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A Comparison of How the United States and England Educators Teach Reading

Katy Wood

Ouachita Baptist University

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A Comparison of How the United States and England Educators Teach Reading

Ever since I was in high school, I knew I wanted to be an elementary teacher. I want to spend time with children and teach them about the world around us. I want to make school an exciting, educational experience for the students and make them yearn for more information. I love learning about new things, and I want to translate that passion to others. Teachers lay the crucial foundation for knowledge that students will use the rest of their lives. In addition, teachers have the opportunity to make such an impact on a student's life, and I would be honored to be able to play an important role in a child's life. Children are our world's future and to have the chance to impact our future is a powerful opportunity. I want my students to be fully capable to better our world.

During my time of studying to be an early childhood education teacher at Ouachita Baptist University, I felt a calling to explore and become immersed in another culture. I had never been out of the country before, and I believed that in order to become a well-rounded teacher, I needed to learn how other countries' teachers taught their children. I chose to study abroad in Liverpool, England, at Liverpool Hope University. I took several classes at the university, but one of the most impactful things that I did while I was in England was observing in St. Leo's and Southmead Catholic Primary School, located in Whiston. This school services students from ages 3 to 11, which is nursery through Year 6. This is typical for primary schools in England. The school age division in England schools is different from the United States. Nursery refers to preschool (ages 3-4), as well as Reception also translates to preschool (ages 4-5). Year 1 refers to Kindergarten (ages 5-6), Year 2 to first grade (ages 6-7), Year 3 to second grade (ages 7-8), and so on. Essentially, the English Years are one ahead of American grade levels. English Years are also grouped into Key Stages, which allows teachers to assess the students at certain levels. Years 1—2 are Key Stage 1 and Years 3 – 6 are Key Stage 2.

There are several additional facts unique to St. Leo's and Southmead Catholic Primary School, according to researchers from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services, and Skills (Ofsted), who inspect and regulate services that care for and provide education for children in England.

- This is a smaller than average size Catholic primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is far greater than average.
- The majority of pupils in the school is White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is larger than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than average.
- The school meets the current floor standard which sets the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. (Ofstead, 2012, p. 3)

The "pupil premium" refers to the additional funding for publicly funded schools in England to close the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers (Department for Education and Education Funding Agency, 2015). This means that many students at St. Leo's and Southmead are performing lower than the average. School Action ("SA") is used when a child is not making adequate progress at school, and there is a need for action to be taken to meet the child's learning needs. According to a firm that specializes in education and disability law, "SA can include the involvement of extra teachers and may also require the use of different learning materials, special equipment or a different teaching strategy" (Douglas Silas Solicitors, 2014). I witnessed SA at St Leo's and Southmead when the teachers divided the students into different reading groups, based on their ability, and each group was led by either the teacher of the class or an aid.

There was definitely an apparent gap between students of the same year. For instance, in Year 4, there were students reading chapter books that were age appropriate for them, but then there were also students who were reading picture books that would be appropriate for students in Year 3.

During a two-month period, I visited St. Leo's and Southmead once a week and observed all of the age groups there. This extensive observation allowed me to see the significance of the material being taught in each year and the effect each year had on the succeeding year. Throughout my time there, I got to know the teachers in all of the grade levels, observe each class, interact with the students, and learn how the teachers instruct their students.

Although the United States is one of the leaders of the world in education, there is still room for improvement. There are so many ways that England is similar to the U.S., yet so many ways it is different, and that is why I chose to do my study in England. Since reading is such a foundational skill that is throughout a lifetime, I want to know the best methods for teaching it to students. I do not want to rely on a one-sided education, where I just learn the "American" way. As a result, I chose to compare how England and the U.S. educators teach reading. Because I am interested in teaching first grade or higher, I decided to focus on how U.S. educators teach reading to first grade students and how England educators teach reading to Year 2 (or the end of Key Stage 1).

U.S. and England Reading Programs

The U.S. and England both have reading intervention programs designed to assist students who struggle with reading. The U.S. uses the Reading First Initiative, which strives to decrease the gap between the achievements of students, so that all students are on the same level. England uses the Every Child a Reader program, which aims to prove that by the end of Key

Stage 1, all students are competent readers and writers. Both programs aim to better the education of students, with regard to reading.

According to researchers from the National Reading Panel Report (from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development), the five critical areas of effective reading instruction are the following: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (The Learning Point, 2004, p. 2). These five elements were incorporated into the No Child Left Behind Act and the Reading First Initiative. The purpose of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is to close the gap of student achievement by providing equal opportunities for all children to learn. Progress is measured through standardized tests for all the students.

The U.S. Department of Education emphasizes four pillars within the bill: accountability: to ensure those students who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency; flexibility: allows school districts flexibility in how they use federal education funds to improve student achievement; research-based education: emphasizes educational programs and practices that have been proven effective through scientific research; parent options: increases the choices available to the parents of students attending Title I schools. (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, N.D., p. 3)

This act was created under the presidency of George W. Bush, who made it a priority to improve education throughout the U.S. because children are the future of our nation.

The Reading First Initiative stemmed from NCLB and also addressed the achievement gap between students (Scholastic, n.d.). The overall goal of Reading First is to have all students reading on grade level by the end of third grade (Scholastic, n.d.). As an incentive for schools to participate in the initiative, government stakeholders provided about \$900 million in state grants “dedicated to help states and local school districts eliminate the reading deficit by establishing

high-quality, comprehensive reading instruction in kindergarten through grade 3” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, Sec. 1002, Part B). State leaders are only eligible to receive grant money if they can demonstrate how they plan to help their local educational agencies improve reading instruction and student achievement. School leaders are held accountable for participation in this program through ongoing screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based assessment (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, Sec. 1002, Part B).

In order to participate in Reading First, state officials must apply by submitting a detailed proposal of how they plan to spend their funding to better their education in order to allow their schools to participate in the program (Scholastic, n.d.). If successful, officials can receive funds for a 6-year period. They must give priority to districts with high rates of poverty and reading failure. Once the funds reach the school districts, up to 3.5% of the local Reading First funding can be used for planning and administration, and the rest should be used for reading materials, assessment, and other forms of support with the intent of improving reading instruction (Scholastic, n.d.).

As stated earlier, this program requires teachers to focus on the five critical areas of effective reading instruction - phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to identify and use phonemes, which are the smallest units that make up spoken language. For example, the word sun has three phonemes, /s/ /u/ /n/. Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes and graphemes, which are the letters that represent sounds in written language. This helps readers identify familiar words and decipher new words. Fluency is the ability to read accurately and quickly. Vocabulary is the knowledge of stored information about the meanings of words. Comprehension is the ability to understand what one is reading, which is

essentially the purpose of reading. The Reading First Initiative considers these five components to be the most important parts of reading.

For first grade students who are more at risk and therefore have a low reading ability, the Reading First Initiative provides early intervention teachers to allow those students to meet in small literacy groups. Within these groups, students receive more explicit instruction as the teacher is able to target the specific needs of each student (The National Office for Research on Measurement and Evaluation Systems, 2007). The table below shows the structure of this small group instruction.

Table 2-10
DESCRIPTION OF EARLY LITERACY SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION FIRST GRADE

COMPONENT	MATERIALS	ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS	TIME
Familiar Reading (Guided rereading of familiar texts)	Texts at the instructional/independent level	Phonics, Fluency, Comprehension	5 minutes
Shared Reading of ABC charts, nursery rhymes, poems, and books	Poems Enlarged texts	Phonemic Awareness Phonics, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Fluency	5 minutes
Phonemic Awareness/Phonics Explicit instruction based on the children's needs	Elkonin Boxes Counters Magnetic Letters Literacy Task Cards	Phonemic Awareness Phonics, Fluency (automaticity with sight words)	10 minutes
Assisted Writing Interactive Write Aloud Model Independent	Chart Paper Markers Dry Erase Boards Magnetic Letters	Phonemic Awareness Phonics, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Fluency	10 minutes
Small Group Reading	Instructional Level Tasks	Phonics, Vocabulary, Comprehension	15 minutes

Source: Arkansas Department of Education, 2007.

This early literacy small group instruction focuses on each of the five elements of reading and provides many different learning opportunities to accommodate different learning styles. In order to assess if the Reading First Initiative truly helps student's reading ability, the results must be assessed. According to researchers from the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Reading First produced a positive, significant impact on the amount of teaching time spent on the five essential components of reading instruction promoted by the

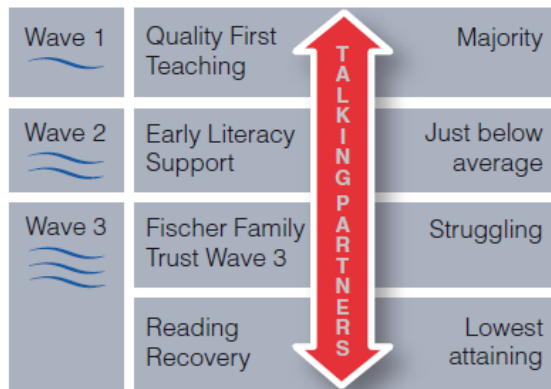
program” (2008). This shows that teachers adjusted their instruction to follow the guidelines of the program. Sometimes the problem with new programs is that it does not get implemented to its full extent, but it seems as though the five elements of reading were emphasized more due to Reading First. However, based on the comprehension test scores, which measure students’ knowledge at the end of the year, Reading First did not show a statistically significant impact in first, second, or third grade (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2008). While this program helps individual students raise their reading levels, overall there was no evidence that this initiative has made a significant impact.

Similar to the Reading First Initiative, the United Kingdom has a program called Every Child a Reader, which strives to improve the reading levels of their students.

The overall aim of Every Child a Reader (ECaR) is that by the end of Key Stage 1 all children (with the exception of a small minority who may have multiple and complex learning needs) are competent readers and writers who achieve in line with age-related expectations or better. (National Strategies, 2009)

Key Stage 1 is Year 1 and Year 2 grouped together, so the expectations of the program should be met at the end of Year 2, which translates to the end of first grade in the U.S. ECaR’s approach is layered interventions for children who, after one year of schooling, display difficulty with reading. Research suggests that this is the prime time for intervention, because after this period, students’ self-confidence for learning depreciates, which makes remediation more challenging. According to studies conducted by the English government, “intervening at age six to address literacy difficulties is also more cost-effective than later intervention. The gap is less wide and less time is needed to bring children up to average attainment” (Department for Education and Skills, 2006, p. 2). The “layered approach” of this program is made up of three

waves. The following chart identifies each wave and its corresponding level of reading ability.



The first wave represents the majority of the students- those who do not need reading intervention, but whose reading needs are satisfied with a quality classroom teacher. Students who read just below average need Early Literacy Support (ELS), which means that six children work in a group for twenty minutes each day for twelve weeks, led by a teacher's assistant who follows a scripted lesson. Struggling and the lowest attaining readers are in need of the Fischer Family Trust (FFT), which involves twenty minutes a day of one-to-one teaching on a rolling program, meaning a reading followed by a writing lesson. This intervention is led by an experienced teacher's assistant and it lasts ten weeks. It is aimed at Year 1, but it can also be used in Years 2 and 3, if needed.

Reading Recovery is the lowest of wave three. It is a program for children who have made little to no progress for being on level for reading and writing. These children work one-on-one with a specially trained teacher for about thirty minutes each day, for 12 to 20 weeks. Another program that is implemented into all the waves of ECaR is Talking Partners, which is an oral language program. Talking Partners may be used in all three waves of the program, meaning all levels of readers. The purpose of this program is to train students to listen more actively and talk for a range of purposes. Students work in groups of three with a trained teacher or teacher's assistant for twenty minutes, three times a week for ten weeks (Tanner et al., 2011).

Because the fundamentals of reading include being able to understand phonological awareness and phonics, these reading interventions are centered on understanding phonics.

Overall, there were exceptional short-term results from the students who participated in Every Child a Reader. The Department for Education reported the following results from students who participated in Reading Recovery, which focuses on third-wave students with the lowest reading level.

- 80 per cent of the children who completed Reading Recovery in 2009-10 (and 54 per cent of all RR participants) achieved accelerated learning, meaning that they caught up with the average range of ability in their class and were considered ‘likely to continue learning at the same rate as their peers, without the need for further special support’
- The average gain in reading age for the RR completers was 24 months over a four or five month period, which is five times the average rate of progress for all children. (Tanner et al., 2011, p. 24)

By analyzing these statistics, it would be easy to assume that ECaR was a success for improving the reading levels of students. However, the evidence on the extent of ECaR’s impact is mixed. When English officials followed up on students a few years after they participated in the program, some of them were reading at levels even lower than they were before participating in the Reading Recovery program. Therefore, the evidence showed that “early intervention alone cannot ‘inoculate’ children from later literacy difficulties and highlights the need for ongoing support to address the wider influences in a child’s life that may undermine their progress” (Tanner et al., 2011, p. 25). While this reading intervention program provides great support in the early grades, some students digress in subsequent years. Hence, these students need continuous support in their reading.

Both U.S. and England educators view reading as an important aspect of a student's learning. They both have quality reading intervention programs that strive to bring students' reading up to the level appropriate for their age. The No Child Left Behind Act from the U.S. aims to close the achievement gap between students in the same grade level. Because of this act, the Reading First Initiative was founded, which aims to improve the reading abilities of students Kindergarten through third grade. It focuses on schools with high rates of poverty and low performing students. Reading First gives specific training for teachers to better the instruction in five areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Similarly, the Every Child a Reader program in England aims to raise the reading level of students before the end of Year 2. While these reading intervention programs in the U.S. and the England have assisted many students and given teachers more insight on how to teach reading, these programs only last a few years and not every school in each country gets to use these programs. These reading programs are narrow in scope, targeting schools that have students who need major improvement in their reading ability. In order to fully understand how each country's educators teaches students reading, we must compare each country's national curriculum or standards because they are the foundation of reading instruction.

Comparing National Standards or Curriculum

The majority of the U.S. uses the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which set the curriculum throughout the nation for reading and math. It was developed and implemented in 2009 with the goal in mind of getting the students "college and career ready." The standards were formed by completing research and using the evidence to construct consistent learning goals across the nation. Today, "forty-three states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) have voluntarily adopted and are

moving forward with the Common Core,” so I will be referring to the CCSS as the U.S. curriculum (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d., para. 2). The CCSS are divided into three major categories, which are reading- literature; reading- information text; and reading- foundational skills. Each category is subdivided into grade-specific groupings.

The National Curriculum of England was published in 2013, and its overarching aim for reading in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by “equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment” (Department for Education- English Programmes of Study: Key Stage 1 and 2, 2013, p. 3). The curriculum is mapped out year-by-year and also by key stage. Schools are only required to teach the relevant program of study by the end of the key stage; this means that schools have the flexibility to introduce content wherever they feel is appropriate, as long as it is done by the end of the key stage. Schools in England are also required to create their school curriculum for English on a year-by-year basis and make it available online (Department for Education- English Programmes of Study: Key Stage 1 and 2, 2013, p. 6). To clarify the national curriculum, the Department for Education of England published a document explaining its purposes and implementation.

We want schools and teachers to take the opportunity to develop their own school curricula to include the essential knowledge set out in the national curriculum, building upon existing good practice where appropriate to do so. There will be no new statutory document or guidance . . . telling teachers how to do this. Government intervention will be minimal but the new national curriculum will set higher expectations and these will be reinforced through the accountability system. (Department for Education- Reform of the National Curriculum in England, 2013, p. 13)

Abiding by the National Curriculum, St. Leo's and Southmead's reading curriculum has two categories: word recognition and comprehension, both listening and reading. For the sake of consistency, I will compare both sets of national curricula in first grade and Year 2 in relation to the five major components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds, or phonemes, in spoken words. The most important forms of phonemic awareness to teach are blending and segmentation; also, phonemic awareness can help students learn to read and spell (Armbruster, N.D., p. 5). In the U.S., the CCSS state that first grade students must be able to demonstrate their understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

(CCSS.RF.1.2) A few extensions of this standard include differentiating long from short vowel words; verbally creating single-syllable words by blending phonemes; isolating and pronouncing initial, medial vowel and phonemes in spoken single-syllable words; and verbally segmenting single-syllable words into their individual phonemes in order of which they occur.

In St. Leo's and Southmead's curriculum, students in Year 2 should be able to read accurately by blending the sounds in words of two or more syllables that contain the graphemes that have already been taught. They should also be able to read common exception words that have unusual correspondences between how the words are spelled and how they sound. It seems as though the National Curriculum of England focuses more on teaching students a set list of words and graphemes for each Year. In contrast, the CCSS simply focuses on mastering single-syllable words. Instead of giving a required word list, the CCSS offers a list of books that would

be appropriate for each grade level. These books are categorized by the Lexile measure, which will be explained later.

Phonics

Phonics is the ability to recognize the relationship between graphemes (written language) and phonemes (sounds). Phonics helps students with word recognition and spelling. The CCSS requires that first grade students be able to know and use grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in deciphering words. (CCSS.RF.1.3) The CCSS then explains what grade-level phonics entails. First graders should be able to know how to spell common consonant digraphs, as well as how they sound. Common consonant digraphs include sh-, ch-, wh-, th-, and ph-. Students should be able to read common one-syllable words. First graders should also be able to understand final –e and common vowel teams that represent long vowel sounds. Students should be able to understand that every syllable must have a vowel sound, which helps in determining the number of syllables in written words. In addition, students should be able to read two-syllable words by recognizing the basic pattern of breaking words into syllables. Finally, U.S. first graders should be able to read words with inflectional endings and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words. “Grade-appropriate” words would include words with the characteristics listed previously.

The standards from St. Leo’s and Southmead require that Year 2 students continue to use what they know about phonics to decipher words until the students can automatically decode words and they become faster readers. This phonics standard allows more freedom in what the Year 2 teachers at St. Leo’s and Southmead may teach. They do not have to follow a strict curriculum, as long as by the end of the year, the students are faster readers because of their knowledge of phonics.

Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately at an appropriate rate with expression and correct phrasing. Fluency bridges the ability to recognize and comprehend words. The CCSS state that first graders should be able to read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension (CCSS.R.F.1.4). This means that the students should be able to read and understand texts that are appropriate for first graders. They should not only be able to read to themselves, but also should be able to read aloud with accuracy at an appropriate rate and with expression. If students do not recognize a word right away, they should be able to use the context around the word to determine its meaning.

Determining which books are appropriate for each grade level is straightforward now with the implementation of Lexile codes. The CCSS partnered with MetaMetrics, a privately-owned educational measurement and research organization, to establish the appropriate text complexity for each grade level (MetaMetrics, 2015). The text complexity is determined by the qualitative dimensions of a text, such as levels of meaning and knowledge demands of a text, quantitative dimensions, such as word frequency and sentence length, and reader and task considerations, such as the student's knowledge and motivation (MetaMetrics, 2015). Through completing research, organizers from MetaMetrics realized that the text complexity of Kindergarten through 12th grade textbooks become progressively easier over the last fifty years, while texts from college and careers have remained the same. Therefore, students are not prepared for reading requirements in the college and career world.

MetaMetrics and the CCSS share the same mindset of training and preparing students to be college and career ready. Together, they have created a Lexile code system that outlines what is expected for each grade level, which follows the expectations of the CCSS. The text

complexity range for each grade level is denoted by a Lexile code, which is represented by a number and the letter “L.” The Lexile codes for each grade level are fairly wide range in order to accommodate for all types of readers. Readers are given a Lexile measure and books are given a Lexile measure, so that it is easy to find a book that is on level with every reader.

Typical Text Measures, by Grade

Grade	Text Demand Study 2009 25th percentile to 75th percentile (IQR)	2012 CCSS Text Measures*
1	230L to 420L	190L to 530L
2	450L to 570L	420L to 650L
3	600L to 730L	520L to 820L
4	640L to 780L	740L to 940L
5	730L to 850L	830L to 1010L
6	860L to 920L	925L to 1070L
7	880L to 960L	970L to 1120L
8	900L to 1010L	1010L to 1185L
9	960L to 1110L	1050L to 1260L
10	920L to 1120L	1080L to 1335L
11 and 12	1070L to 1220L	1185L to 1385L

As shown in the chart above, the CCSS expects first grade students to be reading books measured from 190L to 530L. This changed from 230L to 420L in 2009, in order to challenge students to read at higher levels and to accommodate for every student. Therefore, there is a wide range of books that are available for first graders. For instance, *Little Red Riding Hood* by Harriet Ziefert has a Lexile measure of 200L, so it is appropriate for first graders that have a lower reading ability. *Seven Kisses in a Row* by Patricia MacLachlan is measured at 500L, so it is appropriate for first graders with a stronger reading ability. There is a lot of overlap between the grade levels because students may be able to read at a higher Lexile measure depending on the level of support provided and whether or not the student is interested in the topic of the book.

A student's Lexile measure can be determined by taking reading tests from state departments of education and test publishers that have partnered with MetaMetrics (MetaMetrics 2015). The Lexile codes, coupled with the CCSS, help increase U.S. students' fluency of reading. Students should read books that they are able to comprehend, so that they do not get frustrated while reading. By reading books that are on level with their Lexile measure, students will be able to improve their fluency, and, over time, their Lexile measure should increase as their use of phonics, fluency, amount of vocabulary stored, and their level of comprehension progresses.

The standards for St. Leo's and Southmead state that Year 2 students should be able to read most words quickly and accurately, without obvious sounding and blending, especially reoccurring words. Students should orally read books that reflect their phonetic knowledge and be able to read unfamiliar words accurately and without hesitation. They should reread appropriate books in order to increase their fluency and confidence in reading. Year 2 students should also "be continuing to build up a repertoire of poems learnt by heart, appreciating these and reciting some, with appropriate intonation to make the meaning clear" (St. Leo's and Southmead, 2014, para. 3). Reciting these poems demonstrate that students understand how to read poems with proper inflection. The goal is to transfer these skills to their everyday reading as they gain more practice with reading fluently.

The main difference in the teaching of fluency between the U.S. and England, according to the national curriculum or standards, is the extent to which they specify the standards. Both countries' teachers want their students, ages 6 to 7, to be able to fluently read books that are appropriate for them. The U.S. curriculum is very specific about which books are appropriate for them. For example, the U.S. deems books in the Lexile range of 190L to 530L are suitable for

first grade students. Schools in England allow more freedom for students to choose. A unique aspect St. Leo's and Southmead's standards is the requirement to memorize and recite poetry; this trains students to use proper intonation and it builds their repertoire of poetry. The CCSS, in contrast, do not require any memorization for first grade students

Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the words one must know and understand in order to communicate effectively. Comprehension is dependent on vocabulary because understanding the text is impossible without understanding the meaning of the words. The CCSS is not really specific about the extent to which first grade students should be building their vocabulary. It states that students should be able to ask and answer questions to help define the meaning of words and phrases in a text (CCSS.RI.1.4). The CCSS does not focus on the amount of or the difficulty of words that first grade students should know. Instead, it places emphasis on the idea of having the students learn vocabulary by reading and using the context around the word to find its meaning.

Appendix A of the CCSS explains more about its philosophy of vocabulary. Although it may not be a major focus in first grade, the CCSS do recognize the importance of acquiring vocabulary and how students go about grasping the meaning of a word.

The challenge in reaching what we might call "lexical dexterity" is that, in any given instance, it is not the entire spectrum of a word's history, meanings, usages, and features that matters but only those aspects that are relevant at that moment. Therefore, for a reader to grasp the meaning of a word, two things must happen: first, the reader's internal representation of the word must be sufficiently complete and well-articulated to allow the intended meaning to be known to him or her; second, the reader must understand the

context well enough to select the intended meaning from the realm of the word's possible meanings. . . (Common Core State Standards Initiative, Appendix A, p. 32)

Acquiring vocabulary takes a substantial amount of time and practice through reading. One of the intents of the CCSS partnering with MetaMetrics for the implementation of Lexile measures is to help students master the appropriate vocabulary for their grade level. While vocabulary is not outlined as a major part of the CCSS at the first grade level, it is recognized as an important part of reading and is implied in many other elements of reading.

The standards at St. Leo's and Southmead take a different approach on vocabulary. Teachers want Year 2 students to "develop pleasure in reading, motivation to read, vocabulary and understanding" (St. Leo's and Southmead, 2014, para. 3). Developing a love for reading is an interesting point made by these standards. In order for the students to continue practicing the skills that they learn during school, the students must develop an intrinsic motivation for that skill. This means that they find satisfaction in themselves, rather than by external rewards, for mastering a skill. Since reading is a foundational skill that will be used for the rest of one's life, St. Leo's and Southmead finds it necessary to develop that passion as young as Year 2.

The standards also explain that Year 2 students will expand their vocabulary by recognizing simple repeated literary language that is found in stories and poetry. Some examples of this literary language at the Year 2 level include genre, metaphor, and stanza. Students need to be able to discuss and explain the meanings of words by connecting new meanings to vocabulary that they already know. Likewise, they also should be able to make connections between what they already know and background information and vocabulary provided by the teacher. Connecting their prior knowledge to their future learning allows their vocabulary

knowledge to expand. In order for a student's education to be cohesive, students must be able to connect their learning across the years, including how it affects the world outside of school.

The standards from St. Leo's and Southmead also require students to be able to converse by using their favorite words and phrases. This is also unique as it requires students to express passion for the words that they use. Likewise, it is important for students to be enthusiastic about language, so that they will use these words and phrases in their daily lives, which is the ultimate goal of schooling.

The idea of vocabulary in the U.S. and England's standards is very different. The CCSS require students to acquire vocabulary from reading books that are appropriate for their grade-level. As a result, students use the context around the word to find its meaning. Likewise, the standards from St. Leo's and Southmead require students to gather vocabulary words from reading. They also strive for students to build their vocabulary upon what they already know; this allows the students to have a cohesive education that connects from year to year. Another distinctive difference in the standards at St. Leo's and Southmead is the desire for students to use favorite words and phrases in their daily vocabulary. By allowing the students to have ownership in their vocabulary, students will be able to use the language both inside and outside of the classroom.

Comprehension

Comprehension is the purpose behind reading. It shows that readers understand what they are reading and realize the meaning behind the text. Because this is the ultimate purpose of reading, the CCSS has a lot of requirements of first grade students regarding comprehension. Pertaining to the key ideas and details of a text, first grade students should be able to ask and answer questions about the text, retell the key details of a text, recognize the main topic, describe

the connections between parts of the text, and define the characters, settings, and major events in a story (CCSS.RI.1.1, CCSS.RI.1.2, CCSS.RI.1.3, CCSS.RL.1.3). The standards prove that a first grade student is aware of the story behind the text and can explain the details and main idea of the text.

The next section of the CCSS addresses about how first grade students should understand the craft and structure of a text. Students should be able to ask and answer questions to help define the meaning of words and phrases in a text (RI.1.4). Having an extensive vocabulary can help students be able to do this, but also being able to determine the meaning of context around the words or comprehending the text is equally important. In addition, first grade students should be able to find words and phrases in stories or poems that represent feelings or emotions (RL.1.4). For instance, when someone says that they are “dying” to open their birthday present, this relates to the emotion of excitement. Students should also be able to explain major differences between various types of text, such as informational, fantasy, and fable (RL.1.5). Also related to the structure of a text, students should be able to use the pictures and illustrations in a text to gain more insight of what the author is trying to convey rather than just the words in a text (RI.1.6, RI.1.7).

When it comes to integrating knowledge and ideas, first grade students should be able to identify the supporting details that the author uses to endorse the main idea of the text (RI.1.8). Students should be able to recognize basic similarities and differences between two texts that present the same topic (RI.1.9). Readers can meet this standard by comparing and contrasting the illustrations or the format of the text. The ultimate goal of teaching first grade students how to read is having them read texts appropriate for first grade with the help of prompting and support (RI.1.10, RL.1.10). Accomplishing this goal indicates that a first grader has mastered all

five elements of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

St. Leo's and Southmead also has several requirements for their Year 2 students to master comprehension, as comprehension is one of the two major sections of their standards. They expect Year 2 students to have the ability to understand when they read texts incorrectly so that they know when they need to go back and reread texts. In other terms, students should understand what the text is trying to convey. Students should also be able to make inferences from the text by determining the underlying meanings of the text. Moreover, Year 2 students should be able to make predictions as to what they think is going to occur in the text on the basis of what they have read so far. After reading the text, students should be able to accurately answer and ask questions about the text.

Students should also be able to participate in discussions about texts that they have read by taking turns and listening to what others have to say about the text. This demonstrates to the teacher that the students understand what they have read. Discussions also allow students to not only practice reflecting on what they have read, but also practice their communication skills by taking turns talking and listening to their peers. Furthermore, students should also be able to discuss and explain texts that they have listened to and have read themselves, thus validating their ability to comprehend what he or she is reading.

The U.S. and England educators have different requirements for students to show that they comprehend what they are reading. The U.S. CCSS focuses on the student's ability to make connections between texts and elements of a text, recognize the main idea of a text and its supporting details, and read between the Lexile measures of 190L to 530L. St. Leo's and Southmead's curriculum focuses on the student's ability to recognize when he or she is reading

correctly, make inferences from the text, and discuss with their peers about what he or she has read. Both approaches are different from each other; however, they both keep the students accountable for comprehending what they are reading.

Implementation in the Classroom

Throughout my time in Liverpool, England, I gained a great deal of insight about the English approach to reading pedagogy. Although the U.S. has their own set of standards, I can still implement ideas from the national curriculum of England into my classroom. I love the idea of instilling a love of reading in the students. Having a love for reading will motivate the students to keep reading outside of school. Likewise, it will motivate them in their learning because reading is a part of every content area. By getting to know my students and what they are interested in, I will instill a love of reading.

I will also find out what level of reading ability my students have achieved; this will be done through taking a test that gives the students their Lexile measure. Then, I will introduce the students to books that appeal to their interests and that reflect their Lexile measure. The students' Lexile measure will ensure that the students do not get frustrated while reading, if the text is too hard for them, and the students will enjoy what they are reading, as it appeals to their interests. Also, I will demonstrate to my students how much I personally enjoy reading. Hopefully, my students will look up to me as a role model and be motivated to explore the world of reading.

I also am intrigued by the idea of memorizing poetry as a way to work on mastering the intonation of a text and building one's repertoire of poems. I have seen a U.S. third grade class memorize the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution and that really helped the students understand the history behind the text. Even at this level, these students needed practice on reading with

intonation. Memorizing the Preamble abetted the students because they got to practice finding the pattern of speech that is necessary for that text. As a result, I will choose poems or short texts that are appropriate for my students and that reflect what we are learning. Not only will this help them find their intonation in a text, but it will also help them realize that reading can be used in every content area.

Another interesting idea from the England National Curriculum is having discussions with the class about the text that they have all read. Especially at the young age of Year 2 or first graders, students need assistance with their communication skills. One of the underlying skills that students learn from being at school is the ability to communicate and interact with peers of their own age. Having discussions with peers allows students to practice their communication skills while also expanding on their ability to infer from texts. An important component of effective communication is the skill of listening, a skill most students need to practice. Therefore, discussion would improve students' ability to communicate and listen to each other. Depending on the age of the students, this discussion may have to be closely guided by the teacher in order to keep the students on task. However, once the students get acquainted with the concepts of staying on task and communicating and listening to their peers, the students could have more freedom in their discussions. Discussions also allow students to realize that there are multiple views of a text. Not everyone thinks the same, so students could interpret a text in a different way. Therefore, discussions allow students to view texts in a different light.

Conclusion

Through my time in Liverpool, I gained an invaluable amount of insight that I will definitely use in my future classroom. Comparing the U.S. approach to another country gave me a fresh perspective of teaching and learning. Not only will I implement the English teaching

methods, I will show students my appreciation for the English culture and how we can learn from their culture and history. I will incorporate ideas from the English national standards, such as memorizing poetry or short texts to fluency, encouraging students to create an intrinsic motivation to read, and creating more opportunities where students can discuss what they are reading. Of course, I will also follow the U.S. standards for the basis of my curriculum, but I believe that taking ideas from the English curriculum will improve the education of my students. No country has the perfect method to teach reading; however, both countries could learn from each other.

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