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RESEARCH BRIEFS

Georgia Southern College of Education

Undergraduate Research Project: Preservice Teachers' Perceptions and Knowledge of Graphic Novels in the Content Areas

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Abstract

Graphic novels provide a rich and rewarding literature experience. Graphic novels require readers to interpret the connection between text and graphics and in doing so readers draw upon a wide range of strategies and comprehension skills. Incorporating graphic novels in the classroom not only gives students exposure to more diverse text, but also motivates and requires them to think critically. Graphic novels also move classrooms away from "one size fits all" literacy instruction. This article describes a qualitative study conducted to introduce preservice teachers to graphic novels which are often considered 'unconventional' reading materials. The study addressed specific questions to gain better understanding of preservice teachers' perceptions and knowledge of graphic novels, as well as how graphic novels can be used as classroom resources in each content area. Findings revealed that overall preservice teachers believed that graphic novels were a beneficial resource to engage students in content material, and their use as a classroom resource can foster meaningful learning in all content areas.

Practical Application

This study showed that graphic novels can be an important resource in various content areas. However, preservice teachers need instruction on the most effective way to use them. More importantly, the study, in which two undergraduate preservice teachers worked as assistant researchers, illustrated the importance of teaching procedures of educational research in the undergraduate setting. Teacher action research is an essential method for educational practitioners to engage in the assessment and improvement of their own practice, helping the teacher to reconsider their teaching methods or to adapt in order to solve a problem. When teachers have substantial evidence that their work has transformed their students' understanding, efforts of teaching are validated. These future teachers are now aware of the importance of educational research and the influence this information and understanding can have on teaching practices and methods. *This study was supported by funds from the College of Education Research Committee Seed Grant at Georgia Southern University.

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