



Fostering Literacy in the 21st Century: A Study of Current and Future Educators' Perspectives

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Abstract

This poster presentation contributes to our developing understanding of literacy teaching and learning in a digital world by describing and discussing findings from a case study of the ways in which six current and aspiring teachers at various stages of professional development understand and foster 21st century literacies (National Council of English Teachers [NCTE], (2008); International Reading Association [IRA], 2009). Study participants included three practicing childhood educators, one recent graduate of an undergraduate teacher education program and two teacher candidates currently enrolled in an undergraduate teacher education program. Teachers and teacher candidates participated in interviews that explored their knowledge and understanding of literacy, their views on effective literacy instruction and the factors that influenced their perspectives. Findings indicated that the degree to which teachers' conceptions of literacy and effective literacy instruction reflected current research, theory and practice depended on the participants' academic experiences, level and frequency of participation in professional development opportunities and their professional experiences in the classroom. Findings also indicated that the depth and breadth of participants' understanding of literacy developed along a continuum of change. Participants identified collaboration with professionals in the field and observation of research and theory in practice as factors that had a significant impact on this growth. These findings clearly contribute to our understanding of teachers' perspectives of literacy and the types of academic, personal and professional experiences that influenced their conception of literacy and effective literacy instruction. This study provides insight into the types of academic courses, professional experiences and professional development practices that influence current and future teachers' knowledge and understanding of literacy and effective literacy instruction. These findings have the potential to inform present and future policy and practice related to the education and professional development of current and future teachers in the 21st century.