Combating Readicide

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Abstract

There is an epidemic spreading across American schools. This epidemic is called **Readicide** is caused when teachers use test prep, skill centered activities to exclusively teach language arts and unknowingly destroy a student's desire to read (Clark, 2011). This type of traditional academic work is fueled by the high stakes testing environment that faces many schools in our country. Using peer reviewed articles and texts written by Ornstein & Hunkins and Boushey & Moser; traditional and authentic academic work models are explored to evaluate their effect on student motivation, engagement, vocabulary development, and ultimately literacy success. The roles of time and choice are also discussed as major factors that influence a learner's motivation, engagement and vocabulary development. A structure known as The Daily 5 is introduced and explored as an alternative to skill centered, traditional academic work and a possible solution to **Readicide**.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A contemporary and relevant topic that I feel passionate about and would like to pursue for this project is, student engagement and motivation and how it relates to reading literacy and the effect traditional and authentic academic work have on a student's desire to read. The desire to score well on standardized tests have confined the instruction of reading to "how to read to pass tests and in the process, has left out the ability to read real world authentic reading material" (Clark, 2011, p. 11). Structuring the language arts block to include sufficient time to read authentic text can not only influence a learner's lifelong desire to read, but also increase performance on standardize testing.

Problem:

In the high stakes testing environment of public schools, students are increasingly pressured to perform work that relies heavily on controlled reading material (i.e. unauthentic work) in order to pass tests. This practice, has negatively influenced student's desire to read for both pleasure and competence (Rowlands, 2010). The desire to engage in and read authentic literature and real world text is being lost. Therefore, the question must be asked: Can the structure of authentic academic work in the context of language arts, increase student motivation and engagement exponentially in comparison to traditional academic work?

 Background of the problem:

Over the past several decades the educational pendulum has swung back and forth several times. It has swung from the factory, one size fits all model of education, to whole language, child centered model of instruction, and back to the factory model. One of the changes that has caused the most concern, has been the swing from using authentic academic work to teach reading to the one size fits all prescription of having all students do the same work regardless of

ability or interest. Due to this practice of test prep work, educators are seeing a decline in the

ability and desire to read authentic, real-world, text and literature.

Purpose of the Project:

  The purpose of this staff development project is to introduce the concepts of traditional

and authentic academic work, prepare a research-based presentation about an authentic reading

structure, known as Daily 5, and its effect on student engagement and fluency in reading

authentic texts and literature. The presentation includes a basic understanding of the Daily 5 for

those teachers who may not be familiar with this structure. The presentation will also give

important background knowledge and provide a rationale for the use of the Daily 5 structures

and how to implement this structure in the classroom literacy block. Administrators, teachers,

students, and parents will directly benefit from the completion of a teacher professional in-

service which delineates the causes of **Readicide** with today's students. They will receive

information on how to combat this possible epidemic by structuring the daily literacy block to

allow students choice and significant time to read authentic texts and literature.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Over the past several decades the educational pendulum has swung back and forth several times. It has swung from the factory, one size fits all model of education, to the whole language, child centered model of instruction, and back to the factory model. One of the changes that has caused the most concern, has been the swing from using authentic academic work to teach reading to the one size fits all prescription of having all students do the same work regardless of ability or interest. Due to the practice of test prep work, educators have seen a decline in the ability to engage fully with and the desire to read authentic, real world text and literature. The purpose of this staff development project is to introduce the differences between the concepts of traditional versus authentic academic work, prepare a research-based presentation about an authentic reading structure, known as Daily 5, and its effect on student engagement and fluency in reading authentic texts and literature. The literature review will provide an explanation of **Readicide**, traditional and authentic academic work, the effect they have on student motivation, engagement, the development of academic vocabulary, and the role of time and choice. The literature will also review a literacy structure known as The Daily 5 and its effectiveness as a possible solution to **Readicide**.

Readicide

Today's high stakes testing environment has forced teachers to change daily reading instruction which has created a negative influence on a student's desire to read for both pleasure and competence (Rowlands, 2010). Ruth Clark in her article titled, Reversing **Readicide**: An Interview with Author Kelly Gallagher (2011), defines **Readicide** as "the practices educators employ to raise reading scores that actually kill student's love of reading" (Clark, 2011, p. 10). This outcome of the negative effects of high stakes assessment has not only created students who

have lost the desire to read, but has created "marginally literate citizens" (Rowlands, 2010, p.

123). The author of the book, **Readicide**, not only blames district practice of too frequent testing

in order to not be caught off guard by students who are poorly prepared for state tests, but also

teacher's instructional practices (as cited in Rowlands, 2011).

Four key ways schools and teachers unknowingly contribute to **Readicide** are:

1. Schools value the development of test-takers more than they value the

    development of readers.

2. Schools are limiting authentic reading experiences.

3. Teachers are over teaching books.

4. Teachers are under teaching books (Rowlands, 2010).

By offering extrinsic rewards such as iPads, gift cards and other incentives for

performing well on standardized tests, schools and teachers are sending the message that true

success and competence in learning is defined by the outcome on a multiple-choice test. Students

see reading as an activity used strictly at school to increase test taking ability. In order to assist

students in performing well on multiple choice tests, many teachers have replaced rich reading

experiences with content coverage. Students need rich reading experiences in order to acquire the

literacy skills needed for better academic and possibly test performance success (Rowlands,

2010). When rich reading material is introduced in the classroom, it is often over taught and

analyzed for the benefits of reading instruction. This according to Gallagher "sucks the life (and

the pleasure) out of reading for both competent and struggling students" (as cited in Rowlands,

2010, p.125). Although over teaching reading material can create **Readicide**, under teaching

reading material can also create the same effect. When reading material is handed to struggling

readers without the appropriate support, a negative view of reading can also take place. Test

scores may have risen by the use of this approach, but a generation of marginally literate readers has slowly been created. Educators must not forget that "the kids who read the most do the best in school" (Clark, 2011, p. 11).

Traditional Academic Work

Before the implementation of Common Core State Standards, the traditional methods thought best to serve students were influenced by the No Child Left Behind Act. In order to increase student performance on standardized tests, many teachers adopted the practice of assigning work that focused on isolated skills and strategies and were generally thought of as test preparedness activities. For many years, this type of skill centered instruction has been the norm. It is true that skill and strategy work is an important part of literacy instruction, however, literacy instruction involves more than just skills and strategies (Parsons & Ward, 2011). This requires careful consideration on the part of the teacher when assigning work to students. Although careful thought has been put into learning tasks; Pearson, Raphael, Benson and Maddi (2007) noted that "too many school tasks are unauthentic, unrealistic, and, by implication not useful for engaging in real-world literacy activities" (as cited in Parsons & Ward, 2011, p. 462).

Motivation in traditional academic work. Traditional academic work tends to be closed tasks. Closed tasks are those that offer only one right answer or solution. This type of activity allows the students very little opportunity to apply critical thinking skills or room for creativity. These activities are skill centered and teacher driven. They offer little in the way of real life experiences that a student can connect with and elicit low motivation from the students charged with completing the tasks.

Student engagement in traditional academic work. Blindly teaching curriculum without considering the individual and unique needs of the student is not only counterproductive,

but can negatively affect student engagement (Boushey & Moser, 2014). This one size fits all type of academic work affects both poor readers and good readers. Gambrell, Wilson and Ganitt found in their study of task-attending behaviors of good and poor readers, that the on-task behaviors (engagement) of both types of students increased when they were placed in instructional materials that they could easily read. Poor readers spent significantly more time involved in contextual reading and received the most isolated skill instruction as those placed in difficult material (Gambrell, Wilson, & Gantt, 1981). All too often readers are put in texts that they cannot read fluently and therefore their engagement is low. They are given very little opportunity during reading instructional time to independently practice the skills and behaviors that create fluent readers. As a result, the authors found that "good readers spent more of their time (57%) engaged in reading compared to poor readers who spent only 33% of their time engaged in reading" (Gambrell, Wilson, & Gantt, 1981, p. 403). This supports the findings that the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010) found that "37% of students report that they do not enjoy reading" (as cited in Gambrell L. B., 2011, p. 172).

One way teachers have attempted to offset the statistic stated above has been structuring their literacy block to allow students to visit literacy stations. Although the literacy stations allow students to be somewhat more independent, many times they tend to be teacher driven and consist of activities that range from worksheets that go with mandated district reading programs, to projects that are made to extend the stories for the week (Boushey & Moser, 2014). Simply put, in traditional literacy stations children tended to be more off task than in authentic literacy activities.

Academic vocabulary. Students need to be allowed to participate in authentic work that encourages the use of academic vocabulary. Traditional academic work offers few opportunities

to use academic vocabulary in meaningful ways. Focusing on skill based practice and test prep

reading passages does not increase student's academic vocabulary, reading, or their

understanding of text (Parsons & Ward, 2011).

   Teachers role in traditional academic work. In traditional academic work, the teacher

is responsible for deciding what content is being taught and creating the learning experience the

students are expected to partake in. The activites planned are not student driven and therefore the

teacher's role is less of a facillitator and more of a dispenser of knowledge. According to

Dewey's theory of constructivism, children construct knowledge from their work and therefore,

should be active participants in their academic work (as cited in Parsons & Ward, 2011). Careful

thought should be given when assigning academic work to students.

Authentic Academic Work

   The adoption of Common Core Standards (CCSS) has not only changed what standards

are taught, but how they are taught. CCSS' ask that students develop critical thinking and

problem solving skills which are supported by authentic reading (Hudson & Williams, 2015).

Assigning traditional academic work is no longer an effective approach for teaching 21st Century

skills. A major difference between traditional and authentic academic work is how the roles of

student and teacher are defined. In classrooms that assign authentic academic work, the students

are in charge of contsructing their own meaning from carefully orchestrated real-life,

interactions. This follows the contructivism theory where Ornstein and Hunkins state, " the

learner must internalize and reshape or transform the information. The student connects new

learning with already-existing knowledge. Learning is optimized when students are aware of the

process that they are structuring, inventing, and employing" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, p. 113).

Authentic literacy, to many in the educational field means reading and writing that is unlike the

kind done in school (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006). Such examples of authentic

reading and writing would be reading children's literature and writing on topics of the students

choice. To be an effective teacher, especially in the area of literacy, requires a balanced and

intentional approach to teaching. In classrooms that assign authentic academic work,

expectations remain high and students are encouraged to see themselves as readers and writers.

Children have many opportunities to write in a sustained way instead of filling out

decontextualized worksheets and participating in activities that offer little real world experiences.

Authentic language activites have the abililty to create a positive feeling towards language and

literacy, and also build the foundations for successful reading and writing (Lennox, 2012).

Students are more likely to be motivated and stick with tasks that allow them to be active

participants and have meaning.

       Motivation in authentic academic work. The use of authentic academic work increases

motivation. The work that is assigned mimics the activites people complete in the world learners

see around them. Historically, traditional academic work has been recognized as being closed,

teacher directed, and offers the possibility for only one right answer. On the other hand, authentic

academic tasks are considered to be open ended, child centered and provide an opportunity for

the use of creativity and critical thinking to solve problems. Open ended tasks, allow the learner

to create a problem and come up with the solution. This type of learner controlled activity leads

to high motivation in the classroom (Parsons & Ward, 2011). In authentic academic classrooms,

many teachers offer incentives that value the importance of reading. For example, students

interpret teacher praise as recognition of acievement. This evidence of accomplishment not only

increases student confidence but motivation as well. In other words, if students believe they can

do it, they will. This type of motivation is crucial if students are expected to reach their full literacy potential (Gambrell L. B., 2011).

      Engagement in authentic work: A study conducted by Guthrie, Schafer, and Huang suggests, "Reading engagement is more important as a predictor of literacy success than family background" (as cited in Gambrell, 2011,p.172). This study highlights the reason why student engagement is crucial to literacy success. Linda Gambrell, outlined several factors that can influence a student's engagement with reading. One factor that influences student engagement is participating in reading activities that allow children to make connections with and have access to a wide range of reading materials such as books, magazines, newspapers, real-life documents, and the internet. Participating in reading activites that utilizes rich reading material communicates to the learner that reading is important and helps develop a reading for life habit. Two other equally important factors mentioned in the article are, having abundant opportunities to participate in sustained reading and being able to choose what they read. Additionally, giving students the opportunity to be social and communicate with their peers about their reading material is also a powerful tool used to increase reading engagement. Turner and Paris (1995) suggest three ways social interaction can inhance reading engagement. First, listening to others talk about a book may spark a students interest and curiosity. Second, watching others work and be successful can help boost confidence in their own reading ablility. Third, working cooperatively helps bolster student engagement and motivation (as cited in Gambrell, 2011). Another important factor that influences student engagement is the learners ability to read and be successful with challenging texts. If a student encounters reading material that is too easy they will quickly become bored. However, if the reading material is too hard they will become

frustrated and give up. Only when a learner is successful with reading material that is moderately

challenging and requires some effort will feelings of accomplishment and competence be felt.

Academic vocabulary in authentic work: Authentic work encourages many oral

language experiences which in turn supports the learning of academic vocabulary. Not only does

authentic work build academic vocabulary, but it also offers support for students to create

meaning through real experiences. Such real life experiences are found in project based learning

activities where vocabulary words are taught in context and not as an isolated concept through a

fill in the blank type worksheet. In authentic work, a student's understanding of content is

increased because they are using academic language in real experiences. Such activites also

include a variety or oral language experiences through explicit instruction, large and small group

discussions and cooperative learning experiences (Parsons & Ward, 2011).

Teacher's role in authentic academic work. The effectiveness of an authentic learning

experience rests mainly with the teacher. The teacher must design the task and make sure that the

content and literacy outcomes are integrated successfully. This requires a great amount of time to

design and implement. When compared to traditional academic activities that rely on textbooks

or lectures, it is clear to see that authentic tasks require more thought, planning and time to

implement. Once the planning and designing is done the task is given over to the students and the

teacher acts as a facillitator. It can be challenging for some teachers to give a significant amount

of controll over learning to the students. It is crucial for the teacher to be adaptive because of the

multiple activities that are likely to occur, and the scaffolding that the students will likely require

during an authentic work experience. The open ended nature of this approach to teaching can

definitely be challenging for the teacher.

The Role of Time and Choice

As stated earlier, two of the most important factors influencing student success in reading is giving them abundant opportunities to read and allowing students a choice in their reading material. Traditional academic work does not offer the same amount of time and choice as authentic academic work. Traditional work involves reading materials which are highly structured and contain controlled vocabulary with very little chance for sustained independent reading.

The role of time. Many educators feel that time for reading is a luxury that teachers can't afford in this high pressure testing environment. Those in favor of traditional academic work cite rising test scores as support for leaving out time for reading and replacing it with copious amounts of test prep activities (Rowlands, 2010). In some classrooms, although students spent a 90 minute block of time devoted to language arts, only an average of 18 minutes were actually spent engaged in sustained interaction with text (Gambrell, 2011). This type of instruction may improve test scores, however it is also a likely reason for student's lack of desire to read. According to a study conducted by Allington & Garie (2012), reading every day not only has been proven to be an effective intervention for struggling readers, but could be the most effective test preparation for all students (as cited inHudson & Williams, 2015). In a study of first and second grade students, Foorman et al. (2006) found that " only time devoted to text reading significantly explained gains on posttest reading measures, including word reading, decoding, and passage comprehension. No other time allocation factors, including time spent on word, alphabetic, or phonemic awareness instruction, contributed to reading growth" (as cited in Gambrell, 2011, p. 174). Although the amount of time students spend reading in the school day

has not increased, the study supports the thought that time spent reading can positively affect both reading proficiency and intrinsic motivation to read.

      The role of choice. Giving students the power to choose their reading material is one of the most powerful tools an educator can use to enhance student ownership and responsibility for their learning. One concern many teachers have with giving students the ability to choose their reading material has to do with struggling readers. Many educators feel struggling readers make poor choices when it comes to choosing reading material. They feel poor readers often choose books that are too difficult, therefore, causing frustration and a lack of engagement. One possible solution to this obstacle would be to help students learn how to choose appropriate reading material. This can be accomplished in a short meeting with individual students to let them choose from four or five books the teacher has pre-selected in their reading level which are related to their interest. This type of choice is called bounded choice (Gambrell, 2011).

When the learner is given the freedom of choice over their reading material, their motivation and engagement increases because they believe they have some autonomy or control over their learning (Gambrell, 2011). Having ownership over the books they choose improves confidence in their reading ablility. This boost in confidence will lead to students putting forth more effort towards their reading and therefore gain increased understanding. Allowing students to choose their reading material not only increases the amount of reading students perform, but improves their understanding of text as well.

The Daily 5- A Possible Solution

The Daily Five is modeled after the learner-centered design. In the learner-centered design, "students must be active in their learning environment" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, pg. 175).

The Daily 5 is a student-centered learning structure that engages all learners, regardless of their ability, in reading and writing.

        Principles of the Daily 5. The creators of The Daily 5 believe "that the way teachers structure the learning environment and the way students spend their time influences the level of reading proficiency the students will have attained by the end of the academic year" (Boushey & Moser, 2014, pg. .7). What sets the Daily 5 apart from other approaches is what the students and teachers are doing during the literacy block (Boushey & Moser, Big Ideas Behind Daily 5 and CAFE, 2012). Daily 5 gives students the opportunity to engage fully in meaningful and authentic reading and writing experiences for extended periods of time. The Daily 5 does not approach the teaching of literacy in the traditional manner. Instead of being teacher driven, assigning seatwork that includes busywork, workbook pages, or other unauthentic reading and writing activities that result in low student engagement, the Daily 5 teaches children to build their stamina and independence in each of the Daily 5 tasks so they can fully engage in meaningful and authentic reading and writing activities for an extended period of time. The Daily 5 tasks are designed for student choice, which increases student motivation and student intellectual engagement (Boushey & Moser, 2014). During the literacy block, students receive instruction that is differentiated to meet their individual needs. In this regard, the learner is the focus and an active participant in the learning process, not a passive vessel that receives knowledge.

This type of structure is extremely flexible. It allows the teacher in the classroom to make decisions about how to implement and design their literacy block. This approach is unlike the traditional model of teaching reading where teachers are confined and required to follow the steps or script of a factory model reading program. During the Daily 5 literacy block the teacher is encouraged to "give two or three whole-group mini lessons, teach two to three small groups

and confer with 6-12 individual students daily" (Boushey & Moser, Big Ideas Behind Daily 5 and CAFE, 2012, p. 172). This approach gives students a consistent structure in which they may have time to read and to respond to what they have read. The Daily 5 also encourages social interaction by setting up a community of readers who are allowed to read and share with other students the reading and comprehension strategies that works well for them (Hudson & Williams, 2015).

Structures of the Daily 5. The Daily 5 literacy block consists of two to three short, whole class mini lessons that last from 7-10 minutes. Students choose a Daily 5 task after each whole group lesson and the length of each task (round) is based on the stamina and independence of the class. When stamina breaks down, the round is over. The number of rounds depends on the time constraints of the literacy block and student engagement. Primary students are generally able to accomplish three rounds of Daily 5 and intermediate students are able to complete two longer rounds each day (Boushey & Moser,2012).

Daily 5 tasks. The five daily tasks are as follows: read to self, read to someone, work on writing, listen to reading, and word work. The student choses the order in which they complete the daily tasks which gives the student some control over their learning which in turn increases student engagement. The design is supported by Ornstein and Hunkins when they state that this approach is "likely to favor child-centered, and to a lesser extent, problem-centered design" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, pg. 200). These tasks are authentic and not only lead to growth but help create lifelong lovers of literacy.

Ten steps to teaching independence. In order for this approach to be successful, students must be taught how to be independent. It is critical that these lessons start on the very first day of school. Creating a high level of independence allows the teacher to teach one on one or with a

small group uninterrupted. Independence also helps the students develop a sense of urgency in

regards to their own work as well. The key to developing independence is how it is taught,

modeled and practiced. Boushey and Moser state the 10 Steps to Teaching and Learning

Independence as follows:

1. Identify what is to be taught.

2. Set the purpose, creating a sense of urgency.

3. Brainstorm desired behaviors using an I-chart.

4. Model most desirable behaviors.

5. Model least desirable behaviors, then repeat most desirable behaviors.

6. Place students around the room (only during the launching phase, gradually the
   responsibility to choose will be given to them).

7. Everyone practice and build stamina (practice continues until someone breaks
   stamina).

8. Stay out of the way in order to install true independence.

9. Signal quietly for students to gather back as a group.

10. Group check-in and self-evaluation. Refer to I chart and ask how they did
    (pp.173-174).

    Good fit books. In order for the students to be successful, the majority of their

independent reading time needs to be reading books that they can read with 99-100%

accuracy. The authors of the Daily 5 call these books good fit books (Boushey &

Moser,2014). Good fit books allow the reader to practice the strategies while still

maintaing a high comprehension level. To assist the students in choosing good fit books

an acronym was created. The acronym is: I-PICK. I-I look at the book front and back,

flip through the inside and read a portion. P-Purpose: Why do I want to read the book? I-Interest: Does the book interest me? C- Comprehend: Do I understand what I am reading? K-Know: Do I know all the words (Boushey & Moser, 2012)? Teaching the students how to pick books that are a good fit for their reading ablility is vital in sustaining stamina while reading.

      Barometer children. Keeping student expectations high regardless of the child's age or ability is what makes Daily 5 successful for teachers who use this approach towards structuring their literacy block. To keep reading engagement high and frustration low, careful planning must be involved, especially when educating learners of different needs and backgrounds. Reading stamina breaks down for various reasons, therefore, it is important that the teacher is able to troubleshoot in order to ensure the success of everyone in the class, even at-risk students who the creators of Daily 5 refer to as barometer children because they dictate the working climate in the room (Boushey & Moser, 2012). When working with these students to improve their stamina it is very important to create a supportive and respectful community of learners in the classroom.

One concern educators have toward the Daily 5 structure is the belief that young primary students are not capable of reading independently for extended periods of time. Research done by Mounla, Bahous, and Nabhani (2011), however, found that first graders were capable of reading independently for up to 30 minutes a day (as cited in Hudson & Williams, 2015). This information is an encouraging sign for those educators who are concerned about the ever growing problem of **readicide** in this country. Through the use of authentic literacy activites and a belief in a centered learning structure, such as Daily 5, the negative effects of high stakes testing, traditional, instructional approaches may be on the decline.

Summary

The literature review in Chapter 2 described the concerns facing educators today regarding the teaching of language arts and the declining desire of students to develop a lifelong habit of reading. The phenomenon otherwise known as **Readicide**, both traditional academic work and authentic academic work were discussed along with the influence each approach has had on motivation, engagement, and vocabulary development of the learner. The role of time and choice was also explored as playing an important factor in the development of early reading success. The principles and structures of Daily 5 were examined as a possible solution to **Readicide** and as a means to increase student's literacy skills. The research-based Google slides presentation in Chapter 3 will outline this information for a professional development presentation geared towards regular education teachers in the first and second grades.

Chapter Three: Professional Development Presentation

The purpose of this staff development project is to introduce the differences between the concepts of traditional versus authentic academic work, prepare a research-based presentation about an authentic reading structure, known as the Daily 5, and its effect on student engagement and fluency in reading authentic texts and literature. The intended audience of this presentation are teachers who teach in first and second grade. The project will be presented during a Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this presentation participants will be able to define Readicide, identify traditional and authentic academic work, and explain the effects on motivation, engagement, and vocabulary development. Participants will recognize the background knowledge and rationale for a structure known as Daily 5 as a possible solution and receive suggestions for implementing the Daily 5 in their literacy block.

Presentation Format

A Google slides presentation has been prepared to share the information. The participants will be given opportunities to share thoughts and ideas with a partner. There will be time allotted for a question and answer period at the end of the presentation. Sticky notes will be available on the table to assist attendees in writing questions they may have after the presentation. Questions will be answered by the presenter at the next PLC meeting.

Click here for slide presentation:

 https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BBRCVI4aYI46V6S-OyuRJIumTbX2P-vZbNqHfRqFlps/edit - slide=id.g18cc21d17f_0_49

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