

Reference:	Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). <i>Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes</i> . Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
Summary:	<p><i>Mind in Society</i> specifically refers to a child’s cognitive development and the interconnectedness amongst the process of intelligence. It is separated by two major sections: Basic Theory and Data and Educational Implications. Basic Theory and Data discusses the development of perception, attention, memory, and thinking. For example, it is noted that intelligent speech comes after a child has developed <i>technical thinking</i>, which is comprised of the use of tools. Technical thinking is then the beginning of cognitive development. However, Vygotsky argues that, “the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development, which gives birth to the purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, converge” (pg. 24).</p> <p><b>Basic Theory and Data:</b>  In this first section, Vygotsky also talked about the importance of speech in cognitive development. As he states, “Sometimes speech becomes of such vital importance that, if not permitted to use it, young children cannot accomplish the given task” (pg. 26). This exemplifies the importance of action, perception, and dialogue for learning.</p> <p>Memory and the environment is also discussed in this section. As Vygotsky summarizes, “The child’s memory not only makes fragments of the past more available, but also results in a new method of uniting the elements of past experience with the present” (pg. 36). Humans remember, or activate memory with the help of signs. Younger children think by recalling something from the past. However, young adults or adolescents recall by thinking, which is more complex and requires logical thinking. Additionally, “It may be said that the basic characteristic of human behavior in general is that humans personally influence their relations with the environment and through that environment personally change their behavior, subjugating it to their control” (pg. 51). Undoubtedly, we act on our environment, sort of like a stimulus, while the environment also acts on our thinking process. In terms of literacy learning, the environment is an essential element for learning- as we learn, we make connections with our past, current, and future environment. In fact, simply our classroom environment acts on the behavior of the students just as students stimulate their classroom environment with dialogue, thinking, and the learning that takes place.</p> <p><b>Educational Implications:</b>  The last section of this book has many references to past theorists and</p>

	<p>studies, many of which Vygotsky counter-argues. For example, Piaget's line of thinking: development precedes learning, while Reflex Theories state: development and learning occur together. As Vygotsky clearly summarizes these two views, "Theorists who hold the first view assert that developmental cycles precede learning cycles; maturation precedes learning and instruction must lag behind mental growth. For the second group of theorists, both processes occur simultaneously; learning and development coincide at all points in the same way that two identical geometrical figures coincide when superimposed" (p. 81). The third view is the element of maturation: the process of maturation prepares and makes possible a specific process of learning. The learning process then stimulates and pushes forward the maturation process (pg. 81). The new aspect is the expanded role of learning that takes place. In other words, "Learning is more than the acquisition of the ability to think; it is the acquisition of many specialized abilities for thinking about a variety of things" (Thorndike in Vygotsky, pg. 83).</p> <p>Vygotsky did not believe that learning and development were based on acquiring specific skills, nor that these skills lead to further learning in other areas. He contends that we must look at the developmental <i>levels</i> to see better understand a child's true learning and capabilities, both independently and dependently. As he is notable know, Vygotsky discusses in length the idea of the <i>zone of proximal development</i>. Vygotsky concludes with a discussion of written language and the detrimental effects of teaching writing as a technical form with no value or application for the students.</p>
<p>Issue Related Findings and Ideas (Important quotes and ideas):</p>	<p>Vygotsky discusses the importance of the learning environment. As he states, "Natural methods of teaching reading and writing involve appropriate operations on the child's environment" (p. 118).</p> <p>Important quote about speech:  "A child's speech is as important as the role of action in attaining the goal. Children not only speak about what they are doing; their speech and action are part of one and the same complex psychological function, directed toward the solution of the problem at hand" (p. 25).</p> <p>"The speaking child has the ability to direct his attention in a dynamic way. He can view changes in his immediate situation from the point of view of past activities, and he can act in the present from the viewpoint of the future" (pg. 36).</p>

	<p>In other words, children are able to change their perspective on situations depending on their past experiences, while also taking into account future possibilities. Dialogue allows this to occur in a way that supports the dynamic nature of reflection, thought process, and development of perception.</p>
Reflections and Connections:	<p>The definition of zone of proximal development according to Vygotsky is that, "It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Similar to reading, students vary in their independent reading level. However, they can read and comprehend at a much higher level when supported or guided by an adult and other capable peers. Read alouds are a prime example of how such <i>zone of proximal development</i> can become part of a child's learning. Through a read aloud, students at all levels, are engaged in simultaneous reading (reading along with a teacher when a story is projected through a projector) and are more importantly engaged in dialogue about the text, allowing them to understand at a much higher level if not given the opportunity to listen to others while reflecting on their own thinking or metacognition. The dialogical process that occurs during a read aloud undoubtedly widens the zone of proximal development because children are given an opportunity, through guided discussions, to think at a much higher level.</p> <p>Learning should not be directly solely on what a child is capable of in their present level since those levels have already <i>matured</i>. Instead, it should be directed on advancing those levels by focusing on skills and concepts that children will attain in the future. As Vygotsky notes, teaching based on present level "does not aim for a new stage of the developmental process but rather lags behind this process. Thus, the notion of zone of proximal development enables us to propound a new formula, namely that the only "good learning" is that which is in advance of development" (p. 89).</p>

Reference:	Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). <i>Thought and Language</i> . Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
Summary:	<p>This book is separated into seven chapters, beginning with a description of the problem Vygotsky attempts to analyze and answer: the relationship between thought and language. As Vygotsky states, “Since word meaning is both thought and speech, we find in it the unit of verbal thought we are looking for. Clearly, then, the method to follow in our exploration of the nature of verbal thought is semantic analysis- the study of the development, the functioning and the structure of this unit, which contains thought and speech interrelated” (1986, p. 6)</p> <p>As in his other books, Vygotsky discusses other theorists, including Piaget and Stern, analyzes their approach and findings and supports or refutes those with his own experiments. For example, Vygotsky discusses Piaget’s theory on imagination stating that young children do not begin to search for truth until later. Thinking takes the form of play or as referred to, “wishful imagination,” at earlier stages before there is a need for proof of reality. As stated, “Up to the age of seven or eight, play dominates in the child’s thought to such an extent that it is very hard for the child to distinguish deliberate invention from fantasy that the child believes to be the truth” (1986, p. 18). In other words, first is autistic thought and then logic, appearing later.</p> <p>Piaget focuses on egocentrism to the point where the influence of an adult on the child’s environment is irrelevant. In other words, “The influences to which adults subject the child ‘do not imprint themselves upon the child as on a photographic plate; they are ‘assimilated,’ i.e., deformed by the living being who comes under their sway, and they are incorporated into their own substance” (p. 19). Over time, egocentric speech decreases until it eventually disappears and is not part of the child’s talk. However, it does not mean that they lack cognitive egocentrism. “Egocentric thought simply changes the form of manifestation, appearing now in abstract reasoning and in the new symptoms that have no semblance to egocentric talk (p. 29).</p> <p>Vygotsky argues that thought and language develops separately, but cross paths at various points. He continues his analysis by looking at the development of scientific concepts. The scientific concepts evolve under the conditions of systematic cooperation between the child and the teacher. “Scientific concepts develop earlier than spontaneous concepts because they benefit from the systematicity of instruction and cooperation” (p. 148). This supports the idea that learning is best accomplished through cooperative instruction between the student and teacher.</p>

	<p>Vygotsky finds the important idea that instruction should precede development. In other words, instruction and development do not progress together, but at different rates. In other words, “What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow” (p. 188). “Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not much at the ripe as at the ripening functions” (p. 188). Teaching the child only what he can do consciously and independently does not fully take advantage of what the child can accomplish cooperatively with others, thus not taking advantage of the zone of proximal development.</p> <p>Vygotsky provides a critical analysis of various schools of thoughts, especially in their approach to word meaning. Vygotsky refutes the idea that the meaning behind words is static in nature and unchanging. Words are dynamic and the way we develop meaning for words is always changing and developing, which affects our thoughts. Therefore, word meaning, as it develops over time, changes our verbal thoughts or speech. As he states, “The relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought” (p. 218). Speech and meaning develop in opposite ways. Speech develops from small units to a larger one, where a child connects one word with others to make a whole sentence. On the other hand, meaning develops as a whole unit, then progressively comes apart, dissected, into smaller units of meaning. Undoubtedly, Vygotsky argues that, “Thought undergoes many changes as it turns into speech” (p. 219). These changes should be studied and understood in order to better understand how children process information and learn.</p>
<p>Issue Related Findings and Ideas (Important quotes and ideas):</p>	<p>Vygotsky disagrees with the idea that egocentric speech amongst children decreases over time. When a child is faced in a frustrating situation, egocentric speech increases. In other words, “... a disruption in the smooth flow of activity is an important stimulus for egocentric speech” (p. 30). Egocentric speech can be seen when students are given opportunities to write in journals and freely discuss their opinions and connections with a text. Often times students will read stories that will arouse their curiosity, questioning, and may even confound them. Allowing them to take these thoughts in written dialogue, I believe we are able to see egocentric speech in the written form. This enables the process of becoming aware of ones thoughts and reactions, which is inherently egocentric in nature- referred by Vygotsky as “soundless inner speech” (p. 30).</p>

Reflections and Connections:	<p>While reading the discussion concerning egocentric talk, I had a few connections. Egocentric speech is to “chant” one’s thought. I believe that when students are allowed to openly discuss a book or text, it is naturally egocentric because they are in fact <i>chanting</i> their inner thoughts, which are purely based on their own opinions and connections. However, this dialogue becomes socialized when it takes the form of a natural conversation amongst peers, as thoughts are developed by students based off of what others’ have shared. Both of these forms of talk are present at any age.</p> <p>The definition, according to Vygotsky, of a concept is that it is a “complex and genuine act of thought that cannot be taught by drilling, but can be accomplished only when the child’s mental development itself has reached the requisite level” (p. 149). This shows that concepts and ideas cannot be taught in a readymade format. It counters the argument that children’s minds are a blank slate, ready to be written on by a more knowledgeable adult.</p>
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Article Reference:	Damber, U. (2011). Literature and empowerment: a study of multicultural grade three classes overachieving in reading. <i>U.S.-China Education Review</i> , 1, 88-102.
Study Summary:	This mixed-method study was conducted in Stockholm in a low socioeconomic status community. The purpose of this study was to discuss how teachers can employ transformative process to help improve reading abilities for low SES students. As stated in the article, "...the awareness of children's capabilities and potentials is paramount in creating positive conditions for children's learning processes" (p. 89). The article begins by outlining several strategies to help students' achievement in reading, including the important of student and teacher perception in the classroom. The main guiding question of this study is: What factors lead to overachievement in reading in low SES communities? The participants included third graded classes, with a control and reference group that were identified based on the SES and language backgrounds. Data was collected using reading comprehension tests, student and teacher questionnaires, and in-depth interviews.
Issue Related Findings and Ideas:	In the overachieving classrooms, higher positive attitudes were more commonly seen compared to the control group. Teachers in also were less inclined to use basal readers, and more inclined to use dramatization in fiction, writing letters to authors, and scheduling author visits. As stated in the article, "Fiction created a shared frame of reference for literacy activities, providing individual, interpersonal and transactional experiences and learning" (p. 96). Additionally, all students felt competent in their abilities. Undoubtedly, classroom environment was also a positive contributing factor in reading achievement. As noted, "A multitude of books, on divergent topics and language levels to satisfy all needs, provided reading materials, which was a feature described as a characteristic of classrooms with high achieving readers" (p. 96). Classrooms were characterized as being positive, supportive, acceptance, and self-reliant. There was a strong belief amongst teachers that students should chose books at levels that are higher than their ability in order to set goals for future ability and success. The researcher also references Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. For example, "Letting the students develop their reading skills within the realms of their own ZPD enabled them to experience the joy of success" (p. 97). Finally, the study discusses the importance of cooperation, not just amongst students, but also amongst teachers and parents. As stated, "Interviews revealed that parents were invited from the start to participate in the reading communities as collaborators" (p. 98). Concentrating on student abilities, rather than weaknesses, was a final contributing factor to student success. Having a strong trust in student capabilities, while avoiding a deficit view of learning dominated the findings in this study.
Limitations of Methods:	Although the study highlights general factors that contribute to overachievement in reading, specific structures are not discussed nor are specific classroom observations. Questionnaires and interviews are

	<p>employed, but data was not collected for classroom observations, either from anecdotal notes or video recordings.</p>
Further Questions:	<p>The study focuses on the importance of parent involvement and cooperation, showing that within this specific study, communication with parents and their strong involvement positively contributed to student achievement. However, how generalizable is this statement? There are many school districts and communities that highly lack parent involvement, but where student achievement is still prevalent. What factors then, are the most indicative for student achievement?</p> <p>Fiction is mentioned as the most important genre for reading achievement, stating that the skills needed to improve comprehension in fiction are easily transferred to nonfiction reading. However, are the fiction and nonfiction reading skills the same? Researchers have noted the difference, especially in reading purposes, that accounts for a great difference between these two genres. Therefore, does success in one genre and the achievement of reading skills in one directly transfer or guarantee the success in another genre?</p>

Article Reference:	Gajdamaschko, N. (2006). Theoretical concerns: Vygotsky on imagination development. <i>Educational Perspectives</i> , 39(2), 34-40.
Study Summary:	<p>Although this is not a study, it is an article that focuses on comparing Piaget and Vygotsky specifically discussing the role of imagination in cognitive development. According to the author, Vygotsky argued that imagination is a process part of a child's personality development. Although theorists such as Piaget undermined the impact of imagination on thinking and claimed it is not part of intellect, Vygotsky urged that it is central to thinking and learning. Additionally, imagination is a process that develops slowly and gradually. As stated by the author, imagination "... does not occupy a separate place in human behavior, but depends directly on other forms of human activity, especially the accrual of experience" (p. 36).</p> <p>The author continues to summarize and analyze Vygotsky's thoughts on imagination. For example, "He considered imagination to be a process directly connected with meaning-making- a higher psychological function that has connections not only with emotions but also with intellectual functions" (p. 37).</p> <p>In summary, imagination is a cultural function that is active and part of a child's thinking and cultural experience. Teaching provides the tools to develop imagination. Emotional development is connected to imagination- the author quotes Vygotsky and states, "every construct of the imagination has an effect on our feelings, and if this construct does not in itself correspond to reality, nonetheless the feelings it evokes are real feelings, feelings a person truly experiences" (Vygotsky, 2003, p. 19).</p> <p>The article ends with a list implications and approaches to curriculum and instruction development. For example, the author suggests imagination influences the child's behavior, emotions, thinking, and cultural development.</p>
Issue Related Findings and Ideas:	<p>The author warns about the limitations of following Piaget's thoughts concerning the role of imagination in schooling. For example, it is believed that "imagination is a primary natural process, something that a child is already born with, and that exists regardless of prior school experience or any educational influence" (p. 36). If this is the case, imagination is seen as something immutable that cannot easily be influenced, developed, or changed. If so, what is the role of the teacher and school? According to this thought process, teachers have no influence in a child's imagination.</p> <p>Another important finding is the idea that imagination develops as thinking develops. As stated by the author, "Imagination develops as thought develops, and its development is included in the process of development of the child's thinking and conscious meaning-making" (p. 37). Therefore, imagination is an important factor for comprehension and reading skills</p>

	<p>necessary for literacy achievement. Additionally, imagination and realistic thinking plays an important role in speech. Although Piaget disagreed with this concept, Vygotsky believed it was important aspect for speech. For example, "...Vygotsky believed that imagination is always a conscious, active process, intimately connected to the child's language development" (p. 37).</p>
<p>Implications:</p>	<p>While reading this article, I consistently asked what connections I may find between imagination and literacy. Clearly, imagination is needed to help make connections across texts and visualize scenarios. Imagination is not limited to the definition commonly thought of when it comes to play or make-believe. Imagination also consists of a highly developed process of thinking that changes through time, becoming more sophisticated with experience. As stated in the article, "Imagination, which in early childhood appears as a function of play, is gradually developed and appropriates new cultural tools through learning activities. As it changes, it gradually turns into the imagination of the adolescent and then into the productive imagination of the adult" (p. 39).</p> <p>Undoubtedly, books, reading, and comprehension require imagination. It is a sophisticated thought process and psychological function that enables students to solve problems, expand their thinking, and visualize their learning and possibilities.</p>
<p>Further Questions:</p>	<p>Some questions that developed as I read the article dealt with implementation and curriculum development. For example, what changes need to occur not only in the curriculum, but in teacher education, to take into account the role of imagination across the curriculum? What aspects need to be considered in teacher planning? How can teachers capitalize on students' imagination to help support its development?</p>

Article Reference:	Gutierrez, K. (2008). Developing a sociocritical literacy in the third space. <i>Reading Research Quarterly, (43) 2</i> , 148-164.
Study Summary:	<p>Although this article is not a direct analysis of a study, it incorporates information based on a previous study by the author. This article focuses on an idea of a <i>third space</i>, which is an extension of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. The purpose of this study is to investigate the need for a paradigm shift to create a more just educational system for poor immigrant youth. As previously mentioned, it draws on Gutierrez's research with high school students from migrant farmworker families who attended a four-week summer residential program at UCLA, Migrant Student Leadership Institute. Gutierrez uses a sociocritical literacy approach with incorporates not only students' lived experiences, but the historical context of their lives. As stated by Gutierrez, "A distinguishing feature of sociocritical literacy is its attention to contradictions in and between texts lived and studied, institutions (e.g., the classroom, the academy), and sociocultural practices, locally experiences and historically influenced" (p. 149). The this space, therefore, focuses on a <i>horizontal</i> form of learning and development, which includes an individuals' literacy practices outside of school. The study uses participants' biographies written as <i>testimonios</i> (testimonies). These testimonies are examined to better understand the participation structures and power relations across various social spaces. As a group, students were able to develop a collective form of learning and cognition inspired by the envision of a better future. As stated by Gutierrez, "...through metaphor, the playful imagination, and the use of Spanish to connect home, community, and the past with present and future action, the collective nature of social dreaming was enacted in a subsequent event as students collaboratively experience an aspect of social dreaming: the collective and difficult work of imagining and creating a more just world" (p. 159). Therefore, the ZPD is seen as something beyond facilitated learning- it is seen as facilitated and collection action as students work together in a dynamic structure that supports envisioning change for the present and future, heightening their learning and cognitive development.</p>
Issue Related Findings and Ideas:	<p>One of the important findings from this study is the need to understand and validate what occurs as students move across borders, negotiating their way through learning. A third space of learning takes into account the various contexts of learning across social groups, settings, and institutions, looking at how they over, merge, and collide.</p> <p>Gutierrez defines a third space as the space "...where teacher and student scripts- the formal and informal, the official and unofficial spaces of the learning environment- intersect, creating the potential for authentic interaction and a shift in the social organization of learning and what counts as knowledge" (p. 152). A third space provides an opportunity to expand the definition of learning, literacy, development and their various uses. More importantly, a third space provides a powerful and transformative</p>

	<p>relationship among individuals and their environment. This notion relates to Vygotsky's ZPD because it takes into account the need for a shared vision for a shared development of learning and knowledge. In other words, "The curriculum and its pedagogy, then, are grounded in the historical and current particulars of students' everyday lives, while at the same time oriented toward an imagined but possible future" (p. 154). The article suggests new tools and activities for developing thinking, cognition, and socialization as a means for responding to oppression, poverty, and unjust systems. Through education, these goals can be imagined, discussed, and evolved into a reality for a better future. In particular, the study focuses on language practices, conversations, and use of metaphors. Language usage as a group was one of power, encouragement, and hope directed towards the future. As described by Gutierrez, "... the language and embodied practices mediated the accomplishment of shared practices among the participants that functioned instrumentally to help students link the past and present to an imagined future and reorganize everyday concepts acquired through social interaction in joint activities into scientific or school-based concepts in ways that created a collective third space" (p. 158).</p>
<p>Limitations of Methods:</p>	<p>The limitation of this study is that it focuses on immigrant high school students. The implications of this study do not just pertain to high school students, but also those in elementary schools. Children also negotiate their identities as they experience learning and development in and outside of the classroom.</p>
<p>Further Questions:</p>	<p>What other challenges to students from non-dominant groups experience? Do these challenges differ across age? This study is based on a four-week experience in where instructors and staff create an environment that supports and expands on students' repertoires of literacy practice in order to envision a better world with unlimited academic and educational opportunities. However, how did their experience transfer to their own local communities and institutions?</p>

Article Reference:	Nicolopoulou, A., Barbosa de Sa, A., Ilgaz, H. & Brockmeyer, C. (2009). Using the transformative power of play to educate hearts and minds: From Vygotsky to Vivian Paley and beyond. <i>Mind, Culture, and Activity</i> , 17, 42-58.
Study Summary:	<p>The purpose of this study is to explore the role of play in cognition, language development, and social competence for young children. The author suggests that play is often misused and misunderstood in education. Play is seen as <i>didactic</i>- used in between activities as free and unstructured time. However, the author argues that play is powerful and has reinforcing benefits for cognition, language, and social competence. The author compares Vygotsky's definition of play as an expressive imaginary situation with implicit rules. The practice of play discussed in this study is also based on Vivian Paley's narrative activity, which focuses on story-telling and story-acting. These activities provide students with three forms of participation: sharing stories, listening to the stories, and enactment of stories, which are child-driven and peer oriented. As stated by the article, "The public and peer-oriented dimension of this activity helps to create a community of storytellers in the classroom, enmeshed in the ongoing context of the classroom miniculture and the children's everyday peer-group life" (p. 46-47). Therefore, these activities provide opportunities for learning with purpose, which is cooperative amongst peers in a supportive community.</p> <p>The observations of this study are also based in pre-schools with children ranging from the ages of 3-5 over a period of two years with low-income children. A total of 192 children of diverse ethnic backgrounds participated in this project. Each classroom was observed twice a week- fieldnotes were detailed for later analysis, along with the stories that children used during their narrative literary activities. Finally, a case study was also used to provide a closer analysis of the experience and role of story-telling and story-acting.</p>
Issue Related Findings and Ideas:	<p>The idea of rules was an important concept in this study. As stated in the article, "The system of rules is central to constituting the playworld itself, and in turn, these rules derive their force from the child's enjoyment of, and commitment to, the shared activity of the playworld" (p. 44). As compared to Vygotsky's analysis, play is one of the first opportunities for children to creatively enforce rules upon themselves. More importantly, "Vygotsky argued that it is through fantasy play that the child is first able to emancipate his or her thinking from their constraints of immediate external environment and thus take the first steps toward organizing thought in a coherent and independent way" (p. 45). In turn, this also begins to form the zone of proximal development, expanding the child's mental capabilities, as discussed by Vygotsky.</p> <p>Another idea developed by this study is how play functions as a collaborative tool for children as they attempt to maintain a shared imaginary situation,</p>

	<p>following rules developed on their own, not given to them by adults.</p> <p>The results of this study show that students’ enthusiastic participation does in fact promote cognitive, language, and social competence development. Specifically, there was improvement in reading comprehension, print and word awareness, and self-regulation amongst peers. As stated in the article, “Not only did this activity help them improve their narrative and social competence skills, but it also helped them become more integrated into the classroom peer culture- which, in turn, appears to have facilitated and partly motivated their gains in those skills” (p. 49). In other words, children with previous behavior and emotional issues showed high interest and functioning during the narrative activities. In particular, the study focused on one child for further analysis- Destiny. Although Destiny had various behavior problems and had difficulty interacting positively with her peers, the narrative activities greatly helped Destiny gain high collaborative functioning skills and were consistently intrinsically motivated to master her narratives. Through time, Destiny showed enthusiasm towards participation and often included many characters in her story in order to incorporate more peers. In other words, “Over the course of the year, accumulating evidence made it increasingly clear that Destiny used this multiplication of roles in her stories as part of a strategy for integrating herself into the classroom community” (p. 51). Therefore, story-telling and story-acting was a tool for negotiating relationships with peers.</p> <p>Overall, the narrative activities in this study improved how students listen to each other in order to learn about structure and plot (a form of zone of proximal development- students are expanding their knowledge and expertise through others’ examples), develop plot and action to make stories more interesting, and improve quality of story by adding more themes and sophisticated literary devices. Its implication for future research shows that there is a greater need to look into the power of play and how it can be integrated into the curriculum across grades. Nicolopoulou et al., contends, “Improving our understanding of play and its role in children’s experiences and development is a key production for helping children construct and maintain playworlds that can provide resources and motivations to enhance their cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development” (p. 58). Undoubtedly, these findings relate to critical literacy because these engaging and expressive literary activities are powerful tools that help students embrace multiple perspectives, sympathy towards others, and a supportive learning environment based on trust, justice, and fairness.</p>
<p>Limitations of Methods: Gb2bq4</p>	<p>The limitations of this study is that it narrowly focused on preschool children, which leads to the question of what the results could be if this strategy was applied to elementary school children.</p>
<p>Further Questions:</p>	<p>Although a control group was discussed, there were no comparative results. Therefore, a question that arises is how did the post-test scores look like compared to the control group? Lastly, how does this activity contribute to</p>

	the culture of the classroom? How is it sustained and supported?
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Article Reference:	Maurer, C. (2010). Meeting academic standards through peer dialogue at literacy centers. <i>Language Arts</i> , (87)5, 353-362.
Study Summary:	<p>This study begins with a discussion about the two social worlds that exists for children: the official school world and the unofficial school world. As explained in the article, the official school world is standard-driven and scrutinized by adults. The unofficial school world is the one created and sustained by students. The question driving this study is how students intersect and make sense of these two worlds as they coexist in their learning. Specifically, this study looks at the peer dialogue that occurs during the unofficial school world during literacy centers. As stated by Maurer, “This intersection of the official school world with the peer dialogue of the unofficial peer culture often took place at literacy centers and led to an interesting exploration of how the two social worlds can come together to enrich a child’s literacy learning while meeting academic standards” (p. 353).</p> <p>Minimal research on what occurs within literacy centers amongst students and whether this interaction supports standards based learning. Literacy centers as social spaces with no teacher guidance or supervision provides students a unique learning opportunity to engage in an unofficial school world where concepts, ideas, and learning is created and interpreted.</p>
Issue Related Findings and Ideas:	<p>Maurer argues that literacy centers are tools that extend children’s abilities because it provides a space for lively discussions, interactions amongst peers, and problem solving to take place. During these literacy centers, students were given various tasks ranging from decoding skills, vocabulary development, and comprehension- the focus of the researcher’s results and findings. Out of the 79 literacy indicators (standards) from first grade, 47 were observed during peer dialogue.</p> <p>Vygotsky’s ideas of scientific concepts are learned through the application of everyday concepts. In other words, the findings of this study showed that students were able to apply such <i>scientific concepts</i> in novice ways and across different domains to support not only their learning, but that of their peers. For example, in one of the observations students were seen helping others decode words from books that were written by other students in the classroom. More capable students were seen leading others towards understanding in a way that parallels Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development. As stated in the article, “With freedom to talk, discuss, and work together, peers are able to practice and assist each other in developing word recognition and fluency” (p. 358). In addition, when children have differing perspectives, it creates conflict, but this leads to heightened knowledge, new information, and other ways of knowing.</p> <p>Within peer dialogue, students were seen supporting each others’ learning through examples and application, while also experimenting with new words for vocabulary acquisition. Maurer suggests, “An environment that allows</p>

	<p>children to ask about and discuss concepts provides opportunities for them to learn, practice, expand, and strengthen their budding vocabulary” (p. 359).</p> <p>Finally, comprehension was the last area analyzed. <i>Buddy Reading</i> was an activity commonly used during centers. The purpose of <i>buddy reading</i> is to provide opportunities for children to read together and discuss the text, develop comprehension skills for both the reader and listener of the text (Maurer). Students were often seen sharing their own personal experience and knowledge to extend understanding of a text.</p> <p>Overall, Maurer argues that “By providing opportunities for children to work on self-selected activities in the context of literacy centers, various strategies to support the reading process are practiced and utilized, not because it is the skill of the day, but because it is a necessary component of creating meaning while engaged in a literacy event such as reading” (p. 360). In other words, learning is relevant, natural, purposeful, and creates opportunities for the joint construction of meaning, necessary for the official school world and the unofficial social world.</p>
<p>Limitations of Methods:</p>	<p>The methodology used was an ethnographic study, in which the researcher observed two days a week for half the school year during literacy centers. As a participant-observer, the researcher analyzed the role of peer dialogue to support literacy learning. The classroom consisted of 19 children in a rural Ohio district. The racial make-up of the students was White non-Hispanic, which paralleled the school, district, and community. Since the demographics of the students was specifically focused on one ethnic group, the question of generalizability is one that should be considered.</p>
<p>Further Questions:</p>	<p>Students were grouped according to like abilities. However, would the results still have been positive if students were grouped with differing abilities (heterogeneous grouping)? How would the Zone of Proximal Development differ if students were grouped by mixed abilities? How does the peer dialogue dynamics change when students are grouped heterogeneously?</p>

Article Reference:	Meacham, S.J. (2001). Vygotsky and the blue: Re-reading cultural connections and conceptual development. <i>Theory into Practice</i> , 40(3), 190-197.
Study Summary:	<p>This study begins with the argument that research on cultural diversity has been commonly associated with deficits, achievement gaps, and overall academic failure. According to the article, the effect of this is that, “This language has the conceptual effect of perpetually casting children of color in a ‘white shadow,’ where they are perpetually deficit” (p. 190). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to focus on sociocultural theorists who provide evidence for the importance of cultural diversity as a learning resource for literacy education. Meacham succinctly states, “The main argument of this article is that the implications of Vygotsky’s writings support the idea that a culturally diverse learning environment, in contrast to the tradition of deficit, may embody important advantages in higher-order conceptual development” (p. 190). Secondly, the article uses Murray’s research on “blue’s idiom” to show connection between jazz improvisation and higher order thinking. Finally, the article concludes with examples from a diverse classroom and the cultural connection identified during dialogue around literature, which parallels higher-order conceptual processes. By using <i>cultural difference</i> research, there is a clear value in cultural diversity and the validation of diverse ways of knowing.</p>
Issue Related Findings and Ideas:	<p>One of the important findings from this article is that learning takes place not in isolation and removed from the learner, but in context of activity and interaction. Vygotsky is used as the basis of this research: the goal of conceptual learning is to reach a stage of generalization. As defined in the article, “Generalization occurs when a spontaneous conceptual understanding is dislodged from its exclusive identification with a specific local context and connected to a more general category of like concepts that integrate multiple contextual domains” (p. 192). In other words, information and concepts can be transferred, applied, and connected to other areas in order to attain a higher order of conceptual understanding.</p> <p>Higher-order thinking occurs when exclusive and limited concepts are applied and connected to other domains. This can be applied to home and school connection to aide higher-level conceptual development. For culturally diverse classrooms, this occurs through <i>cross-cultural connections</i>. In comparison to jazz, these connections have given jazz the status it has in today’s society. Jazz is used to compare intercultural connections because it incorporates <i>crossroads</i>, defined as an intersection in jazz composition that forces one beyond the familiar. There are three phases in jazz improvisation that parallels Vygotsky’s higher order processes: Disruption, improvisation, and affirmation. Disruption is a break in the unknown that leads to uncertainty. Improvisation allows one to fill in with the known or to revise and alter the new unknown information, which is the basis of concept formation. The final phase is affirmation, which is a new awareness for</p>

	<p>future breaks and improvisations. Such new level of consciousness allows for new connections unthought of previously.</p> <p>The examples of classroom dialogue discuss the integration of prior knowledge and its support and development of student questioning, which assists, supports, and stimulates thinking. In other words, “Through such questions, students move beyond their own, and society’s, conceptual parameters to form connections across cultural domains” (p. 194).</p>
<p>Limitations of Methods: Gb2bq4</p>	<p>The examples used in this research were limited. The argument could have been made stronger if more classroom application were discussed with specific pedagogical practices. The study was based on a year long study with a combined second and third grade classroom of 28 students ranging from 11 different cultural and language groups.</p>
<p>Further Questions:</p>	<p>There are many articles and researchers that focus on literacy assumptions about non-dominant groups juxtaposed to mainstream groups. However, how can we overcome or avoid this comparison? What are the educational goals for non-dominant groups? Are they different for those who are privileged or part of the mainstream group? Are we holding our non-dominant groups to different standards if they are not compared to mainstream group?</p>

Article Reference:	Eun, B. (2010). From learning to development: A sociocultural approach to instruction. <i>Cambridge Journal of Education</i> , 40(4), 401-418.
Study Summary:	The purpose of this study is to explore how communication and social interaction contribute to human development- using Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of development. The study is not based on a specific experiment, research, or observation directed by the author, but more so an analysis of Vygotsky’s ideas on literacy, communication, collaboration, and human development as a means for scaffolding learning. For example, according to Eun, the role of the teacher is to extend, build on students’ funds of knowledge, and guide instructional conversations to develop cognitive processes.
Issue Related Findings and Ideas:	<p>One of the important findings of this article is that our experiences shape our interpretation of new information as we learn and process it, however, as learners we also are affected by our co-construction of knowledge with others in a social setting. Vygotsky develops the idea of the <i>general genetic law of cultural development</i>, which supports the idea that what is learned through social interaction or experiences within a culture is later transferred to the individual for application across other areas. As stated by Eun, “Sensitive and compassionate teachers who provide guidance that is attuned to children’s current level of understanding enable them to learn concepts that were initially beyond individual comprehension” (p. 403). This reiterates the point of the importance of knowing our students, their lives, experiences, culture, and all that contributes to their self, to have a more concrete driving force to their development and learning.</p> <p>The study suggests that teachers become part of the coconstruction of knowledge as facilitators, not just disseminators of information. The idea of <i>teachers as mediators</i> is that the role of a teacher is one who aids in the co-construction of knowledge. Teachers are also viewed as inquirers, guiding students to ask questions and delve deeper in content in order for new knowledge and connections can be generated.</p> <p>Communication is an important aspect of this article. As stated, “Communication is the means by which all participants engage in the instructional process to negotiate and generate knowledge. These forms of collaborative dialogue later get internalized to serve individual cognitive functions, such as problem-solving, reasoning, and logical thinking” (p. 407).</p> <p>The article continues with a discussion of developing a collaborative culture with a common goal of learning. More importantly, it is important to encourage students to be reflective about the learning process. It suggests the importance of being responsive to students’ cultures, beliefs, and values- an important aspect grounded on sociocultural theory. As stated, “Although students may be of same age and grade level, individual students differ tremendously in terms of their social, emotional, and cognitive development”</p>

	(p. 409). Contextualizing learning means that it needs to be situated in a social context, which forms the basis of solving real life problems- <i>cultural competence</i> .
Limitations of Methods:	This article is not based on a qualitative/quantitative study. Instead, it uses an analytical approach to the importance of sociocultural theory in the classroom.
Further Questions:	The process of reading aloud is a social one, based on the co-construction of knowledge, responding, and collaboration around a text. Therefore, how can read alouds and other literacy practices further this notion? How are students' construction of knowledge affected by such interaction?