very excited to try out the applications, but less than a third opted to use them regularly. One PST that regularly worked at the tech table noted that:

The interest in using the apps really tapered off as the cluster went on and I wonder how much of that had to do with the fact that students had to experiment with [the apps] in shifts, so while they weren’t using [the apps] ...they were working on their stories in a paper format and the iPads just seemed like a novelty unless they REALLY connected with them.

Our tech ratio was 2:1, so it did pose some issues that there were not enough iPads for each participating elementary student. Also, there were some creative differences noted by some PSTs, especially with our one writing duo. Another PST noted that one of their writers “was easily distracted by the features of the iPad...but in the end, it did not hinder his overall process.” Overall, PSTs who worked with students at the tech table had positive experiences, but the majority felt that we should have started using the iPads sooner.

Discussion

Generally, the Creating Graphic Novels Enrichment Cluster successfully introduced PSTs to graphic novels as a literacy tool. In their reflections, several PSTs discussed what they discovered about using graphic novels as teaching tools, one offered that they “learned more than I could have imagined about graphic novels.” To successfully facilitate student writing, PSTs had to guide students explicitly through the process. As a university class, we discussed ways to do this. We utilized graphic organizers and story maps to help break down the brainstorming and idea generation process. PSTs also learned about engaging students by offering autonomy and the chance to explore their own interests. One offered that the elementary students “came in with a positive attitude and were so happy to be there with us working on something they actually wanted to work on.” Another said, “they learned

about their lives and why they have such a strong passion for graphic novels.” Engagement is a powerful teaching tool that PSTs need in their toolbox prior to teaching.

Exploring how to differentiate and make accommodations were other aspects that many discussed, one offered:

The most important thing I will take away from this experience is that every student is unique in their interests, in the way they learn, and in how they interact with their learning environment...this was the perfect hands-on learning experience for how to differentiate instruction...

Another surmised they “got a crash course type of experience realizing that the students are more alike than different.” In their coursework PSTs are exposed to the fundamental ideas of differentiation and how to make accommodations for students, but this project gave them the opportunity to differentiate for every learner. Most of all, PSTs learned a lot about themselves as future teachers. One commented that they found the project interesting because they felt it helped them “prepare for the reality of a classroom of varied abilities.”

Limitations

This service-learning project took place in a setting where all elementary students had chosen to participate in this specific Enrichment Cluster. Said students were very engaged across the weeks of our cluster session likely due to their ability to select to participate in this cluster. As far as the use of technology, we were limited in our student: device ratio (2:1). The elementary school itself did have Chrome books that children in some grades could use (3rd grade and up). However, we did not have those at our university. To adequately prepare for using the technology, PSTs need to be able to practice with the devices. Another limitation was that the PSTs rotated weekly due to their own schedules so that the elementary students worked with several PSTs over the course of the sessions.

Implications

Our classes participated in Enrichment Clusters again in the spring of 2020, however, our cluster participation was cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, these suggestions remain viable options we will consider implementing in future iterations of this project. Our goal was to incorporate a more systematic way to communicate weekly about each elementary student and where they are in their graphic novel generation. While we ended up developing an effective sticky-note system where each PST left notes for each other in our pilot study, this next semester we will be more overt and have a standard form where PSTs specify what they worked on and will give a suggestion on where to start during the following session. We will have a tentative timeline calendar as well. This was another suggestion that came from the PSTs, where they specified that it would help both themselves and our elementary-aged students to have a general idea of where students should be at various checkpoints. Several PSTs commented that the use of the technology applications was a bit distracting for the writers for various reasons, but the consensus amongst the PSTs was that if the technology applications had been introduced earlier that it

would likely have been more seamless. As a result, we will have a schedule where all the elementary students rotate through the technology applications earlier in the graphic novel-writing process. Finally, as Jones (2016) pointed out, it is helpful for improving instructional practice if PSTs read graphic novels themselves before teaching with them. Thus, we will be requiring PSTs to each read and/or explore a graphic novel prior to starting the Enrichment Clusters. This will familiarize PSTs with the graphic novel genre as a reader.

Conclusion

One of our main goals with this research was to determine what supports PSTs need to feel prepared to integrate multimodal texts with their students. We found that PSTs needed explicit guidance on both graphic novels and how to use them with students. In order to use them effectively, they had to first understand the platform. Many PSTs had limited experience with these novels themselves before participating in this research. One way to do this would be to provide systematic instruction on graphic novels as a teaching tool, offering guidance on how to integrate them into their teaching.

Secondly, we were interested in determining if PSTs use of multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, would expand their thinking/understanding of multimodal texts as teaching tools. Many reported throughout the study that not only did they learn how to use graphic novels as teaching tools, but that they were learning alongside their students. As researchers, we noted that graphic novels provided an engaging platform for both the elementary-aged participants, but also as an engaging teaching tool for our PST participants.

Throughout the study, PSTs used the student-generated graphic novels as teaching tools. PSTs indicated that students were excited to write and share their creativity as they crafted their graphic novels. Each elementary student participated in creating their own graphic novel story.

Finally, as far as challenges that PSTs faced when incorporating graphic novels into the curriculum, we noted that organization, consistency, understanding how to work with a variety of different aged students, and how to best integrate technology/deal with limited technological resources were the main challenges faced. While these challenges are not unique to this study, most PSTs will not work with a variety of different aged students, at once, in one classroom. However, the challenges they faced were discussed in class during our weekly debriefing sessions, and each were relevant concerns in their own right. Reflecting on how each of these challenges can impact their teaching was a great experience.

About the Authors

Lisa Delgado Brown, Ph.D. is currently an Associate Professor of undergraduate education in the College of Education & Social Services at Saint Leo University in St. Leo Florida. Her research interests include graphic novel and multimodal literacy development, use of technology to motivate, and engage literacy learners, and the impact of language and literacy development on student learning. Email: lisa.delgadobrown@saintleo.edu

Elizabeth Sughrue, M.A. is a literature teacher at Deer Creek Middle School in Edmond, Oklahoma. Her main interest is helping students learn to love reading. Email: elizabeth.sughrue.ma@gmail.com

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