Reader Identity and the Common Core:
Agency and Identity in Leveled Reading

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ABSTRACT

This article moves beyond the common core and leveled literacy instruction to demonstrate how diverse learners in one fourth grade classroom, challenged teacher authority in an effort to position themselves as capable readers. In doing so, they implored the teachers to consider the social context of reading as an essential component to the ways in which we offer readers opportunities to grow. Readers’ identities, were both limited by and grew out of the opportunities pertaining to leveled reading that were made available within the classroom. The vignettes examined contain implications for how a student’s sense of agency and reader identity impacts who they are as readers and how they are viewed within the culture of the classroom.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Theresa Abodeeb-Gentile Ed.D, teaches literacy methods courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Theresa prepares teachers using, research-based methods for helping elementary aged students develop literacy skills and focuses her instruction on application of reading theory into practice. Theresa’s research examines the way student and teacher interactions impact their identities as literacy learners in various contexts. She also examines ways that students learn various aspects of literacy in classrooms and what informs learning. Theresa can be reached at abodeebge@hartford.edu.

Lisa Zawilinski, Ph.D, teaches literacy methods courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Lisa provides research-based methods for helping children develop literacy skills and strategies across various learning contexts. She embeds Internet technologies within instruction with a focus on student variability. Lisa’s research examines the skills and strategies necessary for elementary grade students to communicate to share and gather information on the Internet. She also examines how to support teachers as they explore technologies within their teaching. Lisa can be reached at zawilinsk@hartford.edu.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have become one of the most hotly discussed topics in education as of late. These standards are being implemented, it would seem, to provide a high quality of education for all students and to address the rigor of what our students read and how they acquire the skills necessary to move into twenty-first century careers. A major focus of this work has been on college and career readiness and in an effort to prepare all students, a great deal of attention to text complexity has become a central consideration in the teaching of the core. Page 2 of Appendix A of the Common Core (201) states: