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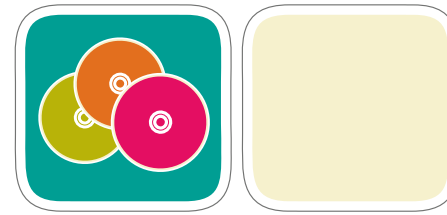
Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers Yearbook, Volume 32

Building Literacy Communities

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ALER
Association of Literacy
Educators & Researchers

Building Literacy Communities

The Thirty-Second Yearbook
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Meet the New Co-Editor Team

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Susan Szabo is an associate professor in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Texas A&M University-Commerce, where she teaches graduate and doctorate courses in reading, language arts, and social studies. She earned her B.A. at Western Michigan University, and both her M.Ed. and Ed.D. at Oklahoma State University in reading and supervision.

Before entering university teaching, she worked in the public school system doing various levels of teaching. Her last assignment was as the district's adolescent reading specialist.

Her research and professional writing focuses on literacy at all levels, teacher education, technology, teacher stages, teacher development, and the integration of literacy into content areas. She has published articles in state, regional, and international publications.

Susan has been a member of CRA/ALER for 6 years. She is on a member of numerous Editorial Boards for various education journals. She is currently in her second term with different co-editors for the ALER Yearbook.

Dr. Timothy G. Morrison

Timothy G. Morrison is associate chair in the Department of Teacher Education at Brigham Young University, where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in reading, language arts, and children's literature. He earned both B.A. and M.Ed. degrees at Brigham Young University, and his Ph.D. at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Prior to joining the faculty at BYU, Tim served as a faculty member at Boise State University and California State University-Fresno.

Early in his career, Tim taught grades four, five, and six in Idaho and third grade in Utah. More recently, he directed BYU's New Zealand Study Abroad Program, during which time he lived in Auckland where he taught and supervised teacher candidates in practicum settings.

His research and professional writing focuses on literacy, teacher education, and children's literature. He has published articles in many professional journals including, *Reading Research and Instruction, Reading Psychology, The Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy,* and *The College Reading Association Yearbook.*

Tim has been an active member of CRA/ALER. He has served as associate editor for the Reading Research and Instruction, and as Publications Committee chair for ALER/CRA.

Dr. Linda E. Martin

Linda E. Martin teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in the Department of Elementary Education at Ball State University. Most of those courses are in the field of reading. She earned both B.S. and M.Ed. degrees at Utah State University and an Ed.D. at Brigham Young University in Reading.

Linda's research interests have focused primarily in recent years on early literacy development and teachers' professional growth and development. She has published in several journals, some of which include *Reading Research and Instruction, Reading Psychology, The Reading Teacher, Journal of School Leadership, Journal of Staff Development, Childhood Education, Young Children*, *Educational Forum*, and the *College Reading Association Yearbook.*

Linda has served on various review boards and committees at Ball State University, which include Chair of the University Research Committee. She has also served on review boards for national publications, and at present, the International Reading Association SPA/NCATE review board.

Dr. Merry Boggs

Merry Boggs is an assistant professor in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Texas A&M University-Commerce, where she teaches undergraduate graduate literacy courses. She earned her doctorate from University of Southern Florida (USF).

Merry and her husband Diehl taught overseas for a year in Cairo, Egypt. She returned to the states and began working in a faculty position at Texas A&M. Merry continued with stops in Tarleton State and A&M-Commerce. She then accepted a position as Dean, School of Education, at Dalton State College to be closer to her ageing parents. At the beginning of the 2010 school year, Merry returned to Texas A&M University-Commerce.

Merry has been a member of ALER for 3 years and joins the new team of coeditors. Her research interests include teacher education, technology, and reading. She has published articles in state, regional, and international publications.

INTRODUCTION

For our 53rd annual meeting, the Association of Educators and Researchers met in Charlotte, North Carolina at the Marriott Charlotte City Center. This conference marked the first one held under our new name. Thus, we enter a new chapter in the history of our organization. This year's conference theme was *Building Literacy Communities,* which we also used as the title for this year's Yearbook, Volume 32.

This organization has long been the home of some of our nation's most notable literacy experts. At the North Carolina conference, these literacy professionals once again engaged us in dialogue of the utmost importance through their presentations and informal conversations throughout the conference. The articles included in this volume are representative of these dialogues that can lead to transformation, possibilities, and risk.

The Yearbook begins with the article representing Mona Mathew's presentation to the membership. In her presidential address, Mona encourages the members to expand their theoretical sights and to hone their vision of literacy. In her speech, entitled *You Can't See What You Don't Know: Crossing Boundaries in Early Literacy Learning,* Mona talked about the importance of examining and understanding literacy happenings in the classroom. However, she asked us to use caution when using theories, as they may also limit our literacy insights. The second section reveals the specifics of a special group of presenters, the invited keynote addresses. In *Kid-watching, Negotiating, and Podcasting:*

Imagining Literacy Instruction for the 21st Century, Vivian Vasquez talked about how children of today are being born into an age where communication via technology is the norm. In addition, research has found that different cultural groups have different definitions of what it means to be literate. Literacy is multimodal in nature. Thus, helping children understand real-life functions of texts is an important component. In *What Comes before Matters in the End*, Mario Alvarez and Victoria Risko talked about the importance of establishing the central and main ideas early on, before and during text readings, as it is those ideas that provide the conceptual glue for all the details that follow. When this happens, student's comprehension is enhanced and they look beyond just "getting the facts" or "focusing on the sound bits" of knowledge learning.

The next section of the Yearbook contains our award winner's research. The Dissertation winner, Cindy Jones from Utah State University conducted her research on *An Investigation of Writing Instruction and Kindergarten English Learners Acquisition of Early Reading Skills.* She examined the effects of interactive writing and writing workshop on the growth of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and word reading. She found there was no significant difference on the students ability depending on the writing format used. The Master Thesis Winner was Daniel Allbery from Washington State University. His study, entitled *Bridging fact and Story: Using Historical Fiction in Middle School Social Studies*, found that it is

easy to supplement the social studies curriculum by pairing historical fiction with critical literacy strategies.

The remaining sections of the volume contain articles that have been sorted into three overarching categories: *Working with Teacher Educators, Working with Preservice Teachers and Alternative Certification Teachers, and Working with K-12 learners.* The articles within each of these categories are a great read and paint a picture of the dialogue from the North Carolina Conference.

It is our hope that the "scholarship of teaching" represented by our keynote speakers, our award winners, and our authors will provide new insights and possibilities that will support and extend literacy research.

SS, TM, LM, MB

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

U CAN'T *C* WHAT *U* DON'T KNOW: CROSSING BOUNDARIES IN EARLY LITERACY LEARNING

Presidential Address

Mona W. Matthews

Georgia State University

Abstract

Each day after lunch, the first graders in Ms. Denny's classroom choose books to read independently or with a partner. On this day, Holbert and Rodney decide to read a book together. They select a book they have read many times. Once seated on the rug, Holbert opens the book and begins to read aloud; Rodney laughs when Holbert speaks in a deep, exaggerated tone to represent the voice of one of the characters. Rodney excitedly squeals as he says to Holbert, "My turn, my turn, it's my turn to read!" Holbert finishes the page and hands the book to Rodney.

Expanding our Theoretical Sight to Hone our Vision of Literacy

As literacy researchers, we examine vignettes such as the one between Holbert and Rodney to gain a deeper understanding of the intricate world of literacy learning. We get assistance in those efforts from theories. Einstein, certainly one of the preeminent theorists, claimed that, *"It is the theory that decides what we can observe" (Albert Einstein,* as cited in Gavelek and Bresnahan, 2009, p. 140). In effect, theories give sight to the researcher. With that said, let's try out our theoretical sight on the opening vignette. Specifically, let's apply a socio-cultural lens. Where would a socio-cultural theory direct our investigative attention in this interaction between Holbert and Rodney? Many possibilities exist, but if we assume Wertsch's (1991) interpretation of a Vygotskian socio-cultural theory, events such as this one would be an appropriate unit of analysis for gaining insight into the social dimension of literacy learning. The interactions between the two boys, as well as the mediation

of those actions, would garner intense analytical scrutiny. A different theory, as suggested by Einstein, would direct our investigative attention to other aspects in this brief vignette.

Theories abound in literacy. As literacy teacher educators and researchers, our shelves are filled with books, handbooks, journal articles, monographs which describe theories. We argue about theories, with some arguments even referenced as *wars.* However, we should be cautious in their application, for just as theories give sight, if applied unexamined, those same theories can obscure our vision or blind us, rendering us unable to see what others, with a different theoretical lens, easily recognize. If such is the case, I'm left to wonder, could the theories commonly used in literacy, while heightening our attention to some variables, obscure our attention on others? I raise this question because as I consider policies and research summaries that direct literacy instruction, and by their consequence learning, I see little priority given to a dimension of literacy teaching and learning that stands at the core of these processes-- the human experience of becoming literate. Specifically, what does it mean to be a human participant in literacy events?

The Vision Problem

For more than two decades, literacy educators and researches have embraced theories with a tangential focus on the human element of literacy teaching and learning. These include critical pedagogy (Souto-Manning, 2010), educational equity (Darling-Hammond, 2010), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Such perspectives cohere around similar principles; all students are capable and competent learners; all students deserve instruction that meets their individual needs, and all students deserve respect. As literacy professionals, we know the benefits to students when these principles are enacted in classrooms and schools. They include enhanced literacy achievement (Langer, 2001), increased motivation and engagement (Guthrie, 2004), and decreased school drop-out rates (Darling-Hammond). And we know why these principles reap such benefits. Although numerous, I mention three most relevant to the topic addressed herein. Students feel cared for and respected (Noddings, 2004); instruction reflects students' interest and backgrounds, and family and community involvement is valued and actively encouraged (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Yet somehow, in spite of our embrace of such theories and the research that supports their effectiveness as guides for literacy teaching and learning, their impact on policies, and by consequence practice, is minimal. Most certainly, we can identify classrooms and even schools where such impact is evident. Regrettably, more evidence exists of their absence.

Contributing to this absence are reports of reading research. Two such reports with demonstrable influence on literacy instruction are those produced by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child health and Human Development, 2000) and the National Early Literacy Panel (National Institute for Literacy, 2008). Both promote literacy as essentially a cognitive process with enhanced

literacy as the outcome of instruction that emphasizes teaching the evidenced-based skills on their respective lists. Further evidence of this absence is the use of scripted programs that present a one-size fits all approach to literacy teaching (Cummins, 2007), standardized tests used as gateways to promotion (Darling-Hammond, 2010), and English language learning policies that deny students the right to use their first language in their classrooms (August & Shanahan, 2006). The costs to students of such narrow conceptions of literacy and the instructional practices they spawn are dear and reflected in statistics all too familiar to us. These include, but not limited to, the overrepresentation of minority students in special education programs (Artiles, Klingner,& Tate, 2006); high school drop-out rates for African Americans and Latinos that barely crest the 50% mark (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006), and a decades-long achievement gap between majority and minority students (Raudenbush, 2009).

In this paper, I argue for a sharper, more intent consideration of the human dynamic in literacy teaching and learning. To enhance our sight, I propose we expand our theoretical reach by crossing disciplinary boundaries to the domain of child development, now referenced as developmental science to reflect a broader more comprehensive treatment of culture and diversity (Lerner, 2006). Developmental science provides insights into the uniqueness of the human experience, with many of those insights relevant to our work as literacy researchers and teacher educators. Specifically, I describe two aspects of human learning from developmental science. Then, I close with a call for all of us as literacy researchers and educators to step up and assume responsibility for promoting the human dynamic in literacy teaching and learning.

Adding Visual Depth

The two aspects of human development briefly described are of particular significance to literacy. The first elevates, from a passionate plea to a human imperative, the need to respect students' families and communities. The second illustrates why strictly cognitive conceptions of literacy are not only misguided but fail to account for known, research-supported theories of human learning.

First Understanding

As humans we are motivated to be with and to be like the important people in our lives (Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005). Initially, these are family members and central caregivers; as the child's world expands, these include peers, teachers, and friends. When we look at an infant, a toddler, or a preschooler, it is easy to see that these young human learners need adults to care for them, to provide shelter, food, clothing, as well as emotional and physical security. While this need to belong begins at birth, it continues throughout our lives, and expands beyond the need to survive to a need to thrive (Sroufe, et al., 2005). Yet, when many of these same children enter school, all too often their humanness is ignored, discounted, or

perceived as inadequate. Critical literacy pedagogy, educational equity, and culturally responsive pedagogy provide theoretical rebuffs for such responses. However, if we complement these theories with others from developmental science, we strengthen our case. The influence family members and central caregivers have on the lives of young children is substantive; in fact, foundational, because what these young humans learn about the world via these very important persons situates their subsequent learning (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

The human species is unique from all other species (Tomasello, 2000). Holbert and Rodney can sit together and share the reading of a book because they are humans. As humans they can share an understanding about the purpose of books; they can share an understanding of the strategies used to participate in partner reading in Ms. Denny's classroom. Many familiar with socio-cultural theories might correctly reference this process of coming to share a similar view about an event, tool use, etc., as *intersubjectivity* (Rogoff, 1990). In fact, the subsequent discussion describes the very beginnings of this process.

Humans are the only species that possesses the ability to understand and share the intentions of others, to be mind-readers so to speak (Tomasello, Carpenter, Cal, Behne, & Moll, 2005). Because of this ability, humans can focus on the intended goal of another's behavior, as well as the strategies the person uses to achieve that goal. So even though Holbert and Rodney individually appropriated their teacher's goals and strategies for partner reading, because they share similar views of partner reading, they can coordinate their actions as they proceed through the event. What is not evident in their interactions is that this process of intentionality begins at birth and is stimulated by an infant's basic need to affiliate with the important persons in his/her life (Rochat & Callaghan, 2005). Around age four, the young child's intention sharing evolves into an ability to share the beliefs of others, referenced as "collective intentionality," (Searle, 1995, as cited in Tomasello, et al., 2005, p. 684) wherein the child shares similar understandings of the rules, social norms, that guide the behavior of those within her community (Tomasello, et al.,)

To discuss this process of intentionality, I borrow heavily from the research of Michael Tomasello and his colleagues and use photographs to demonstrate three benchmarks in young children's development of intentionality. The first photograph portrays a dyadic engagement. The second photograph portrays a triadic engagement, and the third, a collaborative engagement (Tomasello, et al., 2005; see appendixes). I take Tomasello's use of the term *engagement* to mean consensual mental connections between the participants.

Dyadic engagement. The first photograph (Figure 1) illustrates a dyadic interaction between a two-month-old infant and his mother (Tomasello, et al., 2005). Interactions similar to this create a bond between a parent and her infant - a bond that will influence the infant's future relationships (Sroufe, et al., 2005). For the first two months of his life, when the infant cries from hunger this adult human appears; she feeds him; his pain disappears. As she feeds him, he likely gazes at her

face. Around six weeks of age, his behavioral repertoire expands; he now smiles. If we were in the room with this mother and this infant, we likely would hear the mother cooing to the infant and the infant responding with soft grunts and likely see the infant moving his mouth to mimic his mother's expressions. Such behavioral turn-taking is characteristic of these early months. Toward the end of the infant's first year of life, a miraculous change occurs; the infant and mother interact to accomplish a shared goal, and by doing so enter into a triadic engagement.

Triadic Engagement. A triadic interaction represents the introduction of objects. In the second photograph, (Figure 2) the toddler and father share the goal to look at the book. Now instead of focusing solely on the adult, the toddler divides his attention between his father and the object (Tomasello, et al, 2005). The routine nature of this interaction belies the complexity behind its enactment. To perform this task, the toddler must share his father's goal (to look at the book) and he must alternate his visual attention between his father and the book. This toddler's ability to shift his gaze enables him to monitor his father's movements and to time his response so that he and his father look at the book at the same time (Adamson, Bakeman, & Deckner, 2004).

Being able to participate in a triadic interaction represents a watershed event in the child's appropriation of his home culture. Such interactions become key venues through which this parent, and others important to the child, shares valued cultural tools, procedures, and beliefs (Tomasello, et al., 2005). Imagine that as the two attend to the same object, the father talks about the object, demonstrates what to do with the object, and scaffolds the child's use of the object.

The dyadic interaction captured in the first photograph and the triadic interaction captured in the second, prepare the toddler, this young human, for the next progression of his participation with others--collaborative engagement. Now the infant and his social partner, in this case his father, not only share a goal but also a shared understanding of the means by which that goal is accomplished.

Collaborative Engagement. In collaborative interactions, the toddler extends his intentional capabilities, yet again. Around 12 to 14 months of age, the young toddler begins to realize that humans enact specific actions to get something done (Tomasello, et al., 2005). Whereas in triadic interactions, the toddler and parent share a goal related to an external object, now they not only share a goal, but they share the means, or ways, by which to accomplish that goal. Holbert and Rodney in the opening vignette illustrate collaborative engagement. As collaborators in partner reading, the two boys must possess shared knowledge of actions required to coordinate their behaviors to yield a successful collaboration.

In the third photograph (Figure 3), the young toddler and his father coordinate their behavior to construct a tower with blocks. The toddler's ability to coordinate with his father likely comes from a history of shared block-playing experiences. From these shared experiences, the toddler gained important information about tower construction. Over time, with assistance and modeling from his father, the

toddler came to understand the goal (to build a tower with blocks) as well as the means by which to reach the goal (such as to sit on the floor and place one block on top of another). Because the toddler shares with his father an understanding of the goal as well as the actions to accomplish the goal, he can coordinate his movements with his father's to reach the goal.

Individually, each photograph provides a snapshot of an infant and a parent mutually engaged with each other. Collectively, they demonstrate how, across time, via a process of understanding and sharing intentions, the young human gains entry into his world of events, objects, procedures, etc. and does so by way of his closest personal relationships. These relationships are sustained by the toddlers' basic need to affiliate, referenced as BAN, with the humans in their lives (Rochat & Callaghan, 2005). This need drives the young children's desire first to be with, next to share outcomes with, and then to behave like the important people in their lives; desires, it is important to note, that are satisfied by the uniquely human ability to understand and then share intentions.

We must not minimize what each child learns as he participates in the cultural appropriation process demonstrated in these three photographs, nor should we fail to grasp the significance that what mediates this process is the child's close personal relationships. Via these relationships persons who provide him nourishment and comfort introduce the young human to his world; as a consequence, the child comes to harbor an emotional connection to these humans. Soon these important caregivers bring objects into his world. In time and with repeated support, the young child shares, i.e., appropriates, the meaning of the contexts in which the object is present, the purposes for which the object is used, and the procedures for how it is used (Werstch, 1991). Thus, the young child's access to the world and to how his world works are anchored in his personal relationships (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

Second Understanding

As humans, *"what we learn, how we learn, and how we perceive that learning is not just a cognitive process but emotional [and social ones] as well"* (Reynolds, 2005, p. 31). We return to the three photographs, but this time to examine the social and emotional accompaniments of those pictured experiences. Within interactions like those depicted, young children learn a lot. The infant in the first photograph relies on his mother for nourishment and comfort. His inborn proclivity to attend to the human face soon results in him mimicking the expressions of and the sounds emitted by his mother. From these close and frequent encounters, he develops the social skills to engage his mother in interactions. Much of what he learns derives from his growing ability to read his mother's dispositional world," i.e., her affects and emotions (Rochat & Striano, 1999, p. 5). In fact, Rochat and Striano assert that such shared interactions are the foundation of social cognition, "the process by which individuals develops the ability to monitor, control, and predict the behavior

of others" (Rochat & Striano, 1999, p. 4). The second and third photographs depict contexts in which the infants' ability to read the "dispositional world" of others expands to the adults' disposition towards objects and events. Whereas the early interactions afforded opportunities for the young infant to learn social behaviors useful to maintain important relationships, they now provide opportunities for these young humans to learn about the world in which they live. Over time, interactions similar to the book reading event in the second photograph and the block building event in the third photograph enable certain events to become routine and certain objects to become familiar. Moreover, these interactions provide rich venues for knowledge construction; construction interlaced with the social and emotional dispositions in which they were embedded.

In summary, numerous theories and understandings from developmental science supply needed support to strengthen the argument that literacy teaching and learning processes occur between humans. Discussed herein are two. *As humans we are motivated to be with and to be like the important people in our lives.* And, *as humans, "what we learn, how we learn, and how we perceive that learning is not just a cognitive process but an emotional [and social ones] as well"* (Reynolds, 2005, p. 31). Even though the relevance of these understandings to the actions of infants and toddlers is visibly evident, our need to affiliate with others continues throughout our lives (Sroufe, et al., 2005). As literacy researchers and educators, we know this; not just intuitively, but intellectually as well. Eighty-seven percent of preteens and teens use the internet to maintain social contact (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). Students, kindergarten through high school, experience higher levels of achievement when taught by teachers whom they believe care about them (National Research Council, 2004). Schools successful with urban high school students incorporate "structures for personalization", to ensure positive, long-term teacher-student relationships, (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 246).

Why then do current summaries of reading research, specifically the reports of the National Early Literacy Panel (National Institute for Literacy, 2008) and the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000), conceptualize literacy teaching and learning as primarily cognitive processes? What theories did the authors of these reports use to guide their attention to effective literacy practices? Is it possible their vision was obscured, maybe even blinded, by their unexamined use of theories that omit the human element in learning? If so, they violated their own decision rule to include only information supported by research. Decades of research exist which describes how humans learn. Volume one in the *Handbook of Child Psychology: Theoretical Models of Human Development* (Lerner, 2006) provides extensive descriptions of such research.

A Response to the Vision Problem

The statistics reported in the Introduction of this paper reflect a problem. A problem I view much like how Marion Wright Edelman, founder and Director of

the Children's Defense Fund, views the challenges faced today by children in the United States, "*Our child and youth problem is not a child and youth problem; it is a profound adult problem*" (Children's Defense Fund, 2007, p. 2). As literacy professionals who bear the primary responsibility to prepare others to teach literacy, we are the adults. And as such, we should ensure that the pre-service and in-service teachers with whom we work take into their classrooms an understanding of what it means to be a human participant in the process of becoming literate. Perhaps if we assume this responsibility with laser-like intensity, our students, current and future teachers, will be better prepared to advocate for policies and practices which demonstrate that literacy teaching and learning are processes that occur between human beings.

My call to forefront the human dynamic in literacy teaching and learning is not an isolated one. Many within our field make direct connections to the human element in literacy. Researchers such as Alvermann (2003) and Brozo (2002) have increased the field's understanding of how peer culture and gender influence adolescent literacies. Carol Santa (2006) speaks passionately about the need to recognize the relational dimension of literacy learning. In fact, many within our organization work tirelessly to improve the literacy experiences of students in our schools and adults in our communities. At least two of our previous presidents spoke on related issues in their presidential addresses. In 1999, Nancy Padak (2000) gave an address titled, "Listening to Learners" and Jon Shapiro (2006) spoke about the importance of the affective elements of literacy in his address titled, "Another Pothole in the Road". As literacy researchers and educators, we illustrate in our writing, research, and actions that we care about the human variable in literacy. Yet our individual messages are not evident in the literacy research summaries that weigh such substantive influence on current literacy practices. We need to step up to ensure that those whom we teach leave our classrooms and enter theirs with enhanced vision. So, when they look in the faces of their students, they see humans who will be participants in literacy learning experiences. Humans who possess within them a history of learning garnered while in the laps and by the sides of those closest to them. Humans who reflect that history in their ways of seeing the world and being within the world. And, humans who are unable to parse their literacy experiences into individual cognitive, emotional, and social compartments. I submit, metaphorically speaking, that the ball is now in our court. Let's pass it on.

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Appendix

Figure 1. *A Dyadic Interaction Between an Infant and His Mother*

Figure 2. *A Triadic Interaction Between a Toddler and His Father*
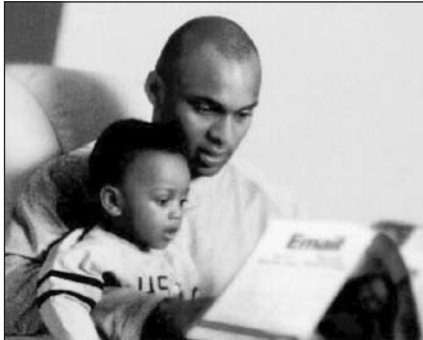
Figure 3. *A Collaborative Interaction Between a Toddler and His Father*

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

KID-WATCHING, NEGOTIATING, AND PODCASTING: IMAGINING LITERACY INSTRUCTION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Children today are born and inducted into a world in which new technologies and new forms of communication are widespread. Therefore, they participate in the world with new mindsets, identities, and practices. This paper sheds light on what this may mean for literacy instruction in the 21st century, including the use of critical literacies and new or contemporary technology.

Five-year old TJ was asked to draw a picture of his family by his pre-school teacher. The image he created, seen below, was of three people of varying heights, representing his Mom, himself, and his Dad. His dad is on the right drawn with a long ponytail. His mom is on the left with dark hair sticking out two sides off the top of her head. TJ is the one in the middle with the baseball cap. In TJ's image of his family, he has represented each person holding an iPod Touch™ (a portable media player and digital assistant).

Figure 1: TJ's Family

Important to note is that TJ has drawn each Touch™ with a different combination of colored dots. When asked why he used a different combination of colored dots for each person, his response was, "because each of us likes different things, so we have different apps." Apps, or applications, is the term used to refer to a program designed for the end-user (the person for whom a product is designed and marketed). Each dot therefore represents a particular iPod Touch™ application or 'app' that he knows is on his Mom's or Dad's Touch or that he thinks they should have on their Touches. For instance, on his iPod™, TJ has various game apps like Rolando2™ and drawing apps like iDoodle2™, while his dad has apps like Grocery IQ™ and Toodledo™.

Gabriela, is one of TJ's pre-school classmates. At school one day, her two-year-old sister Siena was on the playground, waiting with their Mom at the end of the school day, when she climbed into a red and yellow ride-on car. As she stepped into the car to settle into the driver's seat, she turned around with a hand stretched out toward her mother, who was standing nearby, and said 'keys'. Her mother handed her toy keys at which time, Siena, again with an open hand towards her mother, requested 'phone'.

Alison, on Facebook, in a quick exchange with Vivian about their children, shared that her son Pete's first words were iPhone and Chewbacca. iPhone™ is a combination of an iPod™, and a cellular phone made by Apple Computer and Chewbacca is a character from the original Star Wars™ movie from the late 1970s. The movie, set 'a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away', is a favorite among sci-fi fans and those interested in new technologies because of the interesting and innovative ways in which technology is used throughout the movie's storyline.

It is clear from these literacy stories that children today are born and inducted into a world in which new technologies and new forms of communication are widespread. Young children, like TJ, Siena, and Pete "participate in the world with new mindsets, identities, and practices" (Lewis, 2007 p. 230). Lewis (2007) notes that these new ways of being and doing are inevitable with new technologies and new forms of communication. Siena's contextual use of language and Pete's first words are examples of Street's (1984) notion of language development as a socially situated practice, whereby, from a very young age, children make use of the language resources available to them. Similarly, TJ's drawing exemplifies Gee's (2004) notion of Discourse (with a capital D) in which people use "a compilation of semiotic material, and expressive resources as an 'identity kit'" allowing them "to be recognized as certain kinds of people within a given context" (Black, 2006, p. 170). This was evident in TJ's use of the iPod Touch™ in his drawing as a symbol representing membership in a certain community.

What do these stories mean for literacy curriculum, particularly a curriculum for the 21st century? In the next section, we share insights into literacy teaching and learning that have been important for our work as a backdrop for responding to this question.

Theoretical Positioning of 21st Literacy Learning

Our Literacy Beliefs

Two major insights into literacy and literacy learning that has come about in the last ten to twelve years and that has greatly impacted our work are multiple literacies and critical literacies. Researchers have found that different cultural groups have different definitions of what it means to be literate whereby children are inducted into literacy differently (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Street, 1997; Barton, 1994). In response, some researchers have pluralized the term literacy, using the term multiliteracies, "in order to account for multiple ways of making meaning" (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p.68).

The second dimension of multiple literacies is multiple ways of knowing. Literacy involves much more than just reading and writing. It involves orchestrating a whole variety of sign systems in an effort to make and share meaning. The multimodal nature of being literate is evident everywhere but probably most obvious when one goes on the web. Pictures, text, music, videos, and all too often, some very aggravating pop-ups, accompany most reading events. Researchers like Leu & Kinzer (2000) argue that some very different cognitive processing is necessary to read materials on the Internet than is used in reading texts as we have commonly thought of them. This, of course, connects with the notion of shifting mindsets. This dimension recognizes that there are multiple conceptions of literacies and multiple conceptions of what it means to be literate. The second major breakthrough in our understanding of literacy progressed from the critical theorists. They (Critical Theorist) argue that definitions of literacy are not as important as the social practices that surround literacy, and the Discourses that drive them. In fact, these social practices of using Discourse (Gee, 2005) maintain and privilege certain forms of literacy. The argument is that there are larger social forces at work and these social forces are what make sure that inner-city schools always underperform suburban schools. Finn (1999) documented that because of these forces, schools in different settings encompass unequal treatment of students. Teachers talk to children differently in the inner city schools than they do in the suburb schools. The children in inner city schools are given tasks that prepare them for working on the production line while the children in elite schools are taught to be creative, invited to make decisions, and expected to be inquirers. Researchers like Noguera (2009) and Morrell (2007) share these same sentiments. These larger forces can be thought of as social practices with a capital S and these underlying forces trump what individual teachers may do.

Larson and Marsh note, "…there is no singular, normative version of critical literacy. Rather, it is a concept that has been shaped by various theoretical paradigms over the years and formulated in practice in ways that are deeply contextualized and specifically situated" (2005, p.40). Vasquez (1994, 2004) noted that critical literacy should not be considered a topic to be covered, but rather should be considered a different lens, or framework, for teaching throughout the day. Within this

framework, students' cultural knowledge and multimodal literacy practices should be used (Comber, 2001; Vasquez, 1998, 2000). This is based on the belief that students learn best when what they are learning has importance in their lives. Using the topics, issues, and questions that they raise should therefore be an important part of creating critical classroom curriculum (Vasquez, 1998, 2000). This curriculum begins from the premise that the world is socially-constructed and that within that world no text is ever neutral (Luke & Freebody, 1999). What this means is that early on children are taught that all texts are created from a particular perspective with the intention of conveying particular messages that work to position us in particular ways (Meacham, 2003). Because texts are socially-constructed and created from particular perspectives, they work to have us think about and believe certain things in specific ways. For instance, books that portray females as being in need of rescue such as Sleeping Beauty or Cinderella convey the message that females are the weaker or less powerful gender.

We, in turn, read texts from a particular position(s) and so our readings of texts are never neutral, and we need to question the position(s) from which we read (speak, act, do...). Just as texts are never neutral, the ways we read text are also never neutral. When we read, we bring with us our experiences and understanding about how the world works. This suggests that part of our work in critical literacy needs to focus on social issues, such as race, class, or gender and the ways in which we use language in ways that shape our understanding of these issues.

In the past, work in critical literacy has focused primarily on textual analysis and critique. More and more however, text design and production have come into the forefront as opportunities for critique and transformation takes place (Granville, 1993; Larson & Marsh, 2005). Text design and production refer to the creation or construction of texts and the decisions that are part of that process. This includes the notion that it is not sufficient to simply create texts for the sake of "practicing a skill." If children are to create texts, they ought to be able to let those texts do the work intended. For instance, if children are writing surveys or creating petitions, the work should be done with real-life intent for dealing with a real issue. If children write petitions, they should be able to send them to whomever they were intended. Helping children understand real-life functions of text is an important component of growing as a critically-literate individual (Luke and Freebody, 1999). Providing spaces for children to use the multiliteracies they bring to the classroom serves to enhance this experience.

Critical Components of a 21st Century Literacy Program

Before going any further, it is important to note that just because one is using multiliteracies and new technology in the classroom does not mean they are simultaneously engaging in critical literacies (Vasquez, 2010). Rather these multiliteracies and new technologies may be used as tools within critical literacy work. Such tools can be used in the production of texts and in the distribution of texts both locally and globally. Further, they allow for a shift in the ways in which we think about the world and the ways in which we communicate in that world.

In this section, we discuss what a Literacy Program for the 21st Century needs to address and why. Specifically, we will talk about meaning making, language study, and inquiry. We see critical literacy, as discussed earlier, as the overarching frame that cuts across each of these components.

Meaning Making

From our experiences in various classroom settings in the USA and Canada, we saw components of meaning making as including opportunities for uninterrupted writing, read aloud, wide reading through literature studies, reading, and writing strategy lessons, as well as multiple ways of knowing such as art, music, dance, and drama. In her research and book, Negotiating Critical Literacies with Young Children (Vasquez, 2004), Vivian shares her use of an audit trail (see Figure 2) as a visual articulation of meaning making over the course of one school year with her three- to five-year old students. At the start of the year she decided to read aloud the picture book, *Quick as a Cricket* (Wood & Wood, 1997), hoping the children would find it interesting and hoping that they would be able to chime in as she read. She did not get very far into the book when one of the children paused at one of the illustrations and asked, "Is that a frog or a toad?" Finding an answer to this question generated several topics for inquiry including, saving the rainforest and environmental issues. To represent this initial conversation, she posted a copy of the book cover, a copy of the frog or toad illustration and the question on what later became known as the class' audit trail or learning wall (Vasquez, 2004). She explained to the students that from then on they would get to decide on what kinds of artifacts or objects to post on the audit trail of learning to help remind them of the work they were doing in the classroom and the various topics and issues they were studying. Then, the students brainstormed possible items that could be used as artifacts.

Figure 2: Audit Trail 1
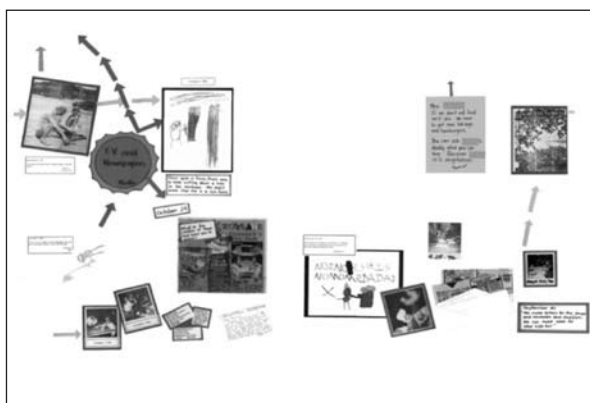
Figure 3 is another image from the learning wall – this one has a McDonald's Happy Meal™, which Vivian and her students critically analyzed and through which they explored what it means to be an informed consumer. Alongside their critique, they also worked on such activities as re-designing the packaging of the toys included in the Happy Meal™to make it safer for children.

Figure 3: Audit Trail 2
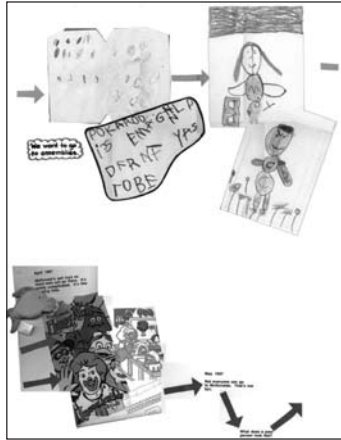
Figure 4 was what the audit trail looked like at the end of the year. It was 40'x6' with over 130 artifacts. Anyone who visited the classroom walked through the various artifacts whereby children from the class would talk with visitors regarding the various issues and topics they had studied and the connections between each. As they did this, the children were reminded of the ways in which they used multiple ways of knowing to construct meaning.

Figure 4: The Classroom

Language Study

During a workshop on new literacies, Lankshear (2007) noted that the truth in government and education no longer exists, as we have known it. Since Bush, truth is simply a matter of what narrative you can spin. This is in keeping with Lakoff's (2004) notion of framing, specifically, how we frame the messages we convey through the discourses we choose to use, positions our audience in particular ways. The frames we use to read and to respond to in the world, shape how we are able to participate in that world. This really gets at the notion of language and power, language as constructive, and language as constructed. For instance, following is a quote from one of the displays at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, "The Price of Freedom: Americans at War" special exhibit.

> "Wars erupted frequently in North America in the 1600s and 1700s as rival groups clashed with each other and with the resident Indians."

Here, wars are presented as though they happen without agency. Volcanoes erupt, wars do not, and they are initiated through particular positions to produce particular results. Notice here also how Indians are the only group culturally identified. How does the use of the word direct us to frame our reading from a particular perspective and what is that perspective?

One of the ways we have explored language, positioning, and perspectives in the classroom is by using children's books in combination with everyday texts. For instance, one of the invitations we used focused on text sets. Children were provided with three different texts focused on the same topic (e.g. magazine ad, picture book, art image). The children were asked to think about who wrote each version of the text and why, who was it written for, whose voices are not included, and how it could be otherwise. Also discussed were how the texts work in combination and what difference it makes to compare one text against another. Sometimes these everyday texts could be particular events that take place in school or outside of school. Regardless, the activity helps children to understand how language works to offer particular positioning, or ways of being, that contribute to shaping whom we can and cannot be as well as what we can and cannot do. Similarly, when we follow up by asking children to redesign some of these texts from alternatives perspectives, or to re-design counter narratives from such text, they learn how the language choices they use tell readers their positioning toward the text. Children therefore spend time analyzing how texts position the reader in different ways and the positions from which they create and read texts.

Inquiry Learning

Inquiry Based Learning focuses on taking up the children's questions, wonderings, passions, issues, and so forth and building curriculum around them. Sometimes these inquiries are large-scale studies or longer term projects that could last for weeks. The use of the audit trail in Vivian's early childhood classroom (Figure 4) for instance was used to represent her student's generative inquiry questions

throughout the school year. One inquiry was so connected to the next that it was sometimes difficult to delineate where topics or issues started and/or ended.

Other times, inquiries result from simply 'lingering with text' (Sumara, 2002). Charlotte Gonzalez, while working with third and fourth had her class *linger* and *reflect* on a quote from Cinderella,

> "The King's son decided to have a party. He invited
> anybody who was anybody in the kingdom to come."

Lingering created a space for Charlotte and her students to explore inequitable power relations in the classroom and beyond and in so doing attempt to change these inequities. (For more on inquiry learning see Berghoff et al, 2000).

The Role of Technology in 21st Century Literacy Instruction

Comber, Nixon, and Reid (2007) asked how technology, such as sending a message or texting using a cell phone, creating a video, and participating in online spaces such as electronic art galleries for children, provided new and interesting ways for children to communicate their ideas, questions, and understanding about the world around them. Lewis (2007) noted the problem in schools was that teachers only received training in the curricular uses of technology. Missing was what Knobel and Lankshear refer to as "new ethos stuff" (2007, p.9). Thus, teacher professional training in the use of technology focused primarily on the question "How do I technologize the work that I do?". In other words, how do I do what I am currently doing, but with a technological twist?

New ethos stuff, according to Knobel and Lankshear (2007) was about being able to use technology to "participate in literacy practices that involve different kinds of values, sensibilities, norms, and procedures from those that characterize conventional literacies" (p. 7). New ethos stuff was evident in April 2008, when UC Berkeley graduate journalism student James Karl Buck was arrested without any charges in Egypt for photographing a demonstration. He used his mobile phone to tweet one word 'Arrested' to his followers. Immediately, his followers contacted UC Berkeley, the US Embassy and a number of press organizations on his behalf resulting in his release shortly afterward. Similarly during the recent metro crash in Washington DC, people using Twitter™ (a short message service or SMS, which allows one to send and read posts of up to 140 characters via a computer or cell phone) were able to get news regarding the crash out through the Internet more quickly than the news media. Therefore, Twitter™ has become more than just a networking tool but also a social support tool as well. Twitter™ has created spaces that allow for everyday use of contemporary literacies as part of daily life.

At the start of this paper, we shared a collection of narratives about the ways in which young children today regard the use of technology as part of their everyday lives. These opening narratives are important to keep in mind as we consider the role of technology in the 21st century literacy curriculum.

Podcasting with Second Graders: 100% Kids

The second grade classroom was located in a school with over 800 students. According to the school website, the students represent over 40 countries of origin and over 20 different languages spoken at home although the most dominant of these is Spanish. The neighborhood was located about 25 minutes outside of Washington, DC, in a neighborhood that was experiencing increased gang activity and where most of the children are on free or reduced-cost lunch. On average, there were 20 students in the class. Fifty percent of the children were English Language Learners. Sixty-five percent were on free or subsidized meals. One student was identified with a learning disability and another eight were in the referral process. This classroom was a complex mix of children with varied needs.

The second grade students took on the role of podcaster during the spring of 2007. A podcaster, the person(s) doing the podcast, records either audio or video of themselves and/or others, using a digital recorder and then uploads it, or posts it to a place on the Internet for others to hear or view. These students used podcasting as a tool for conveying messages about projects they were doing, such as raising enough funds to send all the second graders, some of whom could not afford to go on school trips, to the Baltimore Aquarium. Their podcast, 100% Kids is available for download at http://www.bazmakaz.com/100kids/. They decided to call their show 100% Kids to indicate that they (the children) would generate the topics to be discussed on the show and that the voices that would be heard on the show would be primarily theirs. Some of the topics addressed in their show included animal rights, global/environmental issues, and children's rights. These second-graders, like the children whose work was shared at the beginning of the article, were of course born into a world that is technologically very different from the world we were born into. It was not surprising therefore that many of the children came to school with knowledge of and experience with the new technological stuff and new ethos stuff described by Knobel and Lankshear (2007). Their interest about podcasting was therefore not a surprise.

The children wanted to share, on their podcast, those issues that focused on issues of fairness and injustice, not to take the moral high ground but to make accessible to potential listeners, both kids and adults, how they have attempted to contribute to change in different spaces and places. As part of a conversation on internet safety, we talked to the children about choosing radio names for the purpose of the show. The act of choosing radio names was very exciting for almost all the children as they were quick to realize that taking on these new names meant the ability to construct new identities, new ways of expressing themselves, and new ways of representing themselves.

Gee (2003, 2004) talked about new technology, like podcasting, as opening up possibilities for new forms of interacting that are quite motivating and compelling. For some, the act of renaming themselves into a different existence was transformative and once shy and hesitant children for whom the curriculum was difficult

to access were taking on new roles in the classroom. This fits Nixon and Gutiérrez (2008) notion of identity play whereby children are able to extend the ways in which they are able to express themselves and tell their stories. As they play with language for publication in the online space, they develop an authorial stance or point of view from which they communicate their ideas. In doing so, they develop new identities as meaning makers (Nixon & Gutiérrez, 2008). For instance, Maria, a very shy, withdrawn seven- year old identified with multiple learning issues was one such child. When Vivian first met her, she deliberately shied away. She barely spoke and did not have much to do with the other children, including their podcasting.

Vivian spent one to two mornings a week in the classroom during the Fall 2006 and Spring 2007. Maria would literally sit or stand along the periphery of the classroom. Slowly, she began watching what her classmates were doing and she started to listen in on some of their conversation. Eventually she listened, with the other children, to one of their shows. After having heard a couple of shows she became more and more interested and gave herself a radio name. She wanted to be known as Queen, a nickname her mom called her. This was a name that apparently made her feel good, safe, and made her feel wanted.

Prior to the first recording session, Vivian talked with Queen about the equipment she was using and reassured her that they could record as many times as she wanted. The first recording session with Queen lasted about 15 minutes. Queen's debut performance consisted of one line, "We hope you like our painting of the world," which would be part of the art section of the podcast where there was a brief discussion regarding the piece of art used in the show notes. It took six or seven takes and approximately 25 minutes of editing to produce what amounted to Queen's 2.5 seconds of audio. If this were another task, she would have given up on it or not participated at all but Queen hung in there. Vivian had explained to her that they could cut out the pieces she was not happy with and leave in the pieces she liked. Knowing these editing tools were available, according to Gee (2003), lowered the consequences of failure, and created a space for Maria to take on this new challenge.

Several shows later, a different Queen emerged as she physically and emotionally moved from the periphery of the classroom to the center with her classmates. No longer was she recording with Vivian or by herself, she was engaging in banter, planning, and recording with a group of girls. In subsequent episodes, Maria could be heard singing songs, which she helped create with her classmates and saying things like "you go girl" or "that's right girl." In her identity as Queen, she was able to position herself as part of a group of classmates who by the end of the year had become her friends. No program of study or mandated curriculum could have helped her with this! For Queen, the experience of podcasting was transformative as it was for other children in the class.

As the children moved, based on their interests and desires, to doing different parts of the show, they mentored and ushered each other along the way. In a way, they were doing what Gee (2003) referred to as a "debugging", thereby learning from the experiences of others as they took on new roles or exchanged roles, in the production

of the show. Knowledge was shared and distributed among the children, and groups were often cross-functional. What this meant was that children did not stick to always working with the same group of classmates; they had no problems with creating and recreating new groups depending on which part of the show they were interested in developing. Children, like Queen, who at the start of the year had difficulty accessing learning were able to take on different identities in the podcasting world that created space for them to participate in ways they had not previously.

Putting together a show was not always easy. To attempt to put out a weekly show was quite an undertaking but the children took on this challenge with excitement and without hesitation. This included researching their topics using both fiction and non-fiction books and electronic resources. This is consistent with two of Gee's (2003) principles of learning: Committed Learning Principle and the Practice Principle. The first deals with learners participating in extended engagements, while the second deals with the ongoing rehearsing and rewriting of scripts where the repetitive nature of taking on each step of producing the show, week after week, never seemed to become boring (Gee, 2003).

For the children, producing, designing, and redesigning episodes and segments included in their podcast created a space to get at the notion that texts are socially constructed and that literacy was most definitely not a neutral technology. Through the issues they researched and talked about on the show, as well as through their own experiences in learning about how they each could contribute to this shared experience, they learned about ways they are positioned within certain social systems and the ways in which they position others through the choices they make. They learned to use what the technology afforded them to reach and connect with people beyond the physical limitations of their school site. They read and responded to comments from listeners and sometimes Googled the names of these listeners. Connecting with people in other spaces and places allowed the children to hear the perspective of others, and helped them to make decisions that were more informed. The use of new technology made accessible to them knowledge that they could not have gained in a pre-technological age. For instance, while using the World Wide Web, they learned about what other young people have done in other spaces and places using social networking tools like podcasting.

A Look to the Future

Our friend and colleague Carolyn Burke has said for years that the function of curriculum is to give perspective (personal communication). We hope that this paper and the demonstrations of practice we have shared, help you to gain insight and perspective into imagining literacy instruction for the 21ˢᵗ century. We hope classroom teachers move beyond the more traditional ways of working with texts to engage the learner in various transformative learning experiences. Using the existing literacy practices of children, by incorporating Podcasting and other new technologies as tools in the classroom, enhances and transforms the learning experiences in the classroom.

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WHAT COMES BEFORE MATTERS IN THE END!

Keynote Speaker
Given at the Estill Alexander Forum
for Leaders in Literacy
Marino Alvarez & Victoria Risko

Marino C. Alvarez

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Professor Alvarez is the only recipient of both the Teacher-of-the-Year and the Distinguished Researcher-of-the-Year Awards at Tennessee State University. He was also twice voted the "Most Inspiring Teacher" in a student election held by the TSU Student Teacher Education Association.

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Victoria J. Risko is a professor in the Language, Literacy, and Culture program of the Department of Teaching and Learning at Peabody College of Education, Vanderbilt University. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy education.

Her research focuses on literacy development for students' experiencing literacy difficulties, reading comprehension, and teacher education. One aspect of her current work focuses on teacher education research. She and her coauthors completed a critical analysis of published research on teacher reflection within teacher preparatory programs and an analysis of published research on preparing teachers to teach reading. The goal of her continuing research is to identify features of teacher education programs that support prospective teachers' development in the areas of teacher reflection and applications of pedagogical knowledge within teaching situations. A particular interest for Vicki is preparing teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse students and to teach in ways that maximize students' capabilities, interests, and cultural identities. Her research is published in edited monographs and in journals, such as Literacy Research and Instruction, Reading Research Quarterly, Journal of Literacy Research, *and* Language Arts.

She is currently a co-editor (with Vanderbilt professors Dickinson, Hundley, Jimenez, Leander, and Rowe) of the annual conference yearbook of the National Reading Conference. *Vicki received the A. B. Herr Award (2002) and the Laureate Award (2008) from the College*

Reading Association and the Distinguished Research Award (1992) from the Association of Teacher Education for her investigations of multimedia case methodology. Vicki is currently vice- president of the International Reading Association and will become president in 2011. She was a member of IRA's Board of Directors from 2002-2005. She also served on several IRA committees and commissions. Most recently, she was chair of the Publications Committee and the IRA Teacher Education Task Force, and was co-chair of the Reading Disabilities SIG. She is currently coeditor of the Research to Classroom column of The Reading Teacher. She is a past-president of the College Reading Association.

The sixth-grade teacher was dismayed when his students had limited comprehension of the social studies passage that focused on the work of muckrakers during the mid and late 1800s. These muckrakers, also referenced as reformers,

were writing about the cruel working conditions for factory workers, which included children, and miners. When the teacher asked his students to predict from the title and first paragraph what the text might be about, they either offered a few details or shrugged their shoulders and said they did not know. He was surprised that they generated no connections to the main idea, as they had just read a previous passage that described poor working conditions in meat factories.

The instructional event described above occurred recently in a social studies classroom, yet it represents a problem that we have observed many times in the past. Students often have difficulty comprehending main ideas and central concepts of texts they have read. Recognizing main ideas requires comprehension at many levels including (a) the reader's understanding of details and lower-order information, (b) the reader's understanding of the relationships among the lower-order and higher-order information, and (c) the reader's ability to recognize and, organize this information in a coherent representation of the information.

Comprehension also includes understandings of the author's style of organizing information, point of view, choice of words, and particular language structures. Understanding the main ideas of texts (i.e., print, digital, and speeches) typically requires students to generate inferences about what the author intended (main ideas are rarely stated literally), and to construct relationships among ideas that are situated within a particular text that may seem to be unrelated. We contend, however, that a lack of understanding of main ideas can greatly limit readers' recall of supporting details, which further limits their development of new knowledge and ability to deepen existing knowledge. We, like Graff (2010) and others, have observed that when central concepts are not understood, students show shallow understanding when asked to generate and explain the content of the texts they have read.

When we have observed comprehension instruction and talked with teachers about their goals, we have found that a focus on "getting the facts" as Mr. Gradgrind, the schoolmaster, demanded in *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1855) has trumped building understandings of central concepts or big ideas (Walmsely, 2006). Sometimes instruction is focused on retrievable "sound bites" (e.g., who owned Standard Oil, name three muckrakers, describe the work of children in factories), often viewed as disparate facts by students, deemed important by instructional leaders because they can be retrieved when tested. Other times, such instruction is associated with a "banking method of learning" as described by Freire (1970). The knowledge of the teacher or what is represented in the textbook takes precedence over students' agency for self-directed learning and independent self-questioning and problem solving (Alvarez & Risko, 2009). Often students have learned to produce answers that mimic the teacher or textbook rather than taking ownership for their own learning (Sommers & Saltz, 2004). We have learned that instruction focusing primarily on "establishing the facts" first instead of focusing on the main ideas needs to be turned around, as we contend that central and main ideas need to be established early on before and during text readings for it is those ideas that provide the conceptual glue for all the details that follow.

Our research and teaching over the last three decades has focused on text comprehension instruction designed to invite active, generative learning, which support students' comprehension of complicated concepts, often made more difficult by disorganized or poorly structured textbooks. What remains consistent throughout our research, refined and elaborated upon across our investigations, is our realization that students' comprehension is enhanced with attention to *centrality* of information represented in texts (i.e., print, video, and digital), *structure* of information, students' *connections* between the known and unknown, and *spaces* for reflection. *Centrality* in our work references authors' intended main ideas or point of view – they provide the higher-order conceptual glue for the details, facts, feelings and so on that are explained and elaborated on and in texts. *Structure* of information refers to how authors organize their information, such as the basic plot structure of narratives, or more complicated structures, such as persuasive arguments or positioning of perspectives. Central organizing structures of text are often referenced as macrostructures, and it is expected that a coherent text follow a well-defined top-level central structure. Microstructures, the semantic linkages at the paragraph and sentence level, represent the cohesion linking top-level ideas with the supporting information, such as the explicit connectives described in the appendix. Within our paradigm, *connections* refer to students' personal experiential and cultural histories that can be used as resources to support learning of new information. *Spaces* provide both the opportunity and time for students to reflect on their learning and take agency drawing on what they know for their interpretations and in applying what they are learning to real world contexts. These four – centrality, structure, connections, and spaces – are the analytical lenses that we applied to our study of teaching and learning events designed to achieve comprehension.

In this paper, we have discussed sets of studies conducted together and independently that focused on text comprehension instruction as described above. We begin with our initial studies and the use of a thematic organizer as an instructional scaffold to support comprehension. Next, we have discussed a series of studies that followed including our current research. Throughout the paper, we have demonstrated what comes before matters in the end!

Our understandings of learning with texts, is grounded in our belief that educating comes about through both self-educating (Gowin, 1981; Gowin & Alvarez, 2005) and within apprenticeship forms of engagement, including arrangements with teachers guidance and arrangements with peers learning with and from peers. Our work has been influenced by cognitive (Ausubel, 1963; 1968), constructivist and generative learning theories (e.g., Bransford, 1979; Norris & Phillips, 1987; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999), and socio-cultural perspectives that view learning as a social process and that students' comprehension is informed by their own experiential and cultural knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978).

Close Study of Texts Supported with Organizers as Scaffolds

This work began during the dissertation period with a text organizer designed to support ninth graders' comprehension of ill-defined concepts embedded within social studies texts. Alvarez (1980; 1983) created the thematic organizer as a text adjunct to help students' preview text information and generate connections between their prior knowledge and text concepts. More specifically, the thematic organizer was designed to: (a) highlight systematically and explicitly the central theme of the text; (b) relate the theme to experiences and/or knowledge that students already possessed; (c) provide cohesion among the ideas to accommodate text structure; (d) aid knowledge construction by elaborating upon new and extended meanings of thematic concepts; and (e) aid transfer learning with a novel concept. A thematic organizer differs from other types of *previews* in that it is developed to define and relate explicitly text themes through analogy to examples that are familiar to the reader (Alvarez & Risko, 2002).

As an example, we presented a target concept that was ill defined, such as "the reformers" in a social studies textbook used in one of our studies. This same concept was the focus of comprehension problems described in our vignette at the beginning of this paper. We used a thematic organizer to introduce this central concept of the passage and to bridge what students knew with what was to be encountered in the text (see Risko & Alvarez, 1986). The first paragraph "set the scene" by introducing the "reformers" in a setting believed to be relevant to the students' experience that included, "What would you think if the principal told you that you had to go to school every Saturday?" The second paragraph presented several examples that further defined the concept such as, "You may want to make changes so that you would not have to do any of these things." "Reform means to change what is unfair." The third paragraph presented an analogous relationship between the concept as defined by the students' prior experience and the concept as presented in the text and introduced an explicit definition of the thematic concept. This paragraph read, "Some people tried to reform or change what was unfair. These people were called reformers." Various attributes of the concept from the passage were added in the fourth and fifth paragraphs, and students were asked to explain these ideas in written form as a way to make predictions about the text. The guided instruction statements portion of the thematic organizer presents attributes and non-attributes of the concept. Students were given written directions to read these statements and select the ones that they thought were correct either during or after reading. The thematic organizer provided numerous and varied elaborations on the thematic concept "reformers" and established connections between sentences and relationships among ideas to aid integrated recall. When writing a thematic organizer, the teacher needs to consider the structure of the text and the connections that are necessary to make the central concept meaningful. The steps for developing a thematic organizer appear in the appendix.

We experimented with different versions of the thematic organizer (e.g., thematic overview section only, guided reading statements, combination of thematic overview and guided reading statements) across groups of fourth, fifth, and sixth

grade students (Risko & Alvarez, 1986). Students receiving the thematic overview and the guided instruction statements significantly outperformed others in the amount and quality of literal and interpretive open-ended responses they were able to give. Another study was conducted with undergraduate developmental studies students that investigated whether the transfer of a novel concept, and deductive reasoning in a science passage and a literature passage could be facilitated with a thematic organizer (Alvarez & Risko, 1989). Our results indicated that the thematic organizer strategy facilitated transfer of learning, and suggested that both students with adequate comprehension performance and those experiencing comprehension difficulties benefitted from an explicit explanation of the relationship between common elements of a concept across contexts and that calling attention to the text structure alone was insufficient to facilitate transfer of ideas.

In a more recent study with 67 sixth graders, Keown (2008) used a thematic organizer that included guided statements with hyperlinks to sources that students could access and judge their worth for understanding the target concepts presented in their science textbooks. The thematic organizers were written to include active electronic connections to the Internet. These interactive formats provided the teacher and the students with visual and animated portrayals of science concepts that lead to better understanding of the concepts they were studying.

Enhancing Comprehension with Rich Sources of Information
Anchored Instruction

Risko, as a member of the Cognitive and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, collaborated with her colleagues to develop technology-based curricula called anchored instruction. Real world problems were introduced into the study of academic disciplines in the classroom and to forge cross-curricular connections. In a series of studies, we examined students' learning within our video-based problem solving contexts that were rich with multiple sources of information organized around central conceptual themes. Across several projects located in elementary, middle, and secondary schools and our college classes, we used videos and printed texts to invite students' shared knowledge development and collaborative, active learning (Bransford, Vye, Kinzer, & Risko, 1990; CTGV, 1990; 1993; 1996; 1998). Initially in our instruction, students and teachers collaborated to map central concepts represented in the anchor texts (typically commercial films, such as *Young Sherlock Holmes*, or films, such as the *Jasper Woodbury* series or *The Little Planet* series, that the team produced) and once understood, re-examined the content to identify embedded issues and problems. These issues and problems were studied from multiple perspectives. Students resolved problems as producers of resolutions, enabling the development of new knowledge with cross-curricular connections and connections to their lives both in school (e.g., use of economic information to examine living conditions of characters in films) and out of school (e.g., application of economic principles to problems in their local community).

We concluded that video provides a dynamic media that adds particular value to an array of texts to support learning and deepen awareness of information that is essential to identify and solve problems that are associated with central concepts of texts (Sharp, Bransford, Goldman, Risko, Kinzer, & Vye, 1995; CGTV, 2003). We also learned that knowledge is enhanced when students learn to value both problematizing content and when generating connections to big ideas that go beyond conventional understandings and narrow worldviews. This work also broadened our view of classroom cultures, helping us think more deeply about the teacher as a mediator who invites dialogic conversations. Important in these conversations are the explicit actions of teachers taken to legitimize multiple forms of knowledge, especially the knowledge of students drawing on their experiences and cultural histories (Risko, 1999). This notion of acknowledging students' history and experiences was revisited in our current research with English Language Learners (Iddings, Risko, and Rampulla, 2009).

Students' Knowledge and Experiences Mediate Comprehension

The importance of central text concepts, text structure, making connections, and affording spaces for reflection and dialogue, used in tandem, were important instructional tools that mediated the reading comprehension and learning of a group of English Language Learners (ELLs) who were just beginning to learn English. Their teacher, Seth (pseudonym), faced the dilemma of how to best support their learning when he did not speak their language (Spanish) or share a similar cultural background. For this study, we completed a microanalysis of text conversations between this English monolingual teacher and his three ELL students (Iddings, Risko, & Rampulla, 2009).

To prepare for the instruction, Seth decided to use the *Curious George* (Rey & Rey, 1969) book series for several reasons. He had enjoyed reading these books when he was in the elementary grades, and he believed in the value of using text sets (such as those written by the same author) so that his students could rely on the same characters, plot development, and conflicts across texts. He thought this form of consistency would be especially valuable to provide linguistic and contextual support for the ELL student's comprehension.

During the text conversations, we identified several patterns of supportive instruction. First, central text ideas were introduced (George was in trouble) with specific connections to story elements, such as the characters (e.g., the man in the yellow hat), the initiating events (e.g., George's curiosity leads to trouble), and events leading to problem resolution (e.g., the man in the yellow hat rescues George) that were mapped on a story elements' chart. Second, throughout the discussions Seth encouraged his students to make connections to the story problems and feelings of the main characters. Third, Seth noticed that students were reflecting on their readings by translating story ideas to Spanish and talking with each other to confirm their hunches and interpretations before explaining their ideas and connections to Seth. Fourth,

once Seth noticed how students were translating for each other and sharing insights in their first language, he provided the space – opportunity and time – for them to use their knowledge and language as mediators of their own learning. Centering the conversations on the main text ideas supported students' attention to the foundational information of the story development. Providing spaces for students to make connections to these ideas and engage in productive conversations with each other and with Seth encouraged students to deepen their comprehension. They elaborated on central story concepts and built on each other's knowledge and linguistic productions as they engaged effectively in text conversations.

Creating Spaces for Activating
Thought and Negotiating Meaning

Comprehension is dependent on the careful planning of an assignment by a teacher and the time and resources available to the student. As we noted earlier, a role of the teacher is to provide opportunities for students to create spaces for thinking, reflecting, and negotiating meaning when confronted with meaningful assignments. Likewise, students need to be deliberate in their learning by initiating these thinking spaces on their own to better grasp and understand new information and its application.

Spaces provide students with an opportunity to express, reflect, and share their thoughts and feelings with their teachers, professors, and peers. Teachers and professors also reflect on their class sessions and often regret not expressing a key point, or want to provide elaboration on key concepts discussed in class. It is during these circumstances that spaces created with electronic communication become a forum for teacher/professor/student interactions. Within this context, spaces are defined as areas in which students can post their reflections directly to their teachers or professor through journal entries or to other students, or keep personal records electronically (Alvarez & Risko, 2009). For example, in our Exploring Minds Network (http://exploringminds.tsuniv.edu), spaces are provided for our students to journal with their teacher or professor or among each other, discuss topics in depth through teacher or professor and student generated threaded discussions, keep personal notes, and/or store electronic documents, notes, video, art work, and pertinent Internet sites that are related to a class project, research, or personal project (Gowin & Alvarez, 2005, chapter 9). In an earlier article, we described how spaces afford opportunities for students to pause, think, reflect, and imagine future possibilities with newly learned information (Alvarez & Risko, 2009). We described several avenues to engage students as they navigate academia:

- Spaces for managing knowledge;
- Spaces to enable student voices to affect educating;
- Spaces that allow for personal meaning;
- Spaces that encourage self-authorship; and,
- Spaces that encourage learned optimism.

We include within these spaces the role of a reader when confronted with three distinctive textual features determined by the centrality of an author's intentions, the structure of a text's organizational patterns, and the connections that must be made by activating and constructing new knowledge models using personal experiential and cultural histories in the thinking, reasoning, and learning process.

Spaces Determined by Centrality

Centrality, and its effect on learning new information, is crucial to a learner. The degree of congruence between the reader and the author's intentions with a target concept determines the extent of understanding, judgment, and application with an author's perspective. How the teacher approaches this and bridges the known to the new is most crucial. Connecting the known to the new is a tenant that foreshadows a teacher's lesson and promotes assimilation of ideas.

To make known an author's intentions, we have advocated the use of electronic concept maps. These maps enable students to sort through and organize the key concepts and their relationships to clarify ambiguities or establish a visual representation by which to negotiate meaning with the teacher/professor or one's peers. Likewise, revealing ideas using these hierarchical maps provide the user with a road map toward planning and resolving intricate and complicated assignments (Alvarez & Gowin, 2010; Alvarez & Risko, 2008). These maps can be developed individually and collaboratively and shared electronically with appendages linked to relevant documents and Internet simulations, sites, and sources. CmapTools (http://cmap.ihmc.us/download/) is a software program that offers these features and serves as a bridge to meaning for the teacher, professor, and student. Students in the Exploring Minds Project use these maps to centralize their focus on self-initiated questions and their corresponding events by using concept maps to reveal their ideas and negotiate meaning with peers, their teacher, and in some instances outside resource persons such as an astronomer or university literacy educator (Alvarez et al., 2000a; Alvarez et al., 2000b).

Spaces Determined by Text Structure

Text structure is often perceived as patterns that are represented in a passage with signal words indicating paragraphs that contain description, sequence, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, or problem/solution. However, as we described earlier, they also are indicative of the writer's intentions whether that writer be an author of a published text or a writer of papers when completing assignments. An effective tool for organizing ideas when writing or preparing a speech or when deciphering an author's intention is the use of concept maps.

A hierarchical concept map is a visual representation of an individual's thought processes. The concept map is a word diagram that is portrayed visually in a hierarchical fashion and represents concepts and their relationships. Students, teachers, and researchers use concept maps as a way to visually display and share ideas. Hi-

erarchical concept maps enable students to reveal their ideas with a theme or target concept under study. When students redo their concept maps, they reconceptualize their ideas and these ideas become more meaningful. These maps are very helpful for negotiating ideas not only with the teacher, but also with one's peers. The connections shown on the map together with the linking words determine the extent to which ideas and text patterns are meaningfully represented. These maps enable learners in improving higher-order processing skills and improve academic performance (Asan, 2007; BouJaoude & Attich, 2007). Electronic maps are transactive and permit a sharing of ideas to occur between peers and the teacher (Canas et al., 2004). A transactive map contains feedback the student receives and uses in the reformulation of the map. This map reconstruction is an important part of the learning process as it enables the student to rethink ideas and exhibit them again in a new display (see Novak & Canas, 2008). Together the teacher and student negotiate the ideas revealed by the map into a coherent and meaningful record.

The **V** heuristic developed by Gowin (1981) to enable students to understand the structure of knowledge (e.g., relational networks, hierarchies, combinations) and knowledge-making within a given discipline is another tool for learning about the structure of knowledge and its use this knowledge in novel contexts (Gowin & Alvarez, 2005; Alvarez & Gowin, 2010).

The **V** diagram aids students in this linking process by acting as a metacognitive tool that requires students to make explicit connections between previously learned and newly acquired information. The **V** diagram is shaped like a "V" and elements are arrayed around it. The left side, conceptual or thinking side, of the **V** displays *worldview*, *philosophy*, *theory*, and *concepts*. The right side, methodological, or doing side, has *value claims*, *knowledge claims*, *transformations*, and *records*. *Events and/or objects* are at the point of the **V**. Interplay between both the thinking and doing side engages the learner in critical thinking and reasoning processes as a regular course of inquiry. Both sides are interactive; not exclusive (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Gowin's V Diagram.
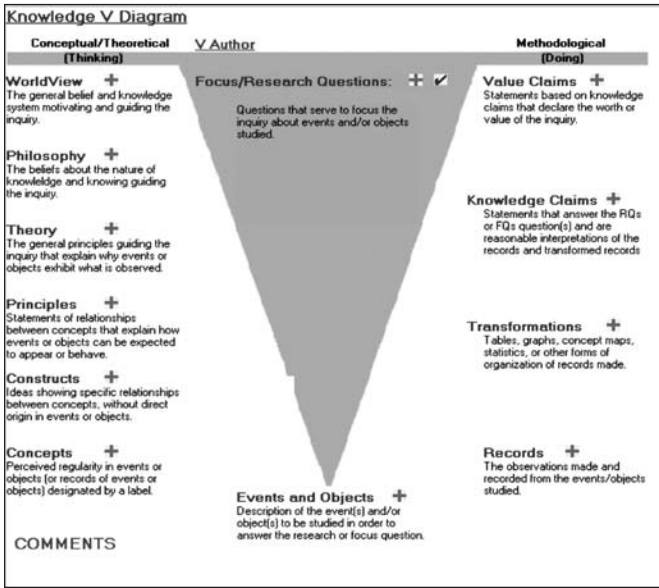
An *Interactive V Diagram* has been designed to enable users to share information appearing on the **V** and allowing new **Vs** to be constructed (Gowin & Alvarez, 2005); also, a version can be accessed at http://exploringminds.tsuniv.edu under **V** Diagram.

High school students in our Exploring Minds Project use concept maps and **V** Diagrams in their case-based research. These metacognitive tools enable students to self-monitor their progress and to re-conceptualize their ideas as they plan, carry out, and finalize their research investigations. Students use these precepts of centrality, structure, making connections, and spaces during their research. They use the tools and the electronic communications processes to reflect and build upon their ideas to seek answers to their own questions, sort through electronic and print mediums, make judgments, and synthesize facts and ideas. During this process, students take charge of their actions through deliberate learning: accepting responsibility, pursuing paths of inquiry, weighing facts and ideas under plausible and meaningful circumstances, and by providing evidence of personal meaning and ownership through research. Many of these students have presented at national and international conferences along with their teachers; relying on demonstrations and explanations including the use of concept maps and **V** diagrams rather than reading from a prepared paper (Alvarez, Stockman, Rodriguez, Davidson, Swartz, 1999; Alvarez, Busby et al., 1998; Alvarez, Rodriguez et al., 1998 Alvarez & Rodriguez, 1995).

Self-knowledge comes about from our own individual experiences and the experiences that we glean from others. Each of these conceptual tools reveal language in one of three ways:

1. the **V** diagram shows the structure of knowledge within a given topic;
2. the concept map is a word diagram showing relationship of ideas; and,
3. case-based instruction empowers students to ask their own questions and pursue paths of inquiries that are less worn that may require varied language uses (e.g., musical, mathematical, chemical) for its resolution.

Spaces Allow for Making Connections

An important consideration for building personal meaning and making connections is the extent of personal, experiential, and cultural history brought to the printed page. Before learning begins, we need to assemble materials in a very special manner by sorting, manipulating, contrasting, comparing, tying-out, failing, and mindful thinking that is multidimensional in scope and includes the affective domain (Gowin & Alvarez, 2005). Reliance on our own prior knowledge, world and cultural experience, rather than starting with formulaic systematic procedures when asking questions, solving problems, and delving into research investigations is advocated as a premise to enable learners to become self-educating.

Having students generate concept maps to reveal and share their thinking and develop **V** diagrams with a variety of source materials, and providing them with case-based situations to analyze, discuss, and write reports are some ways to teach students to use their minds as critical thinkers, stimulate their imagination, and decrease their reliance on memorized facts as a sign of school achievement and success. The need for student self-regulation in challenging situations is a significant influence in the process of making meaningful connections and promoting personal meaning with newly encountered information.

To do so, Ausubel (1968) suggests that we place more emphasis on knowing and understanding as aims, in and of themselves, rather than any practical benefit that will come about from them. Within this realm, we need to provide our students with problem-oriented lessons that permit them to express their own creative and motivational pursuits in reaching resolutions. Equally important for making meaningful connections is the educational environment within which these lessons occur. Some notable factors among learners include their valuing of racial and socio-cultural variations, celebrating each other's successes, non-judgmental peer groups, non-stressful environment for group presentations, emotional support, and mentoring among older and younger students.

Teaching in These Spaces

Our theory of educating (Gowin, 1981; Gowin & Alvarez, 2005) directs teaching to focus on changes in the way students organize their expectations of

what they will be doing with the course content to make personal meaning. Within the context of educating, teaching in these spaces and educational value is evident in those moments when grasping the meaning and feeling the significance of that meaning come together. Spaces allow both cognitive and affective domains to operate simultaneously. When cognition is educative, then it is never separable from emotion. Feelings embrace thinking.

Educating is a process of deliberate intervention in the lives of students in order to change the meaning of experience. While educating, *teaching* is achieving shared meaning through negotiation rather than telling; *learners* are responsible for their actions; the *curriculum* is emergent and constructed rather than given and fixed; *governance* is the way we control meaning to control effort; and the *societal environment* is an important factor to be considered if formal school practices are to be meaningful. Incorporating students' out-of-school experiences into the formal school curriculum strongly influences and has an impact on new learning. For educating to occur, we work together to achieve meaning through the interacting of thinking, feeling, and acting.

The purposeful intervention in the lives of students is aimed at negotiating meaning between teacher, curriculum, and student to the point of mutual understanding. In this process, the teacher brings something, the curriculum presents something, and the student brings something. All three are involved in contributing something toward the empowerment of students so that they become self-educating.

Just as teachers cause teaching, students cause learning. The student is, therefore, responsible for learning. Learning is defined as an active, non-arbitrary, voluntary, reorganization by the learner of patterns of meaning. As learners, we are responsible for our own learning; no one can learn for us. We believe that metacognitive methods and practices such as those mentioned, need to become part of both the teachers' and the students' toolbox. Of course, instructional strategies alone do little to aid the learning process if the materials selected or the form of presentation have little relevance or meaning to the student and the topic of study.

What Comes Before Matters in the End!

Students can be taught to incorporate new information into their existing world knowledge. This can be accomplished through teacher-guided instruction and self-initiated strategies that include methods and meaningful materials that induce critical thinking with conceptual problems. In order for knowledge construction to occur, a framework needs to be provided that helps readers to elaborate upon new facts and ideas and to clarify their significance or relevance. Students need to learn more about themselves as learners. Notable in this learning context is the relationship between facts and ideas learned in formal school settings and those encountered in societal and everyday learning environments.

Reading comprehension resides in the mind not in the text. The better a target concept is known and understood, the better new learning and application with this target concept can occur. Our work has demonstrated that learning novel concepts can be enhanced with several instructional approaches that we have investigated, including scaffolds such as a thematic organizer, electronic concept maps, interactive **V** diagrams, and with anchored instruction and text conversations that legitimize students' cultural and linguistic knowledge. Our role as educators and as students is to change the meaning of our experience. Spaces, providing time and opportunities for managing knowledge and for thinking, reflecting, and sharing our thoughts and feelings, can afford productive and educative changes within us and our students.

By "end," we do not mean finality or conclusion. We mean there is to some extent a resolution that serves as a beginning to a new experience.

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APPENDIX A: Developing a Thematic Organizer
Marino C. Alvarez

The teacher:
1. Estimates the nature and degree of conceptual difficulty presented by the prose or narrative discourse.
2. Identifies the theme of the passage. This theme is generally implied by the author, and therefore has not been explicitly defined.
3. Writes a paragraph(s) which introduces the theme called a thematic concept to be studied. Sets the scene by introducing the thematic concept in a setting believed to be relevant to the students' experience.
4. Writes a paragraph(s) which either clarifies or elaborates upon the thematic concept. The paragraph(s) should define the thematic concept and present an analogy between the ideas in the text and the experiences of the students.
5. Composes each paragraph of the thematic organizer to contain a topic sentence followed by sentences with supporting details. These sentences should be written using explicit connectives, words that relate ideas in one sentence to the ideas to another sentence. Examples of explicit connectives appearing in the "The Reformers" passage are:
    1. *Reference* (e.g., These poor people could not own their own land. *They* did not have much money for food or houses).
    2. *Conjunction* (e.g., The reformers were *called* muckrakers).
    3. *Lexical* (e.g., The reformers tried to help people. *These reformers* wanted everyone to have a fair chance to make a living).
6. Asks students to make a prediction statement either orally or written concerning what they anticipate they will be reading.
7. Constructs statements that describe the thematic concept. At the end of each statement, paragraph number(s) are provided where the student can refer to make decisions concerning its relevance or irrelevance. Some or all statements may be linked to relevant Internet sites. The students are to place a check mark beside the statement with which they agree or to leave it blank if they disagree.

RESEARCH AWARDS

An Investigation Of Writing Instruction And Kindergarten English Learners' Acquisition Of Early Reading Skills

Doctoral Dissertation Award Winner

Cindy D'On Jones

Utah State University

Abstract

This article provides an overview of the effects of two prevalent forms of classroom writing instruction, Interactive Writing and Writing Workshop, on the growth of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and word reading for 41 English Learners in kindergarten. Results of the study showed growth in early literacy skills for English learners was significant. In directly comparing the two methods of writing instruction, differences were largely nonsignificant.

Writing is an important part of literacy instruction for all beginning readers, including English learners. Writing affords the power to extend beyond time and space. Even very young children recognize the power of writing as they scribble "messages" on walls and in books. Not only is it important for English learners to develop competency in writing for social and academic reasons, writing instruction for young learners encourages close inspection of symbols, words, discourse patterns, and other components of the English language. This close inspection and creation of written language may aid English learners in acquiring the skills of reading.

Reading and writing have long been described as interacting language skills with development in one promoting growth in the other (Farnan & Dahl, 2003; Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Shanahan, 2006; Squire, 1983; Tierney & Pearson, 1983). Literacy education that includes both reading and writing instruction allows the learner to interact with text from a receptive and a productive point of view, creating a deeper understanding of written text. Because writing requires a "conscious orchestration" of cognitive academic language proficiency skills in literacy (Lems, Miller, & Soro, 2010), writing proficiency requires effective instruction and

consistent practice. Therefore, writing instruction for English learners must not be delayed until students have achieved proficiency in speaking and reading English as instruction that builds on the reading-writing relationship may be of particular value in the primary grades when the foundations of literacy are established.

Given the importance of writing to the development of literate students, it is necessary to identify effective writing instructional methods for young learners of English and to examine how writing instruction may influence early reading skills. In fact, identification of high quality instructional practices that positively influence early literacy learning is a high priority for closing the persistent achievement gap for English learners (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In their synthesis of research about instructional issues for English learners, Genesee and Riches (2006) expressed concern about current writing instructional methods, noting the lack of evidence of effectiveness. With the immediacy of need for more research on best practices for English learners, such investigation should begin with methods of writing instruction currently in use with English learners: Interactive Writing and Writing Workshop.

Although research has established the importance of writing for early readers, it is unclear how varying elements of writing instruction may influence growth of reading skills for young learners of literacy and English (Clay, 1975, 2002; Durkin, 1989; Farnan & Dahl, 2003; Shanahan, 2006). As Writing Workshop and Interactive Writing are prevalent practice for early literacy instruction, this study directly compared the effects of these two instructional methods on acquisition of early reading skills for English learners.

Methods

One concern with research in writing instruction is the lack of experimental design, especially with elementary-age students (Juzwik et al., 2006). Yet, identification of effective instructional procedures for beginning readers and writers, especially for young learners of English, is crucial. Therefore, this study employed a repeated-measures true experimental design. Kindergarten English learners were randomly assigned to one of two writing instructional groups: Interactive Writing or Writing Workshop. Data were collected at four points during the sixteen-week study from all participants using repeated assessments. Multilevel modeling was used to analyze students' early reading skill acquisition.

Setting and Participants

Two elementary schools in a western city school district were randomly selected to participate in the study. Approximately 44% of the students in this district qualify for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program. This school district has a 6% higher elementary student Hispanic population than the U.S. national average as identified by Planty et al. (2009). For the purposes of this report, analysis was conducted on data gathered from 41 English learners with

Spanish as their native language. Status as an English learner and native language was identified from school records and confirmed by participating teachers. Forty-nine percent of the participants were male.

All kindergarten classes from both schools participated in the study for a total of 8 half-day kindergarten sessions. Class size ranged from 19 to 21, with a mean of 20 students per kindergarten session (SD = .84). Classrooms followed a 9-month instructional schedule. All participating teachers (n=5) in this study had a bachelor's degree in education with an Early Childhood endorsement. Teachers within each of the two schools were randomly assigned to instruct the Interactive Writing (n=2) or Writing Workshop (n=3) groups. Twenty English learners were randomly assigned to Interactive Writing instruction and twenty-one English learners were randomly assigned to Writing Workshop. Comparison of the groups showed no statistically significant difference between groups for student characteristics of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or initial literacy level.

Description of the Intervention

This 16-week study began in August as students entered kindergarten and concluded in December. As the purpose of this study was to compare results of two writing instructional methods on reading, a "walk to write" time was initiated. This "walk to write" time combined kindergarten students from different classes within a school for writing instructional groups, helping to account for potential differences in classroom instruction. Two groups at each school received Interactive Writing instruction and two groups at each school received instruction with Writing Workshop. Students received writing instruction from the teacher randomly assigned to their instructional group.

Interactive Writing. Interactive Writing is a shared writing experience that helps children attend to the details of letters, sounds, and words while creating meaningful text (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). The main components of Interactive Writing instruction include group negotiation of the text to be written, 'sharing the pen' to write the text, and group rereading of the text. As teachers and students shared the pen to construct the letters, words, and sentences, text was written on large chart paper. As recommended by Pinnell and Fountas (1998), during written text construction, instruction included: (1) analyzing letter-sound correspondence and sequencing, (2) identifying words, word parts, letter clusters, and letters, (3) noticing how frequently used words look and relate to other words, and (4) generating words, and making links among words, word parts, and word sets.

Writing Workshop. Writing Workshop involves students in independent writing with teacher guidance and monitoring. The components of a typical Writing Workshop were used, including mini-lessons, drafting and conferencing, editing, and sharing (Calkins, 2006). Mini-lessons were usually presented for the first few minutes of the daily writing lesson. After each mini-lesson, students completed individual writing and teachers held conferences with individual students. Time for sharing of writing was scheduled throughout the week, with additional time allocated for sharing on Fridays.

Early Reading Skills Assessments

Early reading skills are typically learned quickly with a brief period of acquisition (Paris, 2005). Thus, measurement of any single early reading skill at one point in time would likely not capture the rapid growth and development of reading in kindergarten. This study used repeated measurements at four equal intervals during the sixteen weeks with three nationally published, norm-referenced assessments to monitor the growth of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and word reading for kindergarten English learners.

Phonological Awareness. Kindergarten students' phonological awareness was assessed using the *Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing* (CTOPP; Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 1999). Student performance was gauged using the total score of correct responses given for three 20-item subtests: *Elision*, *Blending Words*, and *Sound Matching*. Concurrent validity for the CTOPP has been documented with other well-established phonological awareness measures such as the *Lindamood Auditory Conception Test* (Lindamood & Lindamood, 1970) and the *Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-R* (Woodcock, 1987). Internal consistency reliability for the phonological awareness subtests ranged from .84 on the blending words subtest to .89 for the elision and segmenting words subtests (Rashotte, MacPhee, & Torgesen, 2001).

Alphabet Knowledge. Student knowledge of letter names and sounds was evaluated using the *Letter Identification* task, a subtest from the *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (OSELA; Clay, 2002). The total number of correct letter names and letter sounds was used in the analyses. Denton, Ciancio, and Fletcher (2006) reported a .65 Pearson correlation with the *Woodcock-Johnson III Letter-Word Identification* (Woodcock, 1987) subtest. Reliability coefficients for the OSELA *Letter Identification* task are reported as .97 (Clay, 1993) and .95 (Pinnell, McCarrier, & Button, 1990).

Word Reading. The *Test of Word Reading Efficiency* (TOWRE; Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1999) Sight Word Efficiency subtest measured the number of sight words accurately identified in 45 seconds. The Phonetic Decoding Efficiency subtest measured the number of accurately decoded nonwords in 45 seconds. Extensive validity for the TOWRE has been well-established (Rashotte et al., 2001). Internal consistency reliability coefficients for the sight word subtest is .93 and .94 for the nonword decoding subtest (Rashotte et al., 2001).

Data Analysis

In this study, outcome measures were nested within students and students were nested within treatments; thus, the use of a multi-level modeling was appropriate for data analysis so the interdependency of levels could be taken into account when measuring changes in student achievement (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Hox, 1998, 2002; Hox & Maas, 2005; Willett, 1988). A two-level model was used to evaluate the impact of Interactive Writing and Writing Workshop on students' acquisition of early reading skills. Repeated outcome measures at four points in time (Level 1) were clustered within students (Level 2). Level 1 data consisted of the repeated outcome

measures for phonological awareness (*n* = 164), alphabet knowledge (*n* = 164), and word reading (*n* = 164). The multilevel model accounted for the effects of classroom grouping through clustering or nesting (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

   Three separate analyses were completed, one each for the three early reading skills dependent variables. The dependent variable for the level one model was student growth over time for each of the three early reading skills. The dependent variable for the level two model was student growth based on random assignment to the writing instruction group.

Results

Phonological Awareness

   Results of the phonological awareness growth model showed English learner student growth over time to be significant, $t = 4.40$, $p = .0001$. Results of the writing instructional model for phonological awareness showed differences between the two writing instruction groups to be nonsignificant, $t = 0.53$, $p = .60$.

Table 1: *Standardized Results for Phonological Awareness Models*

	Growth Model				**Writing Instruction Model**			
Fixed Effects	*Coefficient*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*Coefficient*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Time	4.65	1.06	4.40	.0001	4.17	2.03	2.06	.04
Writing Instruction					0.14	0.26	0.53	.60
Time by Treatment					0.59	1.17	0.50	.62
Random Effects								
Variance Estimates								
Intercept		0.35				0.31		
Slope		5.50				5.43		
Correlation between random						0.16		
slopes and intercepts		0.20						

   Table 1 summarizes the results of the phonological awareness models. Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, and gain scores for the two writing instructional groups on phonological awareness for each measurement period. Figure 1 compares the mean growth over time for English learner students in the Interactive Writing group with English learners in the Writing Workshop group.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics for Phonological Awareness Measure by Instructional Treatment Across Measurement Period*

	Interactive Writing				Writing Workshop			
n	20	20	20	20	21	21	21	21
Measurement Period	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Mean	6.40	10.10	13.85	20.40	7.62	10.76	14.14	19.05
SD	5.10	6.78	8.52	12.29	6.27	6.36	5.90	7.66
Mean Gain Score English Learners		3.70	7.45	14.00		3.14	6.52	11.43

Figure 1: Growth over time in phonological awareness by instructional treatment.
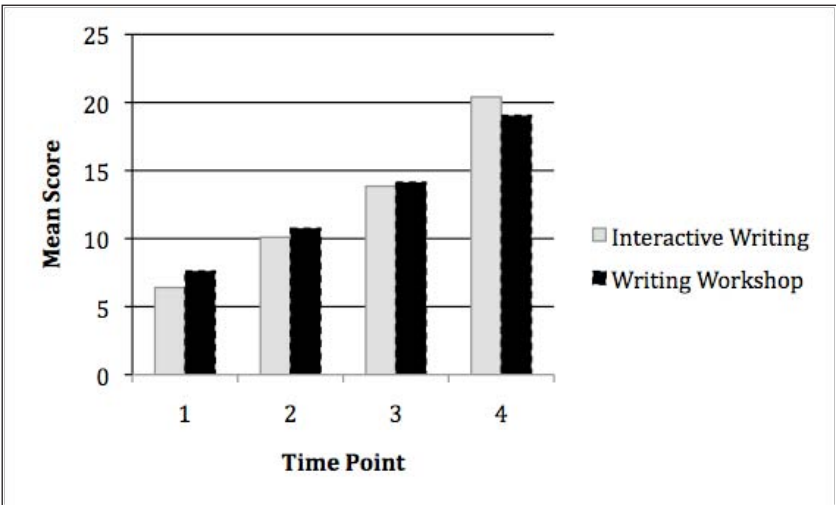
Alphabet Knowledge

Results of the growth model for alphabet knowledge showed English learner student growth over time to be significant, $t = 1.98$, $p = .05$ (Table 3). Results of the alphabet knowledge instructional model showed differences between the two writing instruction groups to be nonsignificant, $t = 0.32$, $p = .75$ (Table 4). Figure 2 compares the mean growth over time for English learners in the Interactive Writing group with English learners in the Writing Workshop group.

Table 3: *Standardized Results for Alphabet Knowledge Models*

	Growth Model				Writing Instruction Model			
Fixed Effects	*Coefficient*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*Coefficient*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Time	1.24	0.63	1.98	.05	1.32	0.62	2.13	.03
Instructional Treatment					0.03	0.08	0.32	.75
Time by Treatment					0.03	0.10	0.34	.74
Random Effects								
Variance Estimates								
Intercept		1.00				1.00		
Slope		1.00				1.00		
Correlation between random								
slopes and intercepts		0.75				0.75		

Table 4: *Descriptive Statistics for Alphabet Knowledge Measure by Instructional Treatment Across Measurement Periods*

	Interactive Writing				Writing Workshop			
n	20	20	20	20	21	21	21	21
Measurement Period	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Mean	14.95	36.25	59.45	79.55	16.86	28.90	60.38	84.33
SD	20.15	32.36	37.72	28.03	20.81	30.42	32.70	24.06
Mean Gain Score English Learners		21.30	44.50	64.60		12.04	43.52	67.47

Figure 2: Growth over time in alphabet knowledge by instructional treatment.
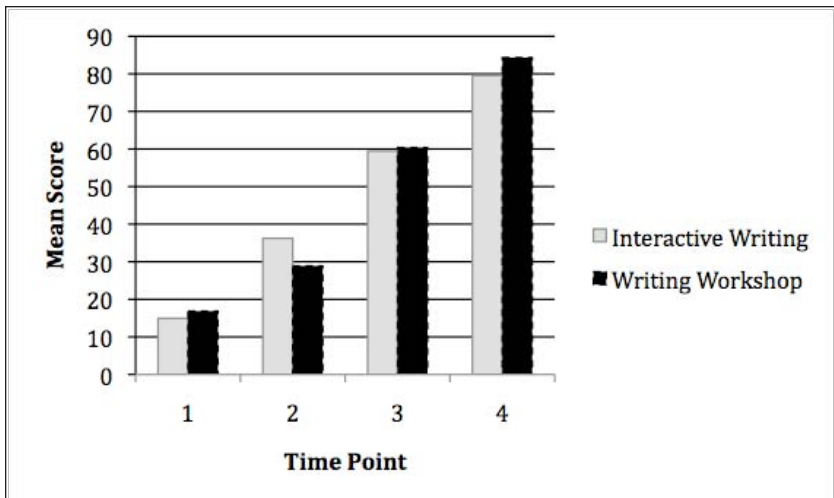
Word Reading

It is likely that any test of word reading administered at the kindergarten level would result in floor effects. However, this measure was included in the study in an attempt to capture growth of students who potentially might experience ceiling effects on the phonemic awareness or alphabet knowledge measures. As this outcome measure (TOWRE; Torgesen et al., 1999) resulted in a large proportion of scores of zero, a zero-inflated Poisson distribution was a better fit for these data (Atkins & Gallop, 2007; Long, 1997).

Results of the word reading growth model showed English learner student growth over time to be significant, $t = 4.10$, $p = .0001$ (Table 5). Results of the word reading instructional model showed differences between the two writing instruction groups to be significant, $t = 2.01$, $p = .05$. Descriptive data analyses show the average mean score gain for kindergarten English learner students over the duration of the study was 4.41 for students receiving Interactive Writing instruction and 2.19 for students receiving Writing Workshop instruction (Table 6). Figure 3 compares the mean growth over time for English learner students in the Interactive Writing group with English learners in the Writing Workshop group.

Table 5: *Standardized Results for Word Reading Models*

Fixed Effects	Growth Model				Writing Instruction Model			
	Coefficient	SE	t	p	Coefficient	SE	t	p
Time	1.16	0.28	4.10	.0001	1.44	0.33	4.37	.0001
Instructional Treatment					0.03	0.01	2.01	.05
Time by Treatment					0.08	0.02	3.94	.0001
Random Effects								
Variance Estimates								
Intercept	1.00				1.00			
Slope	1.00				1.00			
Correlation between random slopes and intercepts	0.91				0.98			

Table 6: *Descriptive Statistics for Word Reading Measure by Instructional Treatment Across Measurement Periods*

	Interactive Writing				Writing Workshop			
n	20	20	20	20	21	21	21	21
Measurement Period	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Mean	0.14	.26	1.45	4.55	0.19	0.29	1.52	2.38
SD	0.64	0.72	3.85	8.23	0.87	1.31	3.40	4.11
Mean Gain Score English Learners		0.12	1.31	4.41		0.10	1.33	2.19

Figure 3. Growth over time in word reading by instructional treatment.
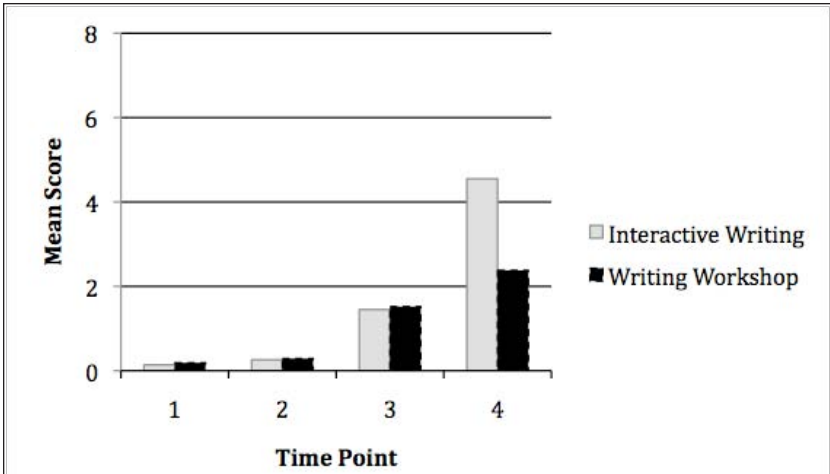
Limitations

Limitations of this study should be recognized when considering the results. First, the duration of the study was 16 weeks. A logical next step would be to extend the duration of the study to a full year to allow greater time for potential effects of writing instruction to more fully emerge. Second, the number of English learners participating in this study is limited to English learners who speak Spanish as their native language in kindergarten classrooms in schools in a mid-sized western city. Results, therefore, should not be generalized to locations and populations with vastly different demographic characteristics. Finally, this study compared only two methods of writing instruction. Future studies could consider expanding the number of participants, English learners of additional native languages, and/or other methods of writing instruction in investigating the impact of writing instruction on early reading skills of English learners.

Conclusions

Previous research has confirmed the importance of early reading skills at the kindergarten level for later success in reading (August & Shanahan, 2006; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; NICHD, 2000; Snow et al., 1998; Stanovich, 1986). Therefore, researchers must identify how literacy instruction at the earliest levels can best meet the needs of English learners. Instructional methods that may result in adequate growth for native speakers of English may not significantly contribute to closing the persistent achievement gap for English learners. Given the recognized importance of the reading-writing relationship for early literacy development, this empirical study directly compared two widely-used methods of writing instruc-

tion to learn more about how Interactive Writing and Writing Workshop impacts acquisition of early reading skills for English learners. This study focused on growth of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and word reading.

Growth over time for English learners was significant for phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and word reading. However, comparison of the two methods of writing instruction showed differences were largely nonsignificant. This is important to note, as descriptive studies of writing with only one group will likely show significant results for student growth, which may be due only to growth over time. Results of this study reinforce concerns stated by Genesee and Riches (2006) regarding the effectiveness of current methods of writing instruction for English learners. After almost one-half year of writing instruction in kindergarten, neither method of writing instruction proved more or less effective for closing the achievement gap in acquisition of early reading skills for English learners.

Acknowledgements

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Bridging Fact and Story: Using Historical Fiction in Middle School Social Studies

Master's Research Paper Award Winner

Daniel Allbery

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Abstract

Social studies curriculum and pedagogy have traditionally been taught by using textbooks. However, this study conducted an analysis of both social studies lesson plans and young adult historical fiction to examine alternative methods to textbooks and traditional teaching practices. It is argued that when pairing historical fiction with critical literacy strategies, social studies curriculum will be more engaging, meaningful, and relatable to middle school students.

Social studies pedagogy and curriculum have been and continue to be greatly contested in American schools. Arguments regularly surface about what content should and should not be taught and what medium is most effective to maximize student learning. So whose history do we teach and how do we teach it? This lingering question is at the root of social studies and continues to receive numerous answers.

Historically, the social studies curriculum and pedagogy stem from the use of a course textbook. Both teachers and students have found convenience in referencing a single tool for course content. A case study conducted by VanSledright and Kelley (1998) had several interesting findings. First, they found that students preferred textbooks because learning was easier as it required fewer sources. Second, they found that textbook convenience should be praised as it was believed the texts had great accuracy. Stahl, Hynd, Britton, McNish, and Bosquet (1996) found that high school students endorsed textbooks because they presented the raw, exact details. The utility of textbooks is one reason why they have been commonly accepted and authorized by a large population.

While many support the content and use of textbooks, the usefulness of these sources in recent years has been questioned. Critics have begun to diminish textbooks and challenge their canonical status. George and Stix (2000) argue that information covered in textbooks is "overwhelming" and "encyclopedic." Others are concerned not with the number of details, but with which details have and have not been included in the text's pages. Critics have asserted that textbooks over-simplify information or, more drastically, have published manipulated versions of historical events (Foster, Morris, & Davis Jr., 1996). Some antagonists claim these misrepresentations were intentional and assert that the author was "lying" (Bigelow, 1989) in his or her account or engaging in "selective forgetfulness" (Meltzer, 1992) or "covert censorship" (Shannon, 1989).

Critiques of social studies textbooks have caused individuals to ask, "Are textbooks the best print source for teaching history?" In light of the textbook criticisms, people have begun to explore alternative texts to discover whether or not there is an adequate replacement or companion source for the textbook. One source suggested as an alternative text is the historical fiction novel. Although many definitions exist for historical fiction, for the context of this project historical fiction will be defined as "fiction grounded in historical fact" (Apol, Sakuma, Reyolds, & Rop, 2003, p. 430).

Purpose of the Study

The focus of this project will examine the possible use of historical fiction in middle school social studies classrooms. Given the age, grade, and reading level of the students that this project is targeting, young adult (YA) historical fiction will be the concentration. The following practical questions guide this examination:

1. Is young adult literature, specifically young adult historical fiction, a viable text to be used in middle school social studies classrooms?
2. What are the benefits and drawbacks of teaching with young adult historical fiction?
3. How should teachers best utilize young adult historical fiction in their classroom?

To address these questions, a literature review was conducted to find articles that had referenced past research. Specifically, topics reviewed were the following: traditional social studies teaching practices, the use of literature and/or historical fiction in social studies classrooms, and the implementation of critical thinking/reading skills in social studies. Following the literature review, an analysis was conducted on the author's undergraduate student teaching lesson plans. The lesson plans (examples located in Appendix) were reconfigured to include the use of YA historical fiction and critical literacy strategies to achieve better learning outcomes. An application and discussion will come next, which will offer suggestions for teaching professionals regarding ways to use YA historical fiction in one's classroom.

Literature Review

Traditional Social Studies Instruction

The social studies controversy centering on what history should cover and how to teach it has been ongoing for over 100 years. According to Ravitch (as cited in Watras, 2002), at the end of the 19th century, both the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Historical Association (AHA), supported the teaching of "traditional, narrative, chronological history" (p. 245). The AHA stated this type of history instruction was justified when content was derived from a good textbook.

Traditional practices carried on throughout the 1980s when most teachers continued to rely on textbooks and lecture to deliver history (Yarema, 2002). Stearns (1993) argued that memorization of large amounts of information needed to be overhauled and supported a more analytic approach to history. Foster et al. (1996) agreed that traditional social studies education supported the idea that students' learning does focus on dates, people's names, and places. However, Foster and his colleagues (1996) believed that teachers who align themselves with this approach give students a superficial look at history and cause surface level comprehension to occur. Other critics argue that this pedagogy and emphasis generate a substandard version of history that is harmful. As den Heyer and Fidyk (2007) stated, "Educational practice of engaging incompleteness is potentially disruptive, given the fact that schools reward expressions of comprehension rather than bafflement and answers rather than questions" (p. 155).

Social studies curricula have traditionally placed faith in textbooks and the authors who have written them (VanSledright & Kelly, 1998). Yet arguments surrounding historical truth and whether or not that is even attainable have arisen. Regardless of attempted neutrality and/or subjectivity, historical truth is always someone's perspective. Individuals possess a distinct cultural frame of reference unique to themselves, meaning that their account of an event will never fully align with another's (Glazier & Seo, 2005).

Literature-Based Curriculum in Social Studies

The subject of social studies gives rise to greatly contested topics surrounding what is true and what is not. So what place does fictional literature have in social studies classrooms? Trofanenko (2002) argues that historical literature forces history to have an opening, middle, and ending, which creates what she calls a messy chronicle of a historical event. Being restricted to follow literary guidelines often pushes fictional plot lines and dialogue into history and excludes key facts. Apol et al. (2003) found that teachers selected social studies literature based on literary merit and moral themes over historical accuracy, as they preferred a story's message to history's harsh reality.

Contrary to the aforementioned studies, integrating historical fiction in social studies classrooms also warrants many advantages. As readers move beyond the names, dates, and places traditionally found in textbooks, historical fiction

(through the use of plot, characters, and other literary elements) humanizes history (den Heyer, & Fidyk, 2007; George, & Stix, 2000; Kornfeld, 1994; O'Brien, 1998; Ringrose, 2007; Turk, Klein, & Dickstein, 2007). Historical fiction creates a past world for which students can feel and provides students the opportunity to connect emotionally with characters and their historical surroundings (Brooks & Hampton, 2005).

Adolescents in middle school can also utilize YA historical fiction to find their voice. This development is aided by the fact that historical fiction provides multiple perspectives often omitted by textbooks. Historical fiction enables students to hear history from the viewpoint of marginalized populations: women, racial and ethnic minorities, children, and the poor (Turk, Klein, & Dickstein, 2007). In presenting students with alternative perspectives, literature exposes myths, hidden stories, and silenced populations (Glazier, & Seo, 2005) and gives students the ability to take educated stances on historical and modern issues. Students might thereby become more compelled to embrace the study of history.

Most literature read in elementary grades is narrative in nature with less time devoted to expository text. Contrary to elementary schools, high schools devote most reading to expository texts to acquire information for core subjects. George (2001) found that YA literature assists middle school students to transition from children's literature to adult classics typically found in upper grades. YA historical fiction serves as a literary bridge to the successful reading and comprehension of more complex texts that increases or sustains reading motivation into the upper grades (Knickerbocker & Rycik, 2002).

Implementing Historical Fiction Using Critical Literacy Skills

While many practitioners support the use of YA historical fiction, if the literature is integrated poorly, social studies learning could be negatively impacted. Effective implementation of YA historical fiction in social studies must contain high-quality literature paired with critical literacy skills (VanSledright, & Kelly, 1998).

Critical literacy is a framework that students can use to evaluate societal constructs in printed text (Pirie, 1997). Mere substitution of YA historical fiction is not an effective alternative to a textbook; verbal dialogue about the text must be at the forefront to maximize literary and historical analysis (Glazier & Seo, 2005).

In a case study by Brooks and Hampton (2005), the substitution of literature over a traditional text did not increase students' ability to question. Students continued to accept the written word as truth without factoring in plausibility that events happened in a certain sequence. Tunnell and Ammon (1996) suggest that students attempt to ask and answer the following questions when reading historical literature:

- How factually accurate was the account?
- What was omitted…[that] would be important for a full understanding…?
- What motives does the book [have]…?
- Who does the book get you to root for, and how do the authors accomplish that?
- Can you think of any groups in our society that might have an interest in people having an inaccurate view of history? (p. 214)

By asking these questions, students will be better equipped to analyze and dissect history in literature. Drake and Nelson (2005) argue that history instruction should mimic what happens in science where "questions are asked, evidence is examined, and discussions and hypotheses occur" (p. 5). When students question what literary freedoms were taken in historical fiction, a more accurate assessment of overt messages and subtle agendas gives students a better gauge of what materialized (Comber, 2001). It is through this explicit examination that students will absorb more completely what the text is and is not offering.

Critical literacy is also achieved through the consideration of multiple perspectives through multiple sources. Utilizing many pieces of historical fiction from different authors allows the readers to synthesize information and check for reliability through cognitive dissonance (VanSledright & Kelly, 1998). This intellectual dilemma can promote students to question, clarify, explore additional materials, and participate in dialogue (Kornfeld, 1994). Woodson (1999) states, "the goal of good literature is to raise questions, not give answers" (p. 12). Through the fusion of numerous historical fiction sources, students might be challenged to mentally synthesize viewpoints, themes, and accounts.

While teaching multiple texts at once allows readers to cross check for accuracy, Jago (2000) criticizes YA literature declaring that it lacks authentic characters and rich language. Due to literature's less concrete display of historical fact, pairing historical fiction with a course's textbook may provide a necessary foundation (O'Brien, 1998). The text's partnership will then provide the raw, exact details (Stahl, et al., 1996) and a historical, narrative format. YA historical fiction can achieve the same harmony by partnering with current printed materials like newspapers, magazines, or journals.

Project Procedures

For the context of this study, the method used to explore the inclusion of YA historical fiction in social studies is a retrospective analysis of original lesson plans written during the author's undergraduate coursework and student-teaching experience. By completing this process, newly formatted lessons were generated that give insight to the three guiding questions previously mentioned above. Both the creative process and the final artifacts provide readers with documents and give perspective about the possibility of using YA historical fiction in middle school social studies.

The retrospective analysis for this project contains four major components: (a) original lesson plans (see Appendixes), (b) critique of the original lesson plans, (c) new lesson plans aligned with state and national standards, integrated with YA historical fiction and critical literacy strategies (see Appendixes), and (d) explanation of the transformation process. Original, unmodified lessons are included to provide readers with my initial understanding of what and how social studies should be taught.

Retrospective Analysis

Original Lesson Plan Critique #1

The original apartheid lesson (see Appendix A) was written as part of an eight-week unit on Africa for my student teaching experience. This lesson was during week four of the unit following a general introduction and regional studies of North and West Africa. The standards listed under "Learning Standards" are from the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), the education body that coordinates and oversees all Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS).

Although the lesson is discussion-based, overall it is mostly teacher-driven. Discussions are either as a way to check basic comprehension and require little to no critical thinking skills or discussions are facilitated with predetermined questions and answers that allow for little student input and/or freedom. Since students are allowed little creativity in both discussions and assignments (sequence chart), they become passive learners. Written responses and discussion points are verbatim from what the textbook, the only source provided to students, states. No questions are asked about the accuracy of the textbook's content nor are alternative viewpoints presented that would allow for cross-checking.

The lesson was written to cover all of South African history and geography in one 80-minute block period. Due to the number of events and years needing attention in such a short time span, the information is very general, limited to names, places, and dates, and does not allow students to explore certain topics in depth. The lesson's brevity also does not give adequate time and attention to the Apartheid-U.S. Civil Rights Movement cross-comparison (Learning Target #2).

New Lesson Plan with Standards (the redesign of lesson plan #1)

The new lesson (see Appendix B) integrates the use of Beverley Naidoo's (2001) *Out of Bounds* and an article about the Little Rock Nine (CITE). Naidoo's (2001) vignette, titled *The Playground*, describes a black South African girl's first day at a newly integrated primary school. Pairing the readings with the course's textbook provide new perspectives, ones that add emotional connections for individuals and cross-cultural comparisons. The previous lesson's texts (course textbook and an Apartheid article) only presented names, places, and dates, which did not engage students nor present them with opportunities to connect with the material.

The gradual release of responsibility approach was implemented by including modeling, guided practice, and independent practice sections. These sections allowed more student ownership by having them determine importance, generate questions, and be the major contributors in the class' discussion. The teacher's role is now behind-the-scenes and provides students with assistance and modeling as needed. The empowerment of students to investigate the material and question the texts makes the lesson more student-centered.

Finally, in order to focus and provide greater depth of research, the lesson was narrowed to allow more attention to the Apartheid-Civil Rights Movement connection. The original lesson had students discuss this topic without any readings on the Civil Rights Movement or any direction on how to compare the two events. Initially, too much history was being covered in too little time. The revision allows for students to synthesize a week's worth of classroom readings (textbook, YA historical fiction, and article) and then critically analyze the validity and reliability of the information.

Discussion

The transformation process from the original to the new lesson plans witnessed many modifications: an inclusion of YA historical fiction, the integration of critical literacy strategies, a change of pedagogy style, and new classroom roles for both the teacher and the students. These adjustments were produced to better enhance the lesson. All adjustments were intentionally selected, but some relied on the addition of historical fiction. Other inclusions were incorporated to naturally update and improve past lessons. Regardless of motive, the new lesson plans represent a novel way of teaching social studies by using history through story, a practice that is not commonly used in today's classrooms.

In an effort to increase the popularity of this teaching strategy, suggestions have been generated for possible use in the classroom. The following are suggested guidelines:

- *Narrow your topic*
  Historical fiction spotlights a particular time-period and situation in detail. A novel does not allow readers to cover as much information as quickly as a textbook. For example, the original lesson on South Africa covered all of the region's history and geography in one day, whereas the revised lesson only focused on the Apartheid-Civil Rights movement connection. Plan for more time, but also expect more enrichment.

- *Utilize multiple sources*
  Using alternative texts, like historical fiction, in conjunction with a course textbook allows readers to cross check and question information. Through the process of intertextuality, students will hear multiple perspectives and no longer attribute authority to a single source. This practice is especially important when you use historical fiction since all of the content is not

accurate. Being able to compare and contrast information and perspectives may provide a more holistic understanding.

- *Integrate critical literacy strategies*
  It is not what you read, but what you do with what you read that counts. Having students merely read historical fiction will not automatically increase their historical understanding, deepen personal connections, or create better historians. Teachers must pair historical fiction with critical literacy strategies in order to strengthen understanding and justify time spent reading a novel.

- *Read the whole novel or parts*
  Do not feel obligated to read historical fiction cover to cover. Most social studies classes do not read all of textbooks and the same rule can apply to historical fiction. The lesson on the Apartheid-Civil Rights movement connection only included reading one chapter in the novel. If time is an issue, only read sections of importance to students' comprehension of a historical event.

- *Emphasize both historical and literary points*
  Textbooks are not known for their literary merit, but historical fiction, like other narrative genres, can present great writing. With the NMSA promoting an integrative curriculum, using historical fiction in social studies allows teachers also to focus on literary themes and elements. Cross-curricular planning is advantageous for students in the middle grades and historical fiction offers a convenient medium to achieve this.

- *Promote adolescent connections*
  One of the major benefits to using YA historical fiction is that protagonists and many secondary characters are adolescents. Not only does this give students the opportunity to experience historical events through the eyes of a fellow adolescent, but also it allows young readers to make associations with characters. Personal connections need to be encouraged and developed in writing and dialogue to deepen student investment. Greater involvement with a text may increase both efferent and aesthetic motivation to read and more specifically to read in social studies.

Summary

After completing the revitalization of past lessons, it was found that YA historical fiction could easily be used to supplement the social studies textbook, which answers question one of the study. There are many YA historical fiction books on various topics that could be used throughout any social studies lesson.

To help answer question two, the literature review showed that both sources have strengths and weaknesses, as information is not always corroborated. Textbooks furnish quick abstracts of many events with descriptions of notable people and their significant actions while historical novels provide fictional accounts grounded in fact that allow readers to feel events and connect with characters. It is from the fusion of the two sources that a more complete historical interpretation can surface.

The literature review also provided the answer to question three, as it was determined that historical fiction novels should not be viewed as replacements to textbooks, but as a companion source. This integration provides different perspectives that could engage students more in what they read. By pairing historical fiction with critical literacy strategies, students will likely question and determine what authors write and how that compares with what actually happened.

Future Research

This project showed that it is easy to include YA historical fiction into social studies topics. In addition, both are needed as they provide different perspective on the same event. This is important, as too often students and some teachers place complete faith in a single written source, which may skew historical accuracy. However, this may be problematic, as teachers need to be careful when choosing YA historical fiction to provide a full range of perspective so they are not "censoring" the materials and the perspective being presented.

This project has led to future research ideas. First, does the pairing of the texts really improve the learning of the students? Yes, it is believed it will provide another perspective and even motivation, but this pairing of texts needs to be compared with student achievement scores. Second, when adding YA historical fiction and critical literacy strategies to the lesson plan, the lesson became longer and will take more time to complete. Thus, can a teacher cover all the required breadth of information using this technique?

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Appendix A: Original Lesson #1

Teacher Candidate: <u>Mr. Male</u>   Date: <u>November 8, 2005</u>

Mentor Teacher: <u>Mrs. Teacher</u>   WSU Supervisor: <u>Mr. Supervisor</u>

Grade: <u>7</u>   School: <u>Middle School</u>

Unit:<u> Africa</u>

Lesson: <u>South Africa: History and Geography</u>

Learning Standards:
- Global Connections: evaluate the concept of universal human rights and its effects on countries
- Power, Authority, and Governance: compare how dissent and related forms of citizen actions influence public policy

Learning Targets:
1. The student will be able to summarize Chapter 23, Section 2 by completing a six block-sequencing chart in class.
2. The student will be able to compare and contrast Apartheid in South Africa with the U.S. Civil Rights Movement by partaking in a discussion in class.

Rationale:

South Africa is a region that is rich in culture, but also rich in controversy. Being that the area was developed for slavery and resource purposes, much of the area has experienced white influence, both in the past and today. By looking at this region from a historical perspective, students will comprehend why modern day problems, like apartheid exist.

Assessment:

Formative Assessment:

The teacher will ask questions to make sure students are fully understanding the material being given to them. Students will also be encouraged to question, contradict, or respond to the information being delivered.

Summative Assessment:

Students will be filling out a six-block sequencing graphic organizer that will verify that they have read the chapter and paraphrased the information into their own words. The completed graphic organizers will be collected at the end of the period. Students will earn 10 points for completion and events being in sequence.

Learning Experiences:
1. Introduction
   The teacher will begin the lesson by asking students to copy down the posted homework, while the teacher explains what is expected of them. The teacher will then go over the day's topic, agenda, and explain the standards being covered. Students responsible for taking roll, collecting homework, and distributing papers will do so at this time.

2. Questions
   A. Where were the people from who first inhabited Madagascar?
   B. Who is Nelson Mandela?
   C. How long was Nelson Mandela imprisoned?
   D. Would the U.S. ever elect someone president whom had been imprisoned?
   E. What were the living conditions like in apartheid South Africa?

3. Learning Activities
   A. The teacher will have students pull out their unit calendars and tell them about the change. Unlike previous plans the students will study South Africa prior to East and Central Africa.
   B. Students will read pages 544-547 in pairs. They will be expected to read the section and complete a six-squared sequence graphic organizer. Students will be allowed 20 minutes to complete the exercise. Following the 20 minutes, the class will discuss what they learned in their reading.
   C. The teacher will collect the sequence graphic organizer.
   D. The students as a class will read pages 548-551. The teacher will call on students to read and periodically check for understanding. Students will be encouraged to reference their homework because it is dealing with the same content area.
   E. Following the reading, the teacher will read an additional article to the students about apartheid conditions. The class will then discuss how apartheid South Africa was similar to the U.S. prior to 1965 and the Civil Rights Movement.

4. Closure
   A. The teacher will ask students to explain what they learned today and how it fulfilled the curriculum standards.

5. Independent Practice
   A. Political Cartoon Analysis

Grouping Of Students For Instruction:
Students will work in pairs to complete the sequence graphic organizer. Throughout the rest of the period students will work as a class.

Instructional Materials, Resources, And Technology:
1. 65 copies of the sequence graphic organizer
2. 65 copies of the political cartoon
3. Textbooks

Appendix B: New Lesson Plan #1

Teacher: Mr. <u>Male</u>   Date: <u>January 27, 2008</u>

Grade: <u>6-8</u>   School: <u>Middle School</u>

Unit/Subject: <u>Africa</u>

Lesson Title/Focus: <u>Cross-Cultural Comparison: South African Apartheid and the U.S.Civil Rights Movement</u>

Learning Standards (NCSS & NMSA):
- NCSS: Culture; Time, Continuity, and Change; Individual Development and Identity; Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; Power, Authority, and Governance; Global Connections
- NMSA: Relevant, Challenging, Integrative, Exploratory Curriculum; Active Learning

Learning Targets (And WA State GLEs):
1. The student will be able to compare and contrast Apartheid in South Africa with the U.S. Civil Rights Movement by developing questions and partaking in a class dialogue.
- *Social Studies (History) GLEs*: 4.3.1-Analyzes and interprets historical materials from a variety of perspectives (6th, 7th and 8th grade)
- *Reading GLEs*: 2.1.6-Apply comprehension monitoring strategies to understand fiction, non-fiction, informational, and task-oriented text by generating and answering questions (6th and 7th grade)
- *Communication GLEs*: 1.1.2-Applies a variety of listening and observation skills/strategies to interpret information by asking probing questions to extend information (7th grade)

Rationale:
- South Africa is a country that has experienced significant controversy both historically and contemporary. Most of the conflict stems from racial injustice beginning with the Dutch invasion and has continued through modern-day apartheid. These events have greatly influenced South Africa: what it was, what it currently is, and what it will become. This journey is evidenced in Beverley Naidoo's (2001) novel, Out of Bounds. By reading portions of the novel, readers will be given insight into daily life experiences of South African youth living during/after Apartheid and will provide an alternate view

from what is presented in the course's textbook. This literary comparison will allow students to critically analyze life in South Africa as told by the two sources.

• Many similarities between Apartheid South Africa and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement arise within the course's readings. Students will be asked to generate questions and participate in a class dialogue comparing and contrasting the two events. It is through this process that students will be able to identify global connections, define what happened in their opinion and recognize the importance of intertextuality.

Assessment:

Students will generate questions based off the textbook reading, the Little Rock Nine article(CITE), and Beverley Naidoo's (2001) Out of Bounds. Questions will be used to formulate the class' discussion. Students will be expected to participate by both asking and answering questions. Following the class discussion students will submit their questions to the teacher for evaluation and credit.

Grouping Of Students For Instruction:

During the modeling period, students will listen as a whole class. For the guided and independent practice, students will work in pairs to generate questions. The end class discussion will be as a whole class.

Teacher Modeling

Declarative:

In this lesson, we are going to learn how to generate two types of questions about the readings we have completed this week. The first type centers on the authors' agenda and content selection and the second type focuses on the concept of intertextuality.

Conditional:

Many times in social studies people do not question where information came from or analyze whether it is accurate or not. Likewise, people sometimes do not compare and contrast information to develop a more concrete understanding. By learning to ask these questions, you can have a greater critical understanding of what happened.

Procedural:

Over the past week we have looked at various readings about Apartheid in South Africa. We have read from our textbook, as well as a chapter from Beverley Naidoo's (2001) Out of Bounds. These two texts presented us with different and overlapping information surrounding Apartheid. And last night for homework I had you read an article about the Little Rock Nine, a group of students from the U.S. Civil Rights Move-

ment. Today we are going to discuss how all this information relates and to question information presented in order to decide for ourselves what happened.

For the last half of the class period we are going to have a discussion about this week's readings on South African Apartheid and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and how we interpret that information. The first half of the class period we are going to generate questions that are going to be used for the discussion later. Now, what type of questions are we going to ask? I mentioned earlier two types of questions: ones that deal with authors' agendas and content selection and those that deal with intertextuality.

We are going to start with analyzing the content we read. When looking at our textbook or Out of Bounds, how do we know that the information is accurate? (Call on a few students) Honestly we don't have a guarantee about the information's accuracy, but we can ask questions about it so we can make an informed judgment. A couple questions we could ask are: What social function does the article serve? and Who gets to speak and have a voice in the textbook and who doesn't? (Write these two questions on the white board) Just by asking and answering these questions you may not reveal the truth, but you may have a more critical understanding when considering this new perspective.

The second type of question we are going to be generating today uses intertextuality. Intertextuality is a fancy word for the process of interpreting one text by means of another text. It is a way of cross comparing two texts and the information they present. Let me show you an example.

This is a passage from Out of Bounds:

As they crossed the veld and entered the town, Mama's hand gave Rosa small squeezes of encouragement. Before they had even reached the corner of Oranje Primary, they could see a crowd of adults and children, lined up by the front entrance….A small gathering of policemen stood a short distance away, next to a man and a woman wearing suits and each carrying a briefcase. The crowd by the gate were all white but some of the police were black….Everyone appeared to be waiting for something, including the paperboy. He stood at the corner watching Rosa and Mama approach. He looked worried.

Mama squeezed her hand more tightly as they reached the protesters. Faces and placards became blurred, but Rosa couldn't blot out the hoarse screams: "NEVER! WHITE AND BLACK DON'T MIX!" "FIGHT FOR A WHITE ORANJE?" "NO BLACKS HERE." (Naidoo, p. 135).

After reading this passage, a question is: In what ways did school integration after Apartheid relate or differ from the experience of the Little Rock Nine?(Write the question on the white board) By asking this question I am using one text, Out of Bounds, to interpret meaning from another text, the Little Rock Nine article.

Guided Practice

All of you are now going to draft questions working in pairs. Using your textbook, novel, and article, I would like each group to draft two questions, one of each type, that may be used for our discussion later. Please reference my examples and I will walk around helping individual groups as needed. In five minutes we are going to come together and share our examples that way we can help each other.

(Five minute later) Okay everyone, we are going to come back together. Before we move on developing more questions, I would like a couple groups to share. Who would like to share? (Have 3-4 groups share both types of questions; teacher will provide general feedback to the class after sharing.) Great questions everyone!

Independent Practice

For the next ten minutes, I would like each group to generate four more questions, two of each type. Following this we will have our class discussion where all of you will get to ask some questions of your peers to further analyze the Apartheid-Civil Rights comparison that we are focusing on today.

(Allow ten minutes.) Attention everyone. I hope all of you had enough time to write your questions. We are now going to transition into the discussion. Please know that you probably will not be able to ask all of your questions and that is okay. For the structure of the discussion we are going to take one question at a time and when we feel we have adequately discussed, we can move on. Agree? Perfect, who would like to volunteer to share their question? (Discussion should be around 45 minutes long; the teacher will interject/redirect as needed.)

Application

Today we worked on developing a critical skill that you can use when encountering any type of text. Being able to question the author and the content presented may lead you to many new perspectives that were not previously sought out. Also, comparing and contrasting multiple texts by practicing intertextuality may add a new element to reading and understanding: a critical eye that doesn't place all weight on one text or one perspective. By developing these skills I hope you were able to better understand South African Apartheid and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and how they are interrelated.

Additional Requirements:
- Critical literacy strategy inspired by Bean and Moni (2003)
- Critical literacy strategy inspired by Knickerbocker and Rycik (2002)
- Lesson plan outline inspired by Pat Mainella

Appendix C: Historical Fiction for
Middle School Social Studies

U.S.: Colonial America

1. Clapp, P. (1968). *Constance: A story of early Plymouth*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
2. Levitin, S. (1973). *Roanoke: A novel of the lost colony*. New York: Atheneum.
3. Speare, E. G. (1957). *Calico captive*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
4. Speare, E. G. (1958). T*he witch of blackbird pond*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
5. Speare, E. G. (1983). *The sign of the beaver*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

U.S.: The American Revolution and the New Nation

1. Avi. (1984). *The fighting ground*. New York: Lippincott.
2. Fast, H. (1966). *Conceived in liberty: A novel of Valley Forge*. New York: Signet.
3. Forbes, E. (1943). *Johnny Tremain*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
4. Reit, S. (1990). *Guns for general Washington: A story of the American revolution*. New York: Harcourt Brace, Gulliver.
5. Rinaldi, A. (1993). *The fifth of March: A story of the Boston massacre*. New York: Harcourt Brace, Gulliver.
6. Walter, M. P. (1996). *Second daughter: The story of a slave girl*. New York: Scholastic.

U.S.: The Civil War and Reconstruction

1. Beatty, P., & Robbins, P. (1990). *Eben Tyne, powdermonkey*. New York: Morrow Junior Books.
2. Fleischman, P. (1993). *Bull run*. New York: HarperCollins.
3. Heidish, M. (1976). *A woman called Moses*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
4. Hunt, I. (1964). *Across five aprils*. Chicago: Follet.
5. Myers, W. D. (1994). *The glory field*. New York: Scholastic.
6. Paulsen, G. (1993). *Nightjohn*. New York: Delacorte.

U.S.: Westward Expansion and the Native American Response

1. Bohner, C. (1985). *Bold journey: West with Lewis and Clark*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
2. Carvell, M. (2005). *Sweetgrass basket*. New York: Dutton Children's Books.
3. LaFaye, A. (2004). *Worth*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.
4. O'Dell, S. (1970). *Sing down the moon*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

5. O'Dell, S. (1986). *Streams to the river, river to the sea*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
6. Paulsen, G. (1994). *Mr. Tucket*. New York: Delacorte.
7. Wallin, L. (1984). *In the shadow of the wind*. Scarsdale, NY: Bradbury.
8. West, J. (1975). *The massacre at Fall Creek*. New York: Harcourt.

U.S.: Immigration, Industrialization, Urbanization

1. Conlon-McKenna, M. (1991). *Wildflower girl*. New York: Holiday House.
2. Hesse, K. (1992). *Letters from Rifka*. New York: Holt.
3. Mays, L. (1979). *The other shore*. New York: Atheneum.
4. Sachs, M. (1982). *Call me Ruth*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
5. Yep, L. (1975). *Dragonwings*. New York: Harper & Row.
6. Yep, L. (1993). *Dragon's gate*. New York: HarperCollins.

U.S.: Jazz Age and the Depression

1. Fitzgerald, F. S. (1925). *The great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner.
2. Hesse, K. (1997). *Out of the dust*. New York: Scholastic Press.
3. Hooks, W. H. (1982). *Circle of fire*. New York: Atheneum.
4. Meyer, C. (1993). *White lilacs*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
5. Taylor, M. D. (1976). *Roll of thunder, hear my cry*. New York: Dial.
6. Whitmore, A. (1990). *The bread winner*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

U.S.: The U.S. and World War II

1. Greene, B. (1973). *Summer of my German soldier*. New York: Dial Press.
2. Mochizuki, K. (1993). *Baseball saved us*. New York: Lee and Low.
3. Salisbury, G. (1994). *Under the blood red sun*. New York: Delacorte Press.
4. Savin, M. (1992). *The moon bridge*. New York: Scholastic.
5. Thesman, J. (1993). *Molly Donnelly*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
6. Uchida, Y. (1978). *Journey home*. New York: Atheneum.

U.S.: America in the Modern World

1. Beatty, P. (1981). *Lupita manana*. New York: Beech Tree.
2. Curtis, C. P. (1995). *The Watsons go to Birmingham—1963*. New York: Delacorte.
3. Davis, O. (1992). *Just like Martin*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
4. Foreman, J. D. (1979). *Freedom's blood*. New York: Franklin Watts.
5. Fuller, J. (1984). *Fragments*. New York: Morrow.
6. Myers, W. D. (1988). *Fallen angels*. New York: Scholastic.
7. Nelson, T. (1989). *And one for all*. New York: Orchard.
8. Pitts-Walter, M. (1982). *The girl on the outside*. New York: Scholastic.
9. Wolitzer, M. (1985). *Caribou*. New York: Greenwillow.

World: Africa

1. Ellis, D. (2005). *The heaven shop*. Markham, Canada: Fitzhenry & White-side.
2. Glass, L. A. (2006). *The year the gypsies came*. New York: Holt.
3. Hansen, J. (1994). *The captive*. New York: Scholastic.
4. Jansen, H. (2006). *Over a thousand hills I walk with you*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books.
5. Naidoo, B. (1989). *Chain of fire*. New York: HarperCollins.
6. Naidoo, B. (2003). *Out of bounds: Seven stories of conflict and hope*. New York: HarperCollins.

World: Asia

1. Bosse, M. (1994). *The examination*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
2. Haugaard, E. (1984). *The samurai's tale*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
3. Mah, A. Y. (2005). *Chinese Cinderella and the secret dragon society*. New York: HarperCollins.
4. Maruki, T. (1982). *Hiroshima no pika*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
5. Sheth, M. (2006). *Koyal dark, mango sweet*. New York: Hyperion.
6. Whelan, G. (2004). *Chu Ju's house*. New York: HarperCollins.

World: Europe

1. Alder, E. (1995). *The king's shadow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
2. Bishop, C. (1964). *Twenty and ten*. New York: Viking.
3. Chotjewitz, David. (2004). *Daniel half human*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
4. Cushman, C. (1994). *Catherine, called Birdy*. New York: Clarion Books.
5. Kerr, J. (1972). *When Hitler stole pink rabbit*. New York: Coward McCann.
6. Lowry, L. (1989). *Number the stars*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
7. Walsh, J. P. (1983). *Parcel of patterns*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
8. Yolen, J. (1988). *The devil's arithmetic*. New York: Viking.

World: Latin America

1. Danticat, E. (2005). *Anacaona, golden flower*. New York: Scholastic.
2. Mikaelsen, B. (2004). *Tree girl*. New York: HarperTempest.
3. Talbert, M. (1997). *Heart of the jaguar*. London: Aladdin Books.
4. Wood, F. (2003). *Daughter of Madrugada*. New York: Yearling.

World: Middle East

1. Cadnum, M. (2001). *The book of the lion*. London: Puffin Books.
2. Ellis, D. (2001). *The breadwinner*. Toronto, Canada: Douglas & McIntyre.
3. Ellis, D. (2002). *Parvana's journey*. Toronto, Canada: Groundwood Books.

4. Marston, E. (2005). *Figs and fate: Stories about growing up in the Arab world today*. New York: George Braziller, Inc.
5. Sayres, M. N. (2006). *Anahita's woven riddle*. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers.

World: Pacific Islands
1. Garner, A. (1996). *Strandloper*. New York: Harvill Press.
2. Halam, A. (2004). *Taylor five*. New York: Random House.
3. Segalen, V. (1995). *A lapse of memory*. Mt. Nebo, Australia: Boombana Publications.
4. Taylor, T. (1995). *The bomb*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Co.
5. Toer, P. A. (1980). *This earth of mankind*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Hasta Mitra.

WORKING WITH TEACHER EDUCATORS

College Students' Strategic Reading: Examining Two Teaching Approaches for Summarization Expertise

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Abstract

Recent studies have shown that many high school seniors are not prepared to enter college but enroll anyway. Some educators (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) have expressed dismay at the lowering of college academic standards so these students can enroll while other educators (Cukras, 2006; Giroux, 2009) believe that institutions should be able to foster these students' academic growth without lowering their standards by teaching reading strategies to assist these students in achieving college success. This study examined college freshmen students' reading level and their use of strategies for summarizing narrative text while engaged in two different cooperative teaching approaches during a freshman remedial reading class. The study found that the students' reading level and their placement into teaching approaches did affect their use of summarization strategies.

Reports from the United States Department of Education (2006) and the National Endowment for the Arts (2007) stated that college-entry students are demonstrating significantly lower reading skills than they did ten years ago. In addition, the United States ranks poorly when looking at the percentage of students who successfully complete college. Recent studies have indicated that many American high school seniors are ill-prepared to enter college, that less academically privileged students perform less than satisfactorily when reading text, and that only a third of them can read critically (ACT, 2006; Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006).

With these statistics, some educators have expressed dismay at what seems to be the weakening of academic standards at the college level, as the percentage of poorly-prepared students entering college is increasing (Abbate-Vaughn, 2009; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Christ 2009). However, there are a number of educators (Bruner, 1986; Freire, 1973; Giroux, 2009; Shor, 1992) who believe institutions should be able to foster the academic growth of their students without lowering their standards.

In addition, studies have concluded that when students took remedial classes and were taught reading strategies they used a greater number of strategies and gained background procedural knowledge that is required for college reading (Attewell, Lavin, Domina & Levey, 2006; Caverly, Nicholson & Radcliffe, 2004).

In their well-known studies of reading and summarizing, Brown and Day (1983), Garner (1985), and Palmer (1999) maintained that college-level students are still developing their learning and still need help to gain reading skills. Biancarosa and Snow (2006) supported this idea in their report to the Carnegie Foundation, which addressed the needs of entering college freshmen students. They believe that the success of literacy programs require direct, explicit reading comprehension instruction, and varied teaching approaches that provide motivation and self-directed learning.

Research has shown that two teaching approaches, reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), and peer tutoring (King, 1997) appear to be helpful in promoting intellectual discovery and fostering the use of self-directed reading strategies. These two approaches are considered ideal models of instruction within which to teach the strategies of summarization, as both approaches emphasize the importance of identifying the main idea and the problem introduced in a text (Armbuster, 2009; Oczkus, 2003). Researchers continue to foster the use of the reciprocal teaching approach to scaffold reading comprehension for older students, and recent studies at the college and graduate level have illustrated how this approach can successfully be used to assist students in their ability to summarize the text being read (Oczkus; Doolittle, Hicks, Nichols, Triplett & Young, 2006).

Current studies (Armbuster, 2009; Hock & Mellard, 2005) also support the research by King (1997) and the use of generic question stems within the peer tutoring approach to foster summarization strategies for reading comprehension at the college and adult levels. These researchers maintain that training in question generation is essential to further the strategies of summarization to help the reader with identification of both the main idea and the problem, which are considered vital to the comprehension of text. Working closely with a peer in a structured setting, such as the one described by King, has been advocated by numerous educators to promote learning (Hodges & Agee, 2009; Topping, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

The study is posited in two theories: critical theory and constructivism. Critical theory emphasizes the manner in which language affects the social structure of people's lives as they learn to express themselves better, resulting in an examination of the world surrounding them. Critical pedagogues, in fact, are not content with settling for the status quo and regard the educational system as a source of power that should bear the responsibility for extending the individual capacities and social possibilities of all people (Freire, 1973; Giroux, 2009).

Constructivist philosophy fosters the notion that learning is an active on-going process that enables students to construct their own knowledge based upon their current or prior experiences (Mulcahy-Ernt & Caverly, 2009). Since students' prior knowledge influences their understanding, constructivists believe that reading instruction should familiarize readers with the content domain of the text they are analyzing by building upon their prior knowledge and by creating new knowledge through the teaching of reading strategies to achieve academic success (Abbate-Vaughn, 2009; McGee & Johnson, 2003; Pressley, Graham & Harris, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

As college students are still developing learning skills, research has suggested that colleges and universities should be able to foster student success (Giroux, 2009; Mulcahy-Ernt, & Caverly, 2009) by using a variety of teaching approaches (Brown, & Day, 1983; Garner, 1985; Palmer, 1999). Therefore, this study examined college freshmen students' ability to summarize while experiencing two different teaching approaches (reciprocal teaching and peer tutoring). The questions examined in the study were the following:

1. What are the effects of students' reading level on their ability to identify the main idea in their reading of narrative text?
2. What are the effects of two teaching approaches on students' ability to identify the problem in their reading of narrative text?
3. What are the effects of the interaction between students' reading level and reading approaches on their ability to identify the main idea?
4. What are the effects of the interaction between students' reading level and reading approaches on their ability to identify the problem?

Methods

Participants

The participants for this study were 77 college students from four freshmen remedial reading classes at a large city university campus. The majority were first-generation college students who had come directly from high school to college to seek a four-year college degree in criminal justice. All of the participants were required to take a remedial reading course because they had failed the college entrance exam in reading and were assigned to the classes by the registrar.

The participants were from diverse backgrounds: 42.5% were of Hispanic origin, 8.9% were Eastern European, 7.9% were Western European, 6.8% were Caribbean, 6.8% were Far Eastern, 4.5% were African American, 3.4% were South American, 2.3% were African, 1.1% were Native American and 1.1% were Middle Eastern. The remaining 14.7% were students of mixed ethnicity who were native-born Americans. They chose to identify themselves only as Americans and stated that they had no other specific ethnic or cultural ties.

Sixty percent of the students were female, and the majority of the students at the college were from lower income or working class families. Eighty-nine percent of the students received federal or state financial aid, which covered the bulk of their expenses for tuition and required books. The majority of this aid came in the form of the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), which grants New York state aid to students based on their taxable income, or that of their family if living at home. The other form of financial assistance received by students was a Pell Grant, which is a federal needs-based grant. This grant is distributed to dependents whose expected family income is considered to meet the United States Department of Education low-income financial requirements. Students must apply for these grants, and there is a free application process for federal student aid.

Remedial Reading Courses and Teaching Approaches

Throughout a four-month semester, 77 students were assigned to one of the four remedial reading courses. The researcher taught all four classes at different times during the week, two using the reciprocal teaching approach, and two using the peer-tutoring approach.

The students were given 36 hours of instruction in how the teaching approach used in their classroom worked. In addition, these remedial reading courses taught students the importance of summarization and how to determine both the main idea and the problem of the text being read. Teacher modeling (Bandura, 1997) and think-alouds, also called verbal protocols (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Winne, 2005), were used to instruct the students in both teaching approaches. Students were also encouraged to take control over their own learning through guided practice in both teaching approaches, as studies have indicated that this instructional design is beneficial for student success (Dewitz, Jones & Leahy, 2009).

The reciprocal teaching approach (framework can be seen in Appendix A) was comprised of small groups of four to six students in which the students worked together summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting, while alternating playing the role of teacher and keeping their own group on task. The role of the teacher is a facilitator, who with the use of think-alouds, engages in reciprocal modeling with the students and encourages student interaction. The role of the student has the students taking control of the lesson and the timing of each strategy. A student, playing the role of teacher, fosters student interaction. This lesson format happens in stages where stage 1 is very teacher-centered teacher and progresses to stage 5, which is very student-centered.

The peer tutoring approach (framework can be seen in Appendix B) engaged two people as partners who, under the supervision of the teacher, alternated playing the role of tutor and tutee. This was a more direct model of teaching in which two students asked each other a distinct set of cognitively developed questions based on generic question stems (Appendix C). These question stems focus on higher-order why questions as research support the theory that this question type is most effective to build comprehension (Ambe, 2007; Block & Pressley, 2003; King, 1997).

Periodically, throughout the study, the researcher was observed by the supervisor of the reading laboratory at the college to assure that the researcher was following the format of these two teaching approaches according to their descriptions. The supervisor of the reading laboratory had 15 years experience in the laboratory and in the teaching of remedial reading courses.

Instrumentation and Group Creation

At the onset of the study, the 77 participants were given the Nelson Denny Reading Test (Brown, Fishco, & Hanna, 1993) to assess their current reading comprehension level. It is required for all students who are assigned to a remedial college reading course to take this standardized test. It is employed widely at the college level as a reading survey test (Brown et al., 1993; Flippo & Schumm, 2009). The reading section of this test contains passages that are drawn from college texts frequently used in developmental reading classes.

The median score on this test was used to split the participants into two reading levels (high and low), resulting in 39 students in the high group and 38 in the low group. Once the students were identified as high or low level readers, they were randomly assigned from each group to the reciprocal teaching group or to the peer-tutoring group. This allowed the two groups to be mixed equally with both high and low level readers receiving instruction in each teaching approach. Thirty-nine students received the reciprocal teaching approach and 38 received the peer tutoring approach.

A Summary Rating Sheet (SRS; seen in Appendix D), an instrument for gathering data, was devised by the researcher. It was created in the form of a rubric to be used to examine these college students' summarizing ability by looking at their written paragraphs to determine if they recognized the main idea and/or the problem of the text being read (Nist & Simpson, 2000). Students received training throughout the semester on how to use these two summarization strategies.

Narrative Reading Materials

Seven well-known short stories, believed to enhance students' ability to summarize were chosen to use throughout the semester. The seven narratives were chosen from the text edited by Marcus (1995), *A Word of Fiction: Twenty timeless short stories*, to be read and analyzed by the students in the study during the course of the semester. The narrative stories read were 2-8 pages. The stories read are listed below.

- Lesson 1—Vivante, A. (1995). Can-Can. (pp. 4–5).
- Lesson 2—Chopin, K. (1995). Story of an hour. (pp. 12–14).
- Lesson 3—Tyler, A. (1995). Teenage wasteland. (pp. 112–120).
- Lesson 4—Beattie, A. (1995). Snow. (pp. 22–23).
- Lesson 5—Bates, H. E. (1995). Never. (158–160).
- Lesson 6—Schulberg, B. (1995). A short digest of a long novel. (pp. 60–62).

- Lesson 7—Mansfield, K. (1995). Miss Brill. *(*pp. 177–181).

Upon completion of each of the seven short stories, students were asked to write a brief summary of each story. The SRS was used to examine these summaries to determine the students' ability to ascertain the main idea and/or the problem of the narrative story.

Data Analysis

There were two independent variables. The first was the students' reading level (high or low) as measured by Nelson Denny. The second variable was the two teaching approaches (reciprocal teaching or peer tutoring). The dependent variables were the summarization strategies for locating the main idea and problem identification measured by the SRS.

Both the researcher and the supervisor of the reading laboratory graded the students' summaries, which were not to exceed two paragraphs in length. The purpose of having two raters read the summaries and score the responses was to assure that an inter-rater reliability was established. In this study, an inter-rater reliability of .85 was achieved using the Shure factor (as cited in Tuckman, 1999). The two strategies on the SRS were each rated between 0 ("fail") and 4 ("excellent"). If students stated the main idea and the problem introduced in the story correctly, with clarity and within two paragraphs, they would receive a total score of 8 (Appendix D). Students were told that each summary should be at least one paragraph containing several sentences and that they were not to go over the two-paragraph limit. The SRS sheets were rated by the researcher and were returned to the students along with their summaries at the completion of each lesson in order to help the students review their work and learn from the exercise.

Scores from the SRS, given for stating the main idea and problem, were gathered and tallied. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to test the effects of reading level and teaching approach on the students' ability to use these two strategies for summarization. An additional ANOVA was used to test the interaction effects of reading level within the two teaching approaches on the two strategies for summarization.

Results

Main Idea

Reading Level. Totaling the main idea responses showed that the high reading level were able to recognize the main idea more often (M = 3.43; SD = .50) than the low reading level (M = 3.10; SD = .72). As there was a difference in the mean scores, an ANOVA (see Table 1) was used to see if these differences were significant. The ANOVA showed a significant difference in students' ability to recognize main idea by reading levels, $F(1, 73) = 5.33$, $p = .02$, with the higher level reading group showing better final scores on main idea than the lower level reading group.

Teaching Approaches. Totaling the main ideas responses (see Table 1 below), showed that the reciprocal teaching approach students recognized the main idea more often (M = 3.33; SD = .62) than the peer-tutoring approach students (M=3.21; SD =.66). As there was a difference, an ANOVA was run but no significant effects by teaching approach were found.

Interaction. Examining the final main idea scores for interaction, the ANOVA showed there was no significant interaction effect between the teaching approaches and reading levels, $F (1, 73) = 0.40; p = .53$. These findings indicate that regardless of the teaching approach used, stronger readers showed better ability to identify the main idea (High Reading/Reciprocal: M = 3.45, SD = .51; Low Reading/Reciprocal: M = 3.21, SD = .71; High Reading/Peer: M = 3.42, SD = .50; Low Reading/Peer: M = 3.00, SD = .74).

Table 1: ANOVA on Main Idea Scores by Teaching Approach, Reading Level, and Their Interaction

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Approach	0.28	1	0.28	0.70	.41
Reading Level (RL)	2.10	1	2.10	5.33	.02*
Approach x RL	0.16	1	0.16	0.40	.53
Error	28.74	73	0.39		
Total	856.00	77			

* p < .05

Problem Identification

Reading Level. Examining the final problem scores showed that the high reading level were able to recognize the problem more often (M = 3.00; SD = .45) than the low reading level (M = 2.89; SD = .45). As there was a difference in the mean scores, an ANOVA (see Table 2) was used to see if these differences were significant. The ANOVA showed there was no significant difference between reading levels in students' ability to recognize the problem of the narrative stories.

Teaching Approaches. Examining the final problem scores showed that in the reciprocal teaching approach students recognized the problem more often (M = 3.00; SD .32) than the peer-tutoring approach students (M = 2.89; SD =.55). As there was a difference, an ANOVA was run but no significant effects by teaching approach were found.

Interaction. Examining the final problem scores for an interaction, the ANOVA showed a significant interaction effect between teaching approach and reading level, $F (1,73) = 4.23, p = .04$. These results showed that the Low

Reading/Peer group had lower scores (M = 2.74, SD = .56) than the other three groups, who were roughly equivalent (Low Reading/Reciprocal: M = 3.05, SD =.22; High Reading/Reciprocal: M = 2.95, SD = .39; and High Reading/Peer: M = 3.05, SD = .52). This finding suggests that lower level readers might perform best when taught using the reciprocal teaching approach.

Table 2: ANOVA on Final Problem Scores by Teaching Approach, Reading Level, and Their Interaction

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Approach	0.22	1	0.22	1.10	.30
Reading Level (RL)	0.22	1	0.22	1.10	.30
Approach x RL	0.84	1	0.84	4.23	.04*
Error	14.53	73	0.20		
Total	685.00	77			

* p ≤ .05

Limitations

The results of the study are limited to the nature of the participants used and may be different with subjects in another setting. Another limitation is the number of participants in the study. A third limitation is the teachers' level of expertise to deliver each of the teaching approaches according to the format provided, as research suggests that teachers are not trained in a variety of teaching approaches and reading strategies that might assist college students to become better readers (Cukras, 2006; Long, 2009).

Discussion

Students' reading level affected their ability to determine the main idea. The high-level readers in both the reciprocal teaching and the peer tutoring approaches were significantly stronger in identifying the main idea in a reading.

When looking at the students' ability to identify the problem, there was only a significant difference in the interaction between reading level and teaching approach. In addition, the low-level readers in the reciprocal group were significantly stronger in problem identification than the high-level readers was, which was a surprise. It is believed that the reciprocal process, which was less structured allowed for a higher degree of freedom in questioning and discussion between the participants who may have relied on each other as a source of information in this small group setting. This idea is corroborated by research, which indicates that struggling read-

ers benefit from frequent support, and the constant reinforcement from peers may have benefitted the reciprocal teaching group (Aleven, Stahl, Schworm, Fischer & Wallace, 2003; Kitsantas & Chow, 2007).

Studies also found that approaches to teaching that engaged in more questioning to develop interpretations resulted in greater achievement for the lower performing students but no differences for average to above-average students (Dewitz et al., 2009). This opportunity to question freely may have assisted the low performers in the reciprocal reading group. Research (Mulcahy-Ernt & Caverly, 2009; Pressley, 2002) supports this student-directed questioning format due to its intimate grouping and student interaction with the emphasis on the reciprocal strategies (Appendix A).

Implications

Research on the use of summarization strategies for reading comprehension indicates that those students who entered the study with a higher knowledge base in reading were better able to identify the main idea in a narrative no matter what teaching approach was used (Aleven et al., 2003; McGee & Johnson, 2003). However, when looking for the problem in a reading it appears that the reciprocal teaching approach was the most effective. In short, this study found that the reciprocal teaching approach appeared to be especially beneficial in influencing and enhancing college students' ability to identify the problem in a reading.

In the reciprocal teaching approach, it was interesting to note that the lower-level readers appeared to respond better than the high-level readers did to the reciprocal questioning format of summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). This could be seen in the results of the interaction effects within the reciprocal teaching group when it came to the use of the summarization strategy of problem identification (Table 2). This response may not have been due only to the reciprocal questioning format (Appendix A), but also because the students worked in groups of about four to six and could play off of each others' knowledge and experience while seeking help from each other (Aleven et al., 2003). These results are compatible with those of Rosenshine and Meister (1994) whose meta-analysis of reciprocal teaching found that not only was it successful with older students, but particularly effective for those who were the weakest readers.

In the peer tutoring approach (King, 1997), the student playing the role of tutor was instructed to ask the tutee a question from each of the five categories (review, thinking, probing, hinting and thinking-about-thinking questions) using the generic open ended question stems as seen in Appendix C. In the peer tutoring approach, both the tutor and the tutee were freshmen students assigned to remedial reading courses by the college. It may be that this approach to teaching was not as successful, as both the tutor and the tutee were on reading levels that were developmentally too close in proximity. Vygotsky (1978), in his theory on the *zone of*

proximal development, maintains that it is difficult for two students to learn from each other if they are too similar in their knowledge base. He believed that learning was most likely to occur when one individual worked in collaboration with a more capable peer whom he referred to as "the more knowledgeable other."

Recent research has indicated that students will continue to grow and achieve their potential if the teachers at the college level have knowledge of how to apply appropriate teaching and learning strategies across the curricula (Giroux, 2009; Long, 2009). It is recommended that college level teachers need to be informed about and actively use varying teaching approaches, such as reciprocal teaching, which incorporate strategy instruction (Nist, 2005). In addition, these practices should be used in all subject matter curricula so students do not experience them simply as "decontextualized skills" (Malnarich, 2003, as cited in Hodges and Agee, 2009). Thus, it is recommended that more professional development maybe needed to assist faculty members in learning how to do this in their curricular area (Higbee, 2009; Howard, 2001).

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Appendix A: Reciprocal Teaching Lesson Format

Role of Teacher	Role of Student
The teacher is a coordinator who, through the use of think-alouds, engages in reciprocal modeling with the students and encourages student interaction.	The reciprocal teaching model is student-centered, as students early on take control of the lesson and the timing of each strategy. A student, playing the role of teacher, fosters student interaction.
Stage 1	Stage 1
Teacher briefly explains teaching approach to be used and the expected outcomes. Teacher models note-taking on board.	Students listen, take notes and ask questions.
Stage 2	Stage 2
Teacher models, through the use of think-alouds, and explains to the entire class the use of the four cognitive/metacognitive reading strategies of clarifying, questioning, predicting, and summarizing and their purpose.	Students observe teacher modeling and discussing the purposes of the four cognitive/metacognitive reading strategies of clarification, questioning, prediction and summarization.
Stage 3	Stage 3
Teacher engages in shared modeling/ coaching of the four cognitive/metacognitive reading strategies within the small groups, gradually shifting the responsibility of instruction to the students.	Students share in modeling/ coaching strategies with teacher and then assume responsibility of instruction with each other.

Stage 4	Stage 4
Teacher moves from group to group when called upon by students and encourages students to interact with each other, look at different alternatives, and answer their own questions using the four cognitive/metacognitive reading strategies.	Students have assumed control of the lesson, taking turns leading the dialogues and/or the sequencing of the four cognitive/metacognitive reading strategies.
Stage 5	Stage 5
Teacher circulates among the small groups, occasionally reminding students to summarize the lesson before moving on to the next activity.	Students take turns summarizing the lesson while in their small groups, and generate their own feedback. They decide when to start the next lesson.

Appendix B: Peer Tutoring Format

Role of Teacher	Role of Student
Teacher is a leader who plays a key role in the structuring, modeling (through the use of think-alouds) and direct training of student dyads.	The students follow the direction of the teacher in class structure and sequencing, and actively participate only when in the role of tutor or tutee.
Stage 1	Stage 1
Teacher briefly explains teaching approach to be used and the expected outcome. Distributes cards with generic question stems.	Students listen, look at cards with generic questions and take notes if desired.

Stage 2	Stage 2
Teacher engages in direct instruction of the whole class, demonstrating the structure, sequence and purpose of the five cognitive/metacognitive question stems: review, thinking, probing, hinting, and thinking-about-thinking questions.	Students observe the teacher demonstrating and explaining the structure, sequence and purpose of the five cognitive/metacognitive question stems: review, thinking, probing, hinting, and thinking-about-thinking questions.
Stage 3	Stage 3
Teacher demonstrates for the whole class cognitive modeling of the role of tutor and tutee. Teacher models each question type by giving examples through the use of think-alouds.	Students continue to observe the teacher while the teacher engages in cognitive modeling of roles of tutor and tutee.
Stage 4	Stage 4
Teacher works with each dyad elaborating, reinforcing, hinting and answering questions directly concerning the five cognitive/metacognitive question stems.	Students work within their dyads, alternating the role of tutor and tutee, while the teacher circulates among them observing and directly commenting on their discussions.
Stage 5	Stage 5
Teacher rotates among dyads and decides when students are ready to move on to the next lesson. At the completion of each lesson the teacher summarizes the material covered.	Students listen to teacher's summarization of the lesson.

Appendix C: Generic Open–Ended Question Stems—The Peer Tutoring Approach
(Adapted from King, 1997)

Review Questions
- What does ……..mean?
- Describe what happened at …….(a particular event) in your own words.
- Discuss what we have already learned about………(a character or event in the story)
- How does ……..relate to ………? (something we learned before)?
- Summarize in your own words ……..(the events that happened previously in the story)

Thinking Questions
- What is the difference between….and….? (contrast two characters or events in the story)
- What are the similarities between...and....?(compare two characters or events in the story)
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of……………?
- What would happen if……..?
- What conclusion can you draw about……..?
- What is the main idea of the passage? (Is it implied or is it stated?)
- State the main idea in your own words.
- What message is the author trying to give us in this story? (What's the theme or thesis?)
- What reasons can you give for your answer?

Probing Questions
- I don't understand? What do you mean by that?
- Give me more information about…….
- Could you explain further?
- What's the author really trying to tell us here?
- Is there anything else I need to know about…….?

Hinting Questions
- Have you thought about……?
- This should remind you of……….(a character, situation or event previously discussed)
- Why are………..important?
- How can…………help you?

Thinking-About-Thinking Questions
- What strategies did you use to figure that out?
- What reasons can you give that made you come to that conclusion?
- Describe how you arrived at that………(main idea, thesis or answer to any question)

Appendix D: Summary Rating Sheet
(SRS)—Instructions for the Teacher

Instruct students that their summary should be no more than two paragraphs (3-6 sentences per paragraph) and include a clear statement of the main idea and a clear statement of the problem identified in the story.

This Summary Rating Sheet (SRS) is used to provide feedback to the student on his/her performance summarizing the narrative: How well did the student summarize the story?

For each of the summary strategies:

Start with a score between 0 and 3 points. Add or subtract points according to the column heading. Place checkmarks, if applicable, for *Wrong Idea/Problem* and *Idea/Problem Not Stated*. Add the points across the row and place the sum in the *Score* box for each strategy. The maximum score sum for each strategy is 4.

Score Meaning: Fail: 0
Weak: 1
Acceptable: 2
Very Good: 3
Excellent: 4

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class & Section: _____ Rated by: _____

Reading Title: _____

Teacher Summary Rating Sheet Evaluating Student's Understanding of Strategies for Summarization: Main Idea, Problem Identification							Score For each row: Max: 4 Min: 0
Summary Strategy	Correct Idea/ Problem (0, + 1,2, or 3 Pts)	Correct Idea/ problem, Clearly Stated (+1 Pt)	Too Wordy (more than 2 paragraphs) (-1 Pt)	Too Short (less than 1 paragraph) (-1 Pt)	Wrong Idea/ Problem (check mark only)	Idea/ Problem Not Stated (check mark only, 0 Pt)	
Provide the main idea statement							
State the problem introduced							
							Total

Listening to Teachers: Self-Efficacy and Instructional Barriers, Supports, and Needs

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Abstract

The purpose of this pilot study was to explore perceived barriers, existing supports, and continued needs as reported by K-3 teachers of reading and to examine the relationship of these within the context of teacher reported self-efficacy and teaching confidence. This study describes 13 K-3 teachers' detailed discussion of perceived barriers, existing supports, and continued needs related to delivering reading instruction. The analysis identified several barriers and areas of need the teachers felt affected their ability to teach reading effectively to K-3 students. These findings are discussed in the context of the teachers' responses to basic survey questions of perceived self-efficacy and teaching confidence, and Bandura's notion of triadic reciprocality.

What barriers do K-3 teachers believe they face when teaching reading? Do K-3 teachers believe they lack support in the teaching of reading? What do these teachers believe they need to do to be more successful teachers of reading? Do these beliefs affect perceived self-efficacy? These questions led to this exploratory pilot study. Research has been conducted on teacher self-efficacy in general (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Fives, 2003; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004) but there is limited information regarding practicing teachers' perceptions of efficacy as it specifically relates to the teaching of reading (Haverback & Parault, 2008). While one need not look further than the latest issues of professional education and literacy journals to see the effectiveness of various reading strategies being used in the elementary classroom or the importance of professional development, researchers may have difficulty identifying the barriers that teachers face while teaching reading, as there is a lack of research available.

This topic became important as K-3 students' scores on a state-mandated reading assessment were analyzed. It was observed that, over the course of seven years of

assessment use, while there was a slight upward trend in scores, roughly one-third of students across the state were still not scoring at grade level, despite ongoing remedial reading instruction efforts. Further, in any given year and at any grade level (K-3), at least two-thirds of these below-grade level readers were general education students and not receiving help outside of the general education classroom. These observations led the authors/researchers to believe that the questions could only be answered by the reading teachers directly involved in the teaching and remediation process.

With the current state and national focus on assessment and the raising of test scores in order to meet federally mandated Annual Yearly Progress (AYP; NCLB, 2001) goals, it is believed that teachers' voices have been lost in the overall effort to avoid the negative consequences of what has come to be known as "AYP jail." While, on the one hand, teachers are being asked to raise students' reading scores, on the other hand, they are not being asked for their input as to how this can be accomplished— or better yet, what is preventing reading scores from going up. Further, the pressure to raise the performance levels of struggling students may have a deleterious effect on teacher self-efficacy (Barkley, 2006). It is important, therefore, that teachers have the opportunity to share their beliefs regarding their teaching abilities, the barriers they face in delivering reading instruction, and their instructional needs; after all, they are the ones working with students every day. This led to the development of four questions that guided this research:

1. How do K-3 teachers feel about their personal ability to teach reading?
2. What barriers do K-3 teachers believe they face in delivering reading instruction?
3. Do K-3 teachers feel supported in their instructional efforts in the area of reading?
4. What do K-3 teachers believe they need in order to be more successful teachers of reading?

Review of Literature

Ashton and Webb (as cited in Bandura, 1997) noted "educational systems are strewn with conditions that can easily erode teachers' sense of efficacy and occupational satisfaction" (p. 244). Further, Bandura (1997) states teachers' "beliefs in their instructional efficacy affect their students' academic progress, which, in turn, affects teachers' beliefs in their efficacy to motivate and educate students who have difficulty academically" (p. 250). According to Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy (1998) teachers' sense of efficacy is related to their behavior in the classroom; it affects the effort they put into teaching, the goals they set for their students, and their willingness to experiment with new approaches to teaching. Teachers' self-efficacy can not only lead students to become more motivated and engaged in learning, but it can lead to better achievement in the classroom and on standardized assessments (Barkley, 2006).

Data from classroom observations indicate that teacher efficacy may influence student behavior that is known to yield achievement gains (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Anderson (2004) wrote, "schools can make a great difference in terms of student achievement, and a substantial portion of that difference is attributable to teachers" (p. 19). What barriers, then, do K-3 teachers face when teaching reading? Ashton and Webb (as cited in Bandura, 1997) identified several concerns teachers have that are often beyond their control, such as heavy workloads, the variable quality of administrative leadership, limited resources, and problematic students. Boggs and Szabo (2009) determined through interviews with K-12 Texas teachers that some of the barriers teachers face regarding teaching in general include: 1) working with students with behavior problems, 2) testing and test preparation, 3) increased time spent on administrative tasks (and time spent in meetings to discuss these tasks), and 4) increased stress levels associated with things such as testing and general student issues.

Methods

The theoretical basis for this research was the social cognitive theory and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 1997). According to Pajares (2002), social cognitive theory is:

> …rooted in a view of human agency in which individuals are agents proactively engaged in their own development and can make things happen by their actions. Key to this sense of agency is [that] individuals possess self-beliefs that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. (p. 2)

In regard to the role of self-efficacy beliefs in people's daily functioning, Bandura (1997) states "people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true" (p. 2); because of this,

> …how people behave can often be better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing, for these self-efficacy perceptions help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have. (Pajares, 2002, p. 4)

Since Bandura (1997) believed that most human behavior is determined by several interacting factors as opposed to one single event or experience, people are contributors, not sole determiners, of what happens in their lives. Bandura also believed "the self-assurance with which people approach and manage difficult tasks determines whether they make good or poor use of their capabilities. Insidious self-doubts can easily overrule the best of skills" (p. 35). When we apply this to the teaching of reading, we can say that, regardless of skill level or academic attainment, when teachers doubt their effectiveness in teaching reading, they *will* be ineffective teachers of reading.

Additionally, Bandura (1986; 1997) conceived of the idea of reciprocal determinism, the view that three factors—internal personal factors (cognition, affect, and biological events), behavior, and external environment—create interactions resulting in triadic reciprocality. With the ideas of social cognitive theory, self-efficacy, and triadic reciprocality in mind, the authors interviewed practicing teachers to determine their feelings of self-efficacy and what environmental (i.e., school) and personal (i.e., training) factors could be controlled for to alter (or, if already positive, maintain) their behavior (i.e., instruction) in order for them to view—and ultimately, realize—themselves as successful teachers of reading.

Participants

Twenty-eight teachers voluntarily participated in this study. Fifteen participants were eliminated from the study because they taught grades other than K-3. The remaining 13 participants were K-3 teachers in eight school districts across southern Idaho. Eight of the 13 participants were in their second year of a two-year Master's of Education, Literacy Emphasis, graduate cohort program, for which the first author served as an instructor; the remaining five participants were part of a group of 11 participants in a break-out session at a state reading conference. Participants from the Master's program voluntarily met prior to a regularly scheduled class session. The authors met with the other participants approximately three weeks later during an hour-long breakout session of a state literacy conference. The breakout session was described in the conference program as an opportunity to "share your thoughts about what's happening in K-3 reading instruction, what issues are facing teachers of reading, and what needs to happen to help students become better readers with two reading instruction researchers."

Of the 13 participants, one taught Kindergarten, six taught first grade, one taught in a K-1 combination class, two taught second grade, and three taught third grade. Four of the teachers had 2-5 years of teaching experience, three had 6-9 years experience, three had 10-20 years experience, and three had over 20 years of teaching experience. All were Caucasian females teaching in rural school districts, though the populations of their districts varied greatly, serving a range of approximately 150 to 25,000 students.

Materials and Procedure

Teachers in both sessions were first asked to complete anonymously and individually a 50-question Likert-scale survey developed by the researchers. The survey addressed various aspects of reading instruction, including statements regarding the amount of time available for reading instruction, level of building and district support for reading instruction and professional development, self-efficacy, and teaching confidence. The purpose of the survey questions was twofold: a) to encourage the teachers to think about themselves in relationship to their reading instruction skills prior to participating in the group discussion, and b) to provide

the authors with a general impression of teachers' reported sense of instructional self-efficacy as it relates to reading and barriers to the implementation of effective reading instruction. This article only examines the statements related to self-efficacy and teaching confidence. Specifically, the teachers were asked to *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree* with the following statements:

1. I feel I am able to get through to struggling readers.
2. I feel well prepared to teach struggling readers.
3. I have confidence in what I do as a teacher of reading.
4. Reading Specialists are more effective with diverse learners than I am.
5. Reading Specialists are better at teaching struggling readers than I am.
6. Regarding reading, there are some students that will always struggle.

Next, the participants were given three open-ended questions to reflect on individually, then discuss in small groups before moving into a whole-group discussion. The three open-ended questions were:

1. What, if any, barriers do you face in delivering reading instruction to your students?
2. What existing supports do you have to help you teach reading to your students?
3. What, if anything, do you need to be a better teacher of reading?

During the whole-group discussion, one of the authors wrote down participant statements verbatim while the other facilitated the conversation, encouraging participation and keeping track of time. The authors took Rubin and Rubin's (1995) stance of the interview as a variant of normal conversation. During the discussion, both authors refrained from making comments that could be interpreted as influencing one particular type of response over another; however, the authors did ask participants to repeat and/or clarify their statements to help the authors better understand and record their comments.

Next, the authors and a graduate student reviewed the written teacher statements/responses independently to identify common ideas and organize them into categories (Creswell, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Then, they met together to refine and finalize the ideas and categories. The authors did not identify predetermined categories prior to the analysis of teacher statements; rather, the authors let the teachers' statements influence the formation of categories.

Results

Self-efficacy/Confidence Statements

Teachers were asked to indicate whether they *strongly agreed*, *agreed*, *disagreed*, or *strongly disagreed* with six self-efficacy and/or teaching confidence statements. These statements provided the authors with a basic snapshot regarding the teachers' feelings of instructional self-efficacy as it relates to teaching reading and their confidence in their ability to teach reading. Table 1 includes the statements and

the corresponding percentage of teachers that agreed (responding either *strongly agree* or *agree*) with each statement.

Table 1: Percentage of Teachers Agreeing with Statements Regarding the Teaching of Reading

Statement	% Strongly Agreeing or Agreeing
I feel I am able to get through to struggling readers.	92
I feel well prepared to teach struggling readers.	85
I have confidence in what I do as a teacher of reading.	100
Reading Specialists are more effective with diverse learners than I am.	8
Reading Specialists are better at teaching struggling readers than I am.	23
Regarding reading, there are some students that will always struggle.	8

As illustrated in Table 1, the teachers that participated in this study indicated a high level of confidence in their overall abilities as teachers of reading (100%). Additionally, nearly all (92%) agreed that they are able to reach struggling readers through their instruction, while slightly fewer (85%) agreed that they feel well prepared to teach struggling readers. Questions regarding the effectiveness of others at teaching diverse learners and struggling readers were asked to determine if teachers' responses would hold true; that is, if they viewed a Reading Specialist as being better able to work with particular students. Responses indicated only a small percentage of teachers believed Reading Specialists to be more effective with diverse learners (8%) and struggling readers (23%) than themselves. Eight percent of responding teachers indicated that some students would always be considered as struggling readers, meaning that the majority of teachers believed all students could be successful readers. In general, the teachers in this study rated themselves positively as teachers of reading and for being able to meet the needs of their students. These ratings therefore suggest that not only did these teachers have a high level of confidence in what they do, but they also believe they are capable of organizing and executing a course of action necessary to attain their goal of teaching struggling readers (perceived self-efficacy) successfully.

Discussion Questions

Teachers indicated, through discussion, that they face barriers and have unmet needs when teaching their students in the area of reading. Through an analysis of the statements made during the group discussions, no teachers indicated feelings of inability to teach reading; there were, however, indications of needs, such as continued professional development and access to materials. Additionally, while all teachers felt supported in their teaching efforts, they also indicated a need for more support from school administrators. Overall, teachers in this study did not indicate

an inability or unwillingness to learn more or become better teachers. Given this information, the authors sought to determine what teachers perceived as barriers to their instruction and what they believe they need to further their skills as teachers of reading to teach their students successfully to read. The perceived barriers that are discussed in detail in the following sections are also briefly outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Perceived Barriers, Supports, and Needs of K-3 Teachers of Reading

Barriers to delivering reading instruction	Existing supports	Continued needs
Home-based	***People***	***Home-based***
•Lack of parent involvement (6)	•Aides (10)	•Parent accountability (6)
•Inadequate knowledge of student histories (5)	•Coaches (6)	*School-based*
	•Para-educators (6)	•Smaller class size (11)
School-based barriers at the immediate instructional level: Teachers and specialists	•Special Educators (6)	•More support from various instructional personnel (10)
•Lack of teacher knowledge required to differentiate instruction to meet all students' needs (10)	•Title I (5)	•More preparation time and time to collaborate with others (11)
•New teachers and/or less educated teachers; (6)	•Reading Specialists (6)	•Financial support (to purchase materials, pay additional staff, etc.) (10)
•Pull-out instruction (6)	•Grandparent volunteers (5)	•A focus on academics from school-leadership personnel (6)
•Little connection between pullout program support and classroom instruction (6)	•Cross-age tutors (5)	•Less pressure regarding standardized tests (10)
•Little support from specialists to make connection between pullout services and classroom (6)	•Reading buddies (5)	
•Not enough or any access to Reading Specialists (6)	•Grade level peers (11)	
•Teachers and/or administrators with differing philosophies (6)	•Administrators (6)	
•Lack of consistency and continuity between teachers within and across grade levels (6)	***Programs***	
•Lack of administrative support for unity in reading attainment (10)	•Research-based reading programs (basal, computer programs) (13)	
School-based barriers: Larger school community (school, school district, and state)		
•Lack of time for both planning/preparation and instruction (10)		
•Large class sizes (6)		
•Too much material to cover (6)		

The numbers in parentheses proceeding each perceived barrier indicate how many K-3 teachers provided the response.

Barriers to delivering reading instruction

When asked what, if any, barriers they as K-3 teachers face in delivering reading instruction to their students, it was found that their responses fell into two themes: those that were home-based and those that were school-based. Within the category of perceived school-based barriers were those barriers that could be attributed to within the school at the immediate instructional level (i.e., preparation and personnel) and those that could be attributed to the larger school community (i.e., principals, superintendents). Many of these categories were consistent with Ashton and Webb's findings (as cited in Bandura, 1997) regarding collective school efficacy.

Home-based barriers. Barriers discussed included a lack of parental involvement and an inadequate knowledge of student histories, especially for those students that transfer into the school midway through an academic year.

School-based barriers at the immediate instructional level—Teachers and

specialists. Barriers discussed at the instructional level included those that were due to lack of preparation (knowledge) on the part of the individual and those that were due to lack of support from individuals. Discussion indicated that some teachers felt they did not have the ability to differentiate instruction effectively to meet the needs of all students in their classroom because of lack of knowledge. Other teachers felt that new teachers, because of lack of experience, and teachers with less knowledge of reading instruction could also act as a barrier. They felt this was especially noticeable when they began working with students that had received instruction from a new or 'less knowledgeable' teacher the year before and it was now up to them to 'make up' gaps in instruction.

A few teachers indicated that they did not always receive the kind and the amount of support they felt necessary to deliver good reading instruction. Pull-out instruction (not limited to just reading support) was seen by these teachers as a barrier; while they maintained there was a need for some students to receive this additional form of support, they felt that it often disrupted classroom instruction for the targeted student. These teachers also indicated that there was often little connection between what the student was working on during pull-out instruction and what was happening in the general classroom; these teachers expressed little support from specialists in making connections between pull-out and classroom instruction for the student.

Some teachers indicated that, despite a request for support, they did not have enough access—or at times, any access—to a Reading Specialist. Finally, a small number of teachers indicated that often there were teachers and administrators with differing philosophies and agendas, as well as little consistency and continuity between teachers within and across grade levels, and little administrative support to unite the faculty with the common goal of student reading success.

School-based barriers—Larger school community (school, school district, and state). Within the larger school community, some teachers indicated a lack of time for planning and instruction. They indicated a growing amount of administrative duties that consumed valuable preparation time, such as bus duty and monitoring lunch. Large class size was also a barrier for these teachers, as they indicated not having enough time to meet with each student individually because they now had so many students with whom to work. Finally, a few teachers agreed that they often felt they were covering a large amount of material at little depth, and thus value, to the overall learning needs of the students—as one teacher indicated "the curriculum is a mile wide and an inch deep."

Existing supports

When asked specifically what existing supports K-3 teachers had for teaching reading to their students, two categories of support emerged: people and programs.

People. Overall, the interviewed teachers indicated that they had access, with differing degrees of frequency, to various school personnel for support, such as aides, Reading Specialists, Reading Coaches, paraprofessional educators, Special Educators, Title I teachers, and principals. Many indicated that they received support from

their grade-level peers as well. Teachers also indicated the availability of grandparent volunteers, cross-age tutors, and reading buddies.

Programs. Most teachers indicated that they had access to various research-based reading programs and access to computers and computer software. Some also indicated having access, through their district, to money they could use for materials through *Reading First* (2001) funds. Finally, a small number of teachers indicated that they had the option of attending reading-focused professional development opportunities.

Continued Needs

When asked what they needed as K-3 teachers to be better teachers of reading, teachers' responses focused on a remediation of the barriers they stated they faced in delivering reading instruction, needs that could once again be organized into home-based and school-based categories. They also indicated an increased need for support of their efforts, supports that could be organized into school-based immediate instructional support and school and community support.

Home-based needs. Virtually all teachers indicated a general need for more parent accountability and support. They mentioned specifically the need for parents to support reading opportunities/practice at home and demonstration of parent involvement in motivating their children to read.

School-based needs. Many teachers indicated several things that they believed were needed for them to be able to teach reading better. Their ideas included smaller class size and more support from personnel such as classroom aides and specialists. They also believed they would benefit if they had more time to spend preparing for instruction and working collaboratively with support personnel and grade-level peers. They indicated an increased need for financial support from administration for personnel, materials, and professional development.

These teachers indicated they would also like to see school leadership focus more on academics and less on administrative tasks. They would like support for reading in the content areas, especially as reading instruction takes more and more time away from instructional areas such as social studies and science. While teachers are often inundated with information on meeting the needs of low-achieving students, most teachers stated a need for support to meet the needs of high-achieving students that may become 'bored' in the classroom. Finally, all teachers stated the need for less pressure from school personnel, parents, and the general public concerning standardized tests. They explained that they often felt pressure to 'teach to the test' and that this pressure hindered their ability to teach students to become successful, life-long readers. Teachers further indicated a need to have their teaching efforts and student learning gains be recognized when their struggling students made significant improvement on their state mandated assessment scores but failed to advance to the next higher category.

Limitations

There are a number of constraints that place limitations on the extent to which general conclusions can be drawn from the results of this pilot study. It is not possible to make any statistically significant conclusions about the relationship between teacher reported self-efficacy and perceived barriers to reading instruction. However, this was not the intention of this study. The aim was to explore K-3 teachers' reported perceived barriers, existing supports, and continued needs and the relationship of these perceived barriers within the context of teacher reported self-efficacy and teaching confidence in an attempt to support the need for a larger study. The small number and type of participants, the use of a self-developed self-efficacy scale, and the qualitative data collection methodology are all clearly limitations to the interpretation of this study's findings.

The fact that the participants were either part of a Master's in Education, Literacy Emphasis, cohort or attendees of a state reading conference places limits on the interpretability of the data. While the authors/researchers believe the feedback provided from the teachers at both locations were valuable, only holding discussions with teachers that are interested in furthering their development through continued schooling or professional development opportunities is a limitation. Another limitation with developing conclusions was the fact that information came from a self-developed self-efficacy scale. The use of the self-efficacy items used in this study was intended to serve as a pilot for a larger study the authors have recently launched across the state that will be used to further refine and validate the self-efficacy items. While the information collected here gave us a restricted view of teacher perceptions of self-efficacy, barriers to instruction, levels of support, and areas of need, we believe it was appropriate for this small exploratory study.

A final limitation lies in the decision to transcribe the teachers' statements verbatim during the whole group discussions rather than to record their conversations and transcribe them from the recording. Though directly transcribing statements from a recording of the conversation would have guaranteed an exact record of ideas expressed by the teachers, it was believed the teachers were more comfortable in freely discussing their thoughts by not using a recorder. It is believed that by writing statements and asking for repetition and clarification the salient points of the conversations were captured while also ensuring the comfort of our participants. However, it is believed that the use of three independent raters to initially identify common ideas and organize them into categories was sufficient to produce an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability.

Discussion

In general, the teachers that participated in this study reported feeling highly self-efficacious and confident in their overall ability to teach reading. However, at the same time, they reported facing barriers in delivering reading instruction, having unmet needs, feeling a need for effort recognition, and needing further

support for classroom-level instruction. Looking through the lens of Bandura's (1986) model of triadic reciprocality (external environment, internal personal factors, and behavior), we see that the teacher identified barriers to teaching reading and unmet instructional needs fall heavily within the category of environment. We also see teacher identified effort recognition needs falling into the category of personal factors (cognitive and affective events).

Looking at the school environment, teachers identified perceived barriers at the immediate instructional level, such as a need for more understanding of how to differentiate instruction, as well as a need to, as one teacher stated, get all teachers "on the same page" regarding the delivery of reading instruction so that students are taught the necessary skills at all levels of instruction. Additionally, teachers reported a perception that teachers and administrators within their school may be working independently toward their own goals, rather than cohesively as a group to help all students within the school. Teachers also believed that pullout instruction was, in many ways, a hindrance, as opposed to being a helpful practice. Though teachers indicated that many students benefit from additional instruction from a specialist, they felt there was often a disconnect between the instruction during pullout and instruction occurring in the general education classroom. Teachers in this study reported they would like more support from a Reading Specialist; and they indicated an eagerness to improve their own instruction for the benefit of their students. As Adelman, Taylor, & Schnieder (1999) stated, teachers need to work closely with other teachers and school personnel,

> …as collaboration and teaming are key facets of addressing barriers to learning. They allow teachers to broaden the resources and strategies available in and out of the classroom to enhance [students'] learning and performance (p. 296).

Within the larger school community, teachers indicated a growing amount of administrative duties taking away from their planning time. They also indicated that large class sizes limited the amount of time they could attend to individual students' needs. Finally, the teachers indicated that they were required to cover such a large amount of material over the course of the year that they could not cover it with the depth necessary for true understanding.

The teachers in this study indicated ways in which these barriers could be eliminated, and it is important that school administrators—at the school, district, and state levels—consider this advice. As one teacher stated, "*We are on the front lines every day working with students, and we know, ultimately, what will work and what we need to do to help students.*" While teachers indicated that a wide variety of people were available to support their instruction, such as aides, volunteers, and specialists, the individual that was most frequently requested was a Reading Specialist. Teachers in this study stated that they would like to work with a Reading Specialist to better understand the needs of their students and what they as classroom teachers can do

to help them become better readers. Additionally, teachers indicated a need for more access to and support for attending ongoing professional development workshops. The most important component of this, however, was a need for administrative support through the allotment of additional time to implement the knowledge and practices they learn through professional development. With the need for teachers to take on additional administrative duties, and increasing class sizes, one teacher stated, and others concurred, that "*though I learn a lot through professional development, when I get back to my classroom, I put the information on a shelf, hoping to get back to it and implement the strategies when I have time, but I never do.*"

Teachers in this study also stated that they felt pressure from all sides—parents, administrators, and the state—to make sure students perform well on state mandated reading assessments. The K-3 teachers reported feeling overwhelmed with the amount of testing, especially with students at such a young age. Teachers further stated that they would like to spend more time making reading meaningful for students by using a wide range of materials and experiences to reach their students, but that they do not have time due to the pressures of testing. Teachers also unanimously reported feeling frustrated that the progress their students make in reading over the course of a year is not acknowledged because the student did not make enough progress to raise his or her scores to grade level. Teachers reported being frustrated that struggling or delayed readers that make tremendous gains but do not yet read at grade level are not acknowledged, and teachers felt disappointed and hurt that they are often looked down upon by their peers and administrators for this so-called "lack of progress."

To counteract these feelings, much change needs to occur. Though many positive changes in reading instruction have occurred over time, such as the focus on, development, and use of research-based materials and methods of instruction, reading instruction has become assessment focused much to the detriment of our students. As opposed to using assessment results to drive instruction, teachers in this study, as well as nationally, are reporting feeling pressure to "teach to the test," leaving little time to teach other reading skills (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2003; Jones & Egley, 2007).

Although the majority of the teachers in this study reported having high levels of overall perceived self-efficacy and confidence related to teaching struggling readers, it is clear that they also perceive a number of instructional barriers and have a variety of unmet needs, both in instruction and support. They are also expressing high levels of frustration and disappointment regarding a) their perceptions that their state is over-focused on meeting federally mandated reading/assessment levels at the cost of student skills acquisition, and b) their perception that they, as teachers of reading, are not receiving recognition for the significant gains their low achieving students are making toward reading mastery. Given the research on teacher perceived self-efficacy and the connection to job satisfaction, student academic progress, and teacher classroom behavior (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1997;

Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), if the teacher-identified barriers and needs in this study are not alleviated and met, it is likely that their sense of perceived self-efficacy will erode and ultimately their students will suffer. As Bandura (1997) states, "It takes time for a causal factor to exert its influence" (p. 3) and the teachers in this study are already feeling the influence of two of the three interacting determinants believed to be critical components of Bandura's (1997) notion of reciprocal determinism and perceived self-efficacy.

Implications for Future Research

The data collected from this pilot study gives a glimpse of what is needed to help practicing teachers more effectively meet the needs of their students and suggests the importance of the information K-3 teachers can provide regarding instructional barriers, existing supports, continuing needs and the relationship to perceived teacher self-efficacy. The data also suggests the need to explore further the voice of K-3 teachers of reading and to integrate that voice into the making of policy decisions, the planning of reading instruction, and the training of future teachers of reading.

Revisiting Bandura's (1986) idea of reciprocal determinism and his model of triadic reciprocality, teacher educators and researchers, teachers, and administrators at all levels must work together to help create more of a balance between the personal, the environmental, and the behavioral factors affecting teachers' perceived self-efficacy and, thus, their ability to be effective teachers of reading. As Bandura (1997) stated, "the vastly enhanced human power to transform the environment can have pervasive effects not only on current life but on future generations" (p. 2).

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Increasing Accessibility to an Alternative Teacher Certification Program: Transitional Needs of Working Adults

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Abstract

This study explored how to better meet the needs of working adults as they transition into the alternative teacher certification program (ATCP). Data collection included interviews and questionnaires. The findings highlighted four categories: institutional barriers, quality of advising, program flexibility, and personal concerns. Recommendations suggest areas for modifications that could lead to increased recruitment of career changers.

An estimated 2.2 million new teachers will be needed in the next decade (Nagy & Wang, 2008). Compounding this problem is the attrition rate within the teaching profession, where more than 30% of novice teachers exit the field within the first five years of teaching (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003) and one million are expected to retire in the next five to six years (Nagy & Wang, 2008). Thus, the spotlight is now on alternative teacher certification programs (ATCPs) to help fulfill the need for qualified teachers. The goal of ATCPs is to increase access to teacher education programs (Stoddart, 1990). The National Center for Education Information (NCEI, 2005) has estimated that each year 35,000 individuals enter the teaching profession by means of alternative certification intended for individuals with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. These programs offer shortcuts, specialized help, and tailored curricula that lead towards standard teaching credentials (Adelman, 1986). Working professionals, in particular, are attracted to the incentives of ATCPs (Johnson, Birkeland, & Peske, 2005).

Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia have adopted programs to allow quick entry into the teaching profession (Nagy & Wang, 2008). Yet, in the literature, there is scant information detailing the transition that working adults undergo as they

enter ATCPs (Castro & Baumi, 2009). Given that No Child Left Behind legislation mandates that all teachers be highly qualified, empirical evidence suggests that "the extent and quality" of teacher education programs makes a difference in teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2000b, p. 166). With the shortage of teachers in certain fields, it is clear that there is a demand for quality alternative routes to teacher certification that better meet the needs of nontraditional students wanting to teach (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005). Because the goal of ATCPs is to increase the number of teachers in the field, the purpose of this study was to explore ATCP accessibility for working adults as they transition into the program.

Literature Review
Alternative Teacher Certification Programs

The potentially undermining role of ATCPs on university-based teacher education and the great variability among programs that provide nontraditional pathways into the teaching profession, have led ATCPs to become "one of the most hotly debated issues of contemporary education" (May, Katsinas, & Moore, 2003, p. 67). The variability in the types of existing programs may be the biggest point of contention among those concerned with the teaching quality of ATCP graduates. The goals, length of time required for completion, and structure differ greatly among ATCPs (Salyer, 2003). Whereas some ATCPs are very similar to the ones offered by traditional universities in terms of the number of required classes and the content of the curriculum, others provide a few weeks of training before individuals are sent out into the classroom. Given the demands of teaching, some shortcut versions result in high turnover rates (Darling-Hammond, 2000a; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Fowler, 2002).

Fortunately, not all ATCPs shortchange their graduates. There are many well-structured, rigorous programs that are "successful in preparing mid-career recruits from other fields" (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003, p. 4). These programs are specifically designed to recruit bright individuals from other fields with bachelor's degrees (Feistritzer & Haar, 2008). The curriculum is a compressed version of the coursework offered through teacher education universities that is taken before and while teaching and incorporates more field experiences and intense supervision.

Characteristics of Adults Who Seek Alternative Teacher Certification

According to Cohen-Vogel and Smith (2007), there are four fundamental assumptions regarding ATCPs: (1) recruited candidates are from outside the teaching profession; (2) programs "attract top-quality, well-trained" teachers (p. 735); (3) graduates are more likely to work in challenging, hard-to-staff schools; and (4) the number of out-of-field teachers are reduced. While these assumptions were not verified by Cohen-Vogel and Smith's research, ATCP candidates do have several characteristics in common. These teachers enter ATCPs in order to help students and contribute to society, they may have had previous experiences with teaching and training, they have a desire to spend more time with their families, and they are drawn to the availability of

jobs, a flexible schedule, and benefits of teaching (Nagy & Wang, 2008; Salyer, 2003). Additionally, National Center for Education Information (NCEI) (2007) reports that ATCP teacher demographics are different from traditional university programs. The ATCP population is older, has more males, and has more minorities.

Almost 47% of teachers on ATCP paths would not have entered the teaching profession had it not been for the availability of ATCPs (NCEI, 2007). This can be attributed to the fact that ATCPs are specifically designed to meet the needs of individuals who enter teaching later in life and who possess a set of different experiences (NCEI, 2007).

Needs of Working Adults Transitioning into ATCPs

Research describing characteristics of effective ATCPs is abundant (Jorissen, 2003; May, Katsinas, & Moore, 2003, Stoddard, 1990; Suell & Piotrowski, 2007; Zeichner & Schulte, 2001). However, there is a lack of research that examines the needs of this population as they enter and begin their ATCPs (Castro & Baumi, 2009).

An electronic database search was conducted on ERIC via EBSCO host and Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (CSA). The searches used the descriptors "alternative teacher certification" and "teacher education programs." In addition, the following terms were searched independently and then in combination with the two descriptors: lateral entry, alternative certification, needs, student needs, student characteristics, recruitment, program characteristics, barriers, and career switching. The search was limited to peer-reviewed articles from 2000 to 2010. Both the independent and combined searches yielded 1,416 citations with several duplicated articles. Of these citations, two articles were found to be relevant to our topic. The references to these articles were examined and another relevant article was identified. The findings of these three articles are briefly described below.

A study conducted in northwest England tracked the progress of the first cohort in a postgraduate initial teacher certification program (Reid & Singer, 2006). Of concern to this article, they found that communication between the students and the university is often ignored, and that university personnel must resist the temptation to treat career-switching individuals as typical university students.

A focus group of 14 new entrants in an ATCP was interviewed to explore what factors led them to choose a second career in teaching (Castro & Baumi, 2009). The major finding showed that "program accessibility at the time career changers begin exploring routes to certification dramatically impacts their decision-making" to enter teaching (Castro & Baumi, 123-124).

The third study was a qualitative study describing the experience of six Hispanic paraprofessionals in a traditional teacher education program (Valenciana, Weisman, & Flores, 2006). Although these students were not in an ATCP, their experiences have many commonalities with those of working adults seeking alternative teacher certification. They found that participants struggled navigating university bureaucracy, understanding certification requirements, finding financial assistance, and getting support from advisors.

Although the previously described studies provide much needed information on this limited researched topic, they still leave many unanswered questions. Are the experiences of American students in ATCPs similar to the experiences of students in England? Do the concerns of 14 students generalize to a larger population? To what extent do the barriers encountered by six Hispanic paraprofessionals earning a Bachelor of Arts echo the experiences of ATCP populations?

If the goal of ATCPs is to increase the number of teachers in the field, then examining the accessibility of ATCPs for working adults as they transition into the program is paramount. Knowledge of factors influencing ATCP program accessibility may inform recruitment of second-career teachers. The lack of research describing this key area motivated this exploratory study. Two questions were developed that guided this study:

1. How accessible is an ATCP to working adults making a career change?
2. What transitional needs do working adults have at the beginning of an ATCP program?

Methods

Setting

This study was conducted in a large, urban, public university located in the southeast U.S. serving over 22,300 students. Through the College of Education, the ATCP offers a graduate license or a Master's of Arts in Teaching for individuals who hold a bachelor's degree and desire initial teacher licensure.

Program Description

At the time of the study, the program targeted career changers and retiring professionals. Students could obtain initial certification through two programs, a Graduate Certificate in Teaching or a Master of Arts in Teaching. The programs offered campus-based courses and online course delivery. Classes were available during the evening and summer. Clinical experience hours were required by course throughout the program.

Working toward Graduate Certificate in Teaching. One option required participants to complete 27 credit hours that led to initial licensure in Special Education K-12 through an adaptive curriculum program, or a general curriculum program. In addition, an initial licensure in Middle Grades or Secondary Education could be obtained with 18 total credit hours. One course that was required for all three options was a semester long internship. Students applied through the University system and were accepted by the College of Education. To complete the program, students needed to pass the Praxis II exam. Credits earned could be later transferred towards a Master of Arts in Teaching program.

Working toward a Master's of Arts in Teaching Degree (MAT). This master's program was geared towards students who already held a bachelor's degree outside of the field of education. This option led to initial and advanced teacher licensure. Students applied through the University system and were accepted by the Graduate

School; thus, they needed to meet the required criteria (e.g., grade point average and test scores on the Graduate Record Exam or Miller Analogies Test). This program was designed with phases. The MAT in Special Education (general curriculum or adapted curriculum) required two phases and a total of 39 hours. The MAT in Middle Grades and Secondary Education also required 39 hours. In the areas of math, social studies, and science, up to 30 credit hours could be taken online. The MAT in Elementary Education required 36 total credit hours throughout three phases and students were expected to have their own classroom once they entered phase II. For both Special Education and Elementary Education, each phase had a required number of blocked courses that had to be completed in sequence.

Participants

The sampling method was purposive; only students in the ATCP in the beginning of the elementary, middle/secondary, and special education programs during the spring 2008 semester were targeted as key informants. Students in 16 out of the 17 courses (94%) were invited to participate in the study. Of the courses offered, 10 of the 17 courses (59%) were offered as face-to-face classes and the remaining seven courses (41%) were offered as online classes. Focus group interview sessions were conducted in nine out of the ten face-to-face classes (90%). All online course students were e-mailed the questionnaire. Of the 675 students enrolled in the ATCP, 94 students (14%) at the beginning of their program, participated in the study. Table 1 provides the program, area of concentration, gender, ethnicity, and age breakdown for the population.

Table 1: *Descriptive Data for Sample Population*

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Under 30	43	46
30-39	24	26
40-49	21	22
50 or older	6	6
Gender		
Female	65	69
Male	29	31
Ethnicity		
White (non-Hispanic)	70	74
Black (non-Hispanic)	16	17
Asian, Pacific Islander	4	4
Hispanic	2	2
American Indian, Alaska Native	2	2
Program		
Graduate Certificate	69	73
Master of Arts in Teaching	22	23
Not Reported	3	3
Area of Concentration		
Middle/Secondary	53	56
Elementary	22	23
Special Education	19	20

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Design and Procedures

    This was a qualitative, exploratory study. Data were gathered through focus group interviews and questionnaires.

    Focus Group Interviews. Data collection occurred during March and April. All professors for the courses that enrolled the target student population were contacted first via e-mail. For classes taught face-to-face, the introductory e-mail explained the purpose of the study and asked if the professor would allow the researchers to stop by his/her classroom and recruit students for this study. Once the professor consented, a date and time was agreed upon. The researcher went to the scheduled class, explained the study to the students, and asked for interested participants. If all students consented to participate, the focus group interview session was held at that time. This was the case for all nine face-to-face classes. All focus group interviews were held during class time, in the classroom, either at the beginning of class, or at the end depending on the professor, and they lasted no more than one hour. Both researchers conducted all of the focus group sessions.

    A protocol of structured interview questions were developed to inquire about the needs of working adults enrolled in an ATCP (See Appendix A). The focus group interviews had two parts. The first part utilized Photolanguage, a technique that uses black and white photographs to elicit responses from individuals. Photolanguage has been found to elicit more feedback than traditional interviewing methods (Bessell, Deese, & Medina, 2007). The researchers laid out approximately 75 photos from the Photolanguage Australia Human Values Sets A and B (Cooney & Burton, 1986), on several tables for viewing and selection. Next, the focus group questions were presented orally and written on the board. Participants were then invited to walk around the tables and view the photographs and write down the number of the picture that best described their answer to the questions. After five or so minutes in silence where participants had the chance to see all the photographs and make their selection, they were asked to retrieve the actual photo and return to their seats. Next, participants were invited to share the photo they had chosen and to explain the reasons behind their choice. This explanation became their answer to the focus group questions. Although no exact count was taken, the majority of the participants shared their photo choice and explained through the photo their answer to the focus group questions. The second part of the focus group was conducted without pictures, in a traditional focus group manner with questions posed by the researchers that participants answered based on their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

    For the sake of accuracy, and when participants consented, interview sessions were audio taped and transcribed. While one researcher facilitated the focus group interview, the other took notes, monitored the recorder, and wrote observer comments. When interviews were not audio recorded, both researchers took verbatim notes. The nine focus group interviews were held with 63 students participating. Both researchers took verbatim notes during one focus group interview that was not audio taped. The

eight focus group interviews were audio taped and transcribed by a graduate assistant. All individual or class information was removed from the data.

Questionnaires. A questionnaire was developed in order to reach the target population that was taking online courses and could not be gathered as a group. The introductory e-mail asked if the professor would forward the introductory recruitment e-mail, electronic consent form, and questionnaire to the students enrolled in the online course. Once the professor consented, the documents were sent to the professor who was asked to forward them to the students enrolled in the class and to copy the researchers on the e-mail. The researchers later sent the professor a reminder of the deadline for him/her to forward a reminder e-mail to the students.

The same questions were typed and they asked each student to describe his/her response, as they did not have pictures to examine. The typed questionnaire had spaces under each question for the student to respond. The questionnaire was sent via e-mail through the professor of the class. Upon return, completed questionnaires were de-indentified of individual or class information. Completed questionnaires were e-mailed back directly to the researchers. Of the questionnaires sent, 31 completed questionnaires were returned.

Analysis

Data analysis was completed in two phases over four weeks. During the first phase, each researcher transcribed her own notes and independently began to code loosely the data they thought suitable. The researchers independently reread coded data after each new interview going back over transcripts, marginal notes, and codes.

During the second phase, the researchers met to read and discuss each other's notes and coded data. Together they crosschecked their notes with the transcripts and analyzed the responses to the questionnaires. Collaboratively, they revised initial descriptive codes or created new ones. Together, they discussed discrepancies, identified patterns, and formulated themes. Later, the themes were collapsed, and grouped into categories.

Results

Upon analysis of the data, multiple themes emerged. Commonalities among the themes were identified and grouped into four, non-hierarchical, broader categories: institutional barriers, quality of advising, program flexibility, and personal concerns. The themes that underlie each broad category are discussed below and where appropriate, quotes were taken directly from the data.

Institutional Barriers

There were two themes that were grouped into the category of institutional barriers. The themes were incorrect level of assumed knowledge and frustration regarding

application-processing time. These themes revealed institutional barriers students needed to overcome in order to gain access into the ATCP program.

Incorrect level of assumed knowledge. The ATCP website is the main method through which students access the program and the University. According to the data, the website overestimated the level of knowledge the ATCP students had regarding the certification process and differences between programs. ATCP students did not know which program best suited them or to which they should apply. This caused much confusion and frustration for the students as illustrated by the quotes below and the picture in Figure 1:

- "[The website] wasn't easy to navigate. You kind of had to really search and find the [program]. I was confused at what I was supposed to do. Was I supposed to apply to post-bac or graduate certificate or MAT?"
- "Nothing is explained in detail. No information for a step-by-step process to follow. Too much is inferred or taken for granted."
- "I felt like when I got here, I'm supposed to know everything. That's the big person, I'm supposed to know everything and know what I'm doing. But I'm actually the little person, because I know half of what I'm supposed to be doing."

Students expressed particular frustration with online registration. Registration is a process that should be facilitated by digital technology; however, ATCP students did not feel this way. Students did not know which classes needed permits or how to go about getting them in order to register. This led students to feel incompetent as demonstrated by the quotes below:

- "I got a lot of run-around to register. I feel like I have to ask questions that don't make me feel bright. Registration should be obvious, but it isn't."
- "[On the] website I guess all the answers are there, but I just don't have the patience to find it. I don't know exactly where it is that I need to find all my answers."
- "I was trying to e-mail my advisor to set up an appointment, the response was, 'Well, what questions do you have? I can try to answer them by e-mail.' My problem was I didn't even know what questions to ask."

Application processing time. Students expressed frustration with the number of requirements necessary to start the application process. They reported that it was difficult for them to identify the need for required paperwork, transcripts, clearances, regional approval, previous credits approval, transfer of credits, and communication among different activity systems within the University. Many were aggravated by the time that it took between processing the documents and being able to move to the next step of the process (i.e., admittance into the program and registering for classes) as seen in the following statement: *"I had to send, I think a total of 40 e-mails for someone to finally accept me into the program or give me some kind of answer on what's going on."*

Quality of Advising

Another major theme that emerged was the quality of advising. It was found that good communication was lacking as the students expressed that the university did not communicate well to the students whom their advisors were and/or how to interact with that advisor. When students did not know who their advisor was, or it took them too long to identify their advisor, it resulted in an impersonal advising process and frustration for the students. The quotes and pictures (See Figures 2 and 3) exemplify this finding:

- "I don't feel like the relationship between myself and the University is very personal, and I have no idea who I'm supposed to be talking to. I called a million different people and nobody returns my calls or e-mails. It's not a very personal relationship."
- "Similar to everyone else, I was accepted, they told me I had one advisor. I called that advisor, he said he wasn't my advisor, I was supposed to call somebody else. And then he was out of the county, and how was I supposed to register if I didn't have an advisor because I had to get the approval?"
- "You know he's there but you just got to find him. And you keep trying to find him. I found who my advisor was but it took me a while to get to him. I mean, I literally had to send three or four e-mails. It's like he's there and I'm trying to find him and why am I having such a difficult time finding him."

If and when the students communicated with their advisor, they often found they received incorrect, incomplete, confusing, contradictory, minimal information, or no response resulting in a lack of a clear sense of direction. The data suggest students experienced inconsistencies in the support they received. The information that students gathered from the Web, what they were told by program personnel, and what they found out based on experience did not match up. This was particularly evident for students engaged in the application process. Initially, students needed guidance on program enrollment and later on course planning and registration as seen in the following statement: *"I would find out a different answer to my question two weeks later or two months later."*

When advising was reported as positive, it was because the advisor was easily accessible, knowledgeable, a team player, and returned e-mail and/or phone calls. In these interactions, the students received step-by-step direction, felt they were receiving support, and communication was smooth, as can be seen by the quotes below and picture (See Figure 4):

- "It's a bridge with people on it and it seems kind of rocky and unstable. Even though I've only met with my advisor once or twice, she was extremely helpful. She's there, and I know she's there if I need her help. She's kind of like a bridge for me."

- "I had a positive experience with my advisor. Within a day there was a response to my e-mail, my questions were answered, I got guidance and detailed information and an 'I'm here if you need me' stance."

Program Flexibility

There were two themes that fell under the category of program flexibility, revealing areas in the program that the students felt could be more accommodating: course scheduling and clinical experiences.

Course Schedules. Overall, students were pleased with course offerings. One issue that emerged was the conflict presented by courses offered only during the day (i.e., pre-requisite content area courses offered through other departments and daytime summer courses). Most ATCP students work 12-month, 9-to-5 jobs outside the field of education. Additionally, students expressed a dire need for a course devoted to classroom management:

- "No one sat down and talked to me about different options, they said here's your schedule. I have other things to do in my world than just attend school."
- "The one class that I feel [is needed] is one that focuses on classroom management. This is an area that many of us feel is one of the most difficult parts of teaching and it amazes me that there is not a class that addresses the biggest fear of most teachers!"

Flexible Clinical Experiences. Clinical practice is a large part of most teacher preparation programs and this population of students has special needs in relationship to time and scheduling. When asked about plans for accommodating clinical practice, some students reported that they did not foresee any trouble due to their particular situation (e.g., stay at home mom, unemployed). Others planned on getting a job at a school and completing the clinical experience hours there or taking time off or utilizing vacation time from work to complete the hours. Students realized that it is difficult to get a job in a school setting. For those who have one, they wished that more teaching time and activities would "count" towards the necessary clinical hours. Students not in schools realized that there were too many required clinical experience hours to complete using solely vacation or sick days from work. They did not yet have a plan and were hoping that everything would *"fall into place"*. While acknowledging the hardships of fulfilling clinical hours, most ATCP students recognized the value of these clinical experiences.

Another problem ATCP students reported was the lack of communication related to clinical experience. First, students complained of not being informed earlier of the amount of clinical experience hours required per course. Second, accessing classrooms was difficult because the process of placing students in schools took too long and administrators were not informed of ATCP students assigned to their schools.

Personal Concerns

Many barriers that emerged were of a personal nature. Initially, they were coded as money, family, schedules, fears, and stress. Although these issues can affect traditional students too, they seem to be prevalent in populations of second-career or mid-career switchers because a higher percentage of these students have families to support and lives that are more complex. These personal issues make attending and completing the program a struggle for ATCP students:

- "I have children, I have a job, and I need to get school done more quickly and it's not happening. Because it's not accessible for people who have lives."
- "I'm juggling my family and medical issues, and completing the program."
- "I left a full time job to become a TA [paraprofessional] based on the information I was told. I put off buying a house. We made a lot of sacrifices."

In summary, as can be seen by the categories and the themes, accountability for program accessibility lays on several levels. Some issues regarding accessibility need to be addressed at the institutional level, some at the program level, and some at the individual level.

Discussion

Though there is little existing research on ATCP accessibility and the transitioning needs of working adults as they begin their teacher certification program, the results of this study begin to fill the void in the literature. Regarding accessibility, ATCP students need assistance in overcoming institutional barriers or those barriers need to be removed. The findings of this study echo and reinforce those included in the review of the literature. Results of this study were similar to Castro and Baumi (2009) and those of Valenciana, Weisman, and Flores (2006) that showed program accessibility is a key concern for students. While the goal of ATCPs is to increase the number of high-quality teachers in the field, the finding that program websites and application and registration processes are not student-friendly is of great concern because such barriers can decrease potential enrollment into ATCPs.

Time is another issue for ATCP students. They need timely responses regarding admittance and guidance, as well as flexible options for courses and clinical experiences. Like students in England, the students in this study experienced frustration with university communication in terms of the program website and their contact with advisors (Reid & Slinger, 2006). Additionally, much like students in the Reid and Slinger study (2006), this student population felt it was important that university personnel understand their situation is different from typical university students. As one student in the study explained, *"I needed an advisor that was more sensitive to my background."* While it may not be feasible for ATCPs to assist students in surmounting personal concerns, support personnel, like advisors, need to be aware of the challenges unique to the majority of these non-traditional students.

Similarly to the paraprofessionals in the Valenciana, Weisman, and Flores (2006) study, students in this study expressed a need in finding financial assistance and obtaining support from advisors. As with all transitions, individuals often experience a period of vulnerability. Increasing levels of personal support while students are entering and beginning an ATCP could help facilitate this transition and assist in recruiting additional students.

Recommendations

The section below is organized according to research question and provides recommendations to address the needs of ATCP students.

How accessible is an ATCP to a working adult making a career change?

Career-switchers need assistance in overcoming institutional barriers that may limit their access to ATCPs. Suggested recommendations address programs' incorrect level of assumed knowledge and student frustration over application processing time.

Pre-application advising. ATCP students would benefit from a pre-application question-and-answer session. This session could be conducted simultaneously face-to-face and/or online and offered every semester. Additionally, there should be an easy to find question-and-answer page on the website. In addition, an online "quiz" that asked about the student's background, the degrees they hold, their GPA, and employment history could be developed. Based on their answers, the "quiz" results would suggest to which program they should apply.

Timely communication. ATCP students need timely responses regarding admittance from advisors when requesting guidance. A timeline of expected response dates based on application dates should be offered on the web. If students know the amount of wait time, it is less likely that they will find the response time to be delayed. Programs could also utilize automated e-mail reminders alerting students of the status of their application in the review process. Timely communication might alleviate the frustration associated with the enrollment, registration, and advising processes.

Offer information through various venues. Students use various sources to find information; thus, information needs to be made available through several venues (e.g., flyers, brochures, websites, newspapers). Additionally, along with e-mails, actual letters of invitation need to be snail mailed to students informing them about relevant events such as orientation.

What transitional needs do working adults have at the beginning of ATCP programs?

The issues surrounding advising, program flexibility, and personal concerns call for recommendations that take into consideration the needs of working adults.

Quality advising. Overall, the issues that arose in relation to the quality of advising warrant recommendations for restructuring the advising process to better meet the needs of ATCP students. Recommendations include training for advisors, other methods for advising, and providing program specific orientation.

- **Advisor training.** Often meeting with an advisor was reactive rather than proactive. When communication with an advisor breaks down, ATCP students lack understanding of the overall program and do not know what to do or how to go about addressing the problem. This lack of knowledge gives rise to feelings of frustration and gives the program an impersonal feel. ATCP students need ongoing support (Suell & Piotrowski, 2007). ATCP advisors should be trained regarding the needs of ATCP students, the nuances of the programs and University systems, and their role as support personnel and part of a larger team who advocate for students while negotiating components of the program and the university as a whole.

- **Other methods for advising.** Advising this student population requires a large time commitment. Having a successful program is resource and labor intensive (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). One option might be to train "nightingale" advisors who are available in the evenings and are exclusively responsible for advising ATCP students. Additionally, an E-Advising system available via instant messaging chats or video conferencing would also be beneficial and when applicable, mandatory advising sessions could be implemented.

- **Orientations.** ATCP students would benefit from program specific orientations that provided summaries of specific programs, an overview of course sequences, and a "meet your advisor" session where a brief period is allotted for each student to meet his/her advisor putting a face to the name, exchanging contact information and best method of communication, and beginning the advising relationship in a proactive and positive manner. A more general orientation could also be organized that would introduce students to important university personnel (e.g., registrar, financial aid officers), teach students how to navigate the University website, review of registration procedures, and introduce students to the learning management system (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle).

Program flexibility. ATCP students need alternative means to meet some components of the program. Recommendations are suggested regarding course offerings and accommodating clinical experiences.

- *Adjusting course offerings.* ATCP students are concerned with the element of "time." Programs should consider alternatives to face-to-face courses. More classes could be offered online and hybrid classes combining face-to-face sessions with online sessions should be considered as well. Saturday courses and summer evening courses are options, too. For those who have long commutes or child-care concerns, multiple courses offered back-to-back would lessen

commute and scheduling burdens. Additionally, a mini-semester could be offered between regular semesters (e.g. spring and/or winter break) to allow students to complete one or two courses. Although these courses would be academically intensive, they would allow students to complete the program at a faster pace.ATCP students routinely cite classroom management as one of their top concerns (Suell & Piotrowski, 2007). Alternatively, licensed teachers indicate a higher level of concern for classroom discipline and adapting instruction than traditionally prepared teachers (Wayman, Foster, Mantle-Browmley, & Wilson, 2003). The data collected in this study echo the research that ATCP students need a class on classroom management. If adding a class is not possible due to credit limits, then a free, no-credit seminar or workshop can be offered in between semesters to fill this need or at the end of the program to support the transition to the classroom.

• *Accommodating clinical experiences.* Those who manage ATCPs need to consider flexible options for the required clinical experiences. Use of an electronic video library with examples of classroom events could lessen the number of on-site observation hours and thereby alleviate work and time conflicts. Specific task-oriented assignments would continue to enhance the value of clinical experiences and make optimal use of the student's available time. School placement requests could be processed at the time of course registration so students can receive notice of placement sooner and have more time to fulfill their required hours. Letters from the College and/or course professor could be submitted to the school administration and clinical teacher in order for the student to have credibility and readily gain access to the classroom. Also, the number of required field experience hours could be included with the course description in the course bulletin to assist ATCP students in planning and coordinating their time and schedules.

Personal concerns. Due to some distinctive characteristics of the ATCP student, suggested recommendations focus on creating an awareness of the challenges and making connections to resources. While it may not be feasible for ATCPs to assist students in surmounting personal concerns, they can publicize available University resources. ATCPs should consider collaborating with established University service units such as financial aid, counseling, and career center.

Financial aid could provide clear definitions of distinctions among grants, scholarships, and financial aid and how to apply for each. ATCPs could partner with counseling centers and publicize services available to enrolled students. Students listed many stressors and some could benefit from group or individual counseling sessions. Additionally, counseling centers could offer stress management sessions aimed at the needs of this student population. As individuals transition to new careers they have to develop new competencies and more importantly restructure their identities (Jorissen, 2003). Thus, ATCP students could benefit from a combination of counseling and career advising. The career center could provide realistic expectations of the teaching profession and assist students with career preparation, decision, and planning.

Limitations

The generalizability of this study has limitations related to self-reporting bias and non-response bias. Self-report measures can be easily distorted by factors of social desirability, carelessness, or misinterpretation. The accuracy of respondents' recall of past feelings and behaviors and their anticipation of future events makes the reliability of the data tenuous. In addition, the study was limited to the available data. There is no information on the experience of those who did not respond to the questionnaire or did not participate in the focus groups.

Conclusion

The goal of ATCPs is to increase the number of teachers; yet, there is a lack of information regarding the needs of this student population as they begin the program. The existence of ATCPs is no longer up for discussion. Zeichner and Schulte (2001) explain that ATCPs are "here to stay and are part of the solution to the tremendous inequities that now exist in our public schools" (p. 280). Moreover, ATCP students are not the typical graduate school population. They have a degree in other subject areas, many have work experience in different fields, and some are raising families, while others are significantly older than the traditional graduate student is. Identifying factors that affect program accessibility can lead to modifications at institution and program levels that may not only lead to improved ATCPs and student satisfaction, but to increased recruitment of career changers. This study was a step towards better understanding the accessibility of ATCPs and the needs of working adults enrolled in them.

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Appendix A
Focus Group Interview Questions

Background Questions
    ____I am enrolled in the Graduate Certificate Program.
    ____I am enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching Degree
      (MAT) Program
    ____I am enrolled in _____ program (please specify)
    ____None of the above options describe me because _____
      (please explain)

Protocol Questions
Questions guided by Photolanguage
    1. Find a picture that best describes the advising you received before and/or during the program.
    2. Find a picture that best describes the barriers you encountered/overcame, in applying to the graduate program.

Questions guided by a traditional focus group interview structure
    3. Are the courses that you need provided at convenient times, manners, and locations in order to help you finish your program in a timely manner?
      a. If not, describe what you would prefer.

How have you been able to (or plan to) accommodate clinical practice?
What can be done to facilitate the clinical practice for you?
If currently teaching, what effects has this had on you as you take courses? If not, how do you perceive the information you gain in your courses as helping you as a future teacher?
How well prepared do you feel to teach? How has the program and experience prepared and assisted you?

Appendix B
Photolanguage Photo
Source: Photograph by Brian Balen

Appendix C
Photolanguage Photo
Source: Photograph by News Limited

Appendix D
Photolanguage Photo.
Source: Photograph by John Fairfax and Sons

Appendix E
Photolanguage Photo.
Source: Photograph by Jan Cooney

Adaptive Teaching: A Case Study of One Third-Grade Teacher's Literacy Instruction

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Abstract

Although it is commonly suggested that effective reading teachers are thoughtfully adaptive, little research has examined how and why teachers adapt their instruction. Previous reports of adaptive teaching have presented cumulative data from multiple teachers' classrooms. This paper complements those studies by providing an in-depth look at one teacher's adaptive teaching. This case study provides insight into what adaptive teaching looks like in one classroom and the reasons behind adaptations made by the teacher during a lesson.

It is commonly suggested that effective teachers adapt their literacy instruction to navigate the complexity of classroom teaching and to meet the diverse needs of the students they teach (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Gambrell, Malloy, & Mazzoni, 2007; Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; International Reading Association (IRA), 2003; Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005). For example, Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2005) asserted, "On a daily basis, teachers confront complex decisions that rely on many different kinds of knowledge and judgment and that can involve high-stakes outcomes for student futures" (p. 1). Similarly, research on exemplary reading teachers has consistently found adaptability as a characteristic of educators who are deemed highly effective (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001; Taylor & Pearson, 2002; Williams & Baumann, 2008). However, little research has examined *what* teachers do when they adapt their instruction or *why* they make particular adaptations.

A research study completed by Parsons, Davis, Scales, Williams, and Kear (2010) systematically studied how and why teachers adapt their literacy instruction *on the fly* while teaching. In this study, adaptive instruction was defined as a teacher action that (a) was non-routine, proactive, thoughtful, and invented; (b) included a change in professional knowledge or practice; and (c) was done to meet the needs of students or instructional situations. The researchers discovered the rationale for teachers' adaptations by asking them, "Why did you make that change?"

This case study extends the research on teachers' adaptations by examining in depth the reasons behind one teacher's instructional adaptations. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. In what ways does this third-grade teacher adapt her literacy instruction?
2. What reasons does she give for adapting her literacy instruction?

Theoretical Perspective

This research is guided by research related to effective literacy instruction and to metacognition theory. The research literature suggests that effective reading teachers are knowledgeable professionals who are flexible, responsive, and adaptive (Anders et al., 2000; Gambrell et al., 2007; Hoffman, & Pearson, 2000; IRA, 2003). For example, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) and Snow et al. (2005) suggested that effective teachers possess *adaptive expertise*. Lin, Schwartz, and Hatano (2005) described this characteristic as *adaptive metacognition*. Borko and Livingston (1989) and Sawyer (2004) claimed that effective instruction is *improvisational*. Schon (1987) described this quality as *reflection-in-action*. Nonetheless, little empirical research has examined teachers' instruction to describe how and why teachers adapt their instruction.

Moreover, this research is guided by theories of teacher metacognition. Metacognition typically emphasizes thinking about and regulating one's thinking (Flavell, 1976). Teachers engage in complex mental activity as they monitor and regulate their thinking as they teach (Bransford et al., 2005; Zohor, 1999). In addition, teachers are strategic as they apply instruction, solve problems that arise in the classroom, and adjust their teaching to individual student differences (Duffy, Miller, Parsons, & Meloth, 2009). Despite this acknowledgement that teachers are metacognitive in their instruction, little research has specifically examined teachers' metacognition. For example, Duffy and his colleagues concluded, "In short, it is assumed that teachers are metacognitive, but more data are needed to document the extent to which they are metacognitive, the factors influencing it, and the effect on students" (p. 247).

Methods

The research presented here employed a case study method (Yin, 2009) to study Ms. Anderson's (all names are pseudonyms) adaptive teaching during literacy instruction. Yin described the case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context" (p. 18). According to Yin, there are three different types of case studies: exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. The research reported here is a descriptive case study because it used empirical evidence to describe a phenomenon—adaptive teaching—within a complex context—one classroom within a school.

Setting

This research took place in an urban Title I elementary school in the Southeast. Eighty-six percent of the students at this school received free or reduced lunch, 92% were from minority backgrounds, 35% were English language learners, and 50% came from single-parent families. This school and the local university have had a Professional Development School (PDS) relationship for 11 years. Teacher candidates complete their internships in nearly every classroom in the building three days a week. Therefore, the teachers and students are accustomed to having teacher candidates, university supervisors, and researchers in their classroom. This school performed well on standardized tests of reading over the last seven years, raising its reading scores on the state end-of-grade test from 50% passage rate to 79%. Over the last four years, at least 73% of the students passed the state reading test. Such impressive improvements led to numerous honors such as "School of Progress," "School of Distinction," and "Title I Distinguished School."

After experiencing these successes, this school's high-stakes test scores began to plateau over the last three years. Thus, in the 2005-2006 school year, the school did not meet No Child Left Behind's Adequate Yearly Progress in reading. This disappointment led to school-wide discussions on how to break this plateau. Staff meetings were devoted to eliciting ideas from teachers regarding practical instruction. The result was a focus on project-based literacy instruction. The teachers described this instruction as being authentic, interactive, experience-based, problem-based, student-directed, constructive, and challenging. The local university collaborated with the school to develop project-based literacy instruction. As a university supervisor of interns at this school, the researcher participated in this professional development effort, working specifically with the third-grade teachers.

To this end, the researcher attended their weekly grade-level meetings to participate in their team planning. Following guidelines for qualitative research (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln, & Guba, 1984; Maxwell, 2005) and research on effective PDSs (Antonek, Matthews, & Levin, 2005; Book, 1996), the researcher developed positive, professional relationships with administrators, teachers, staff, and students while working with this school. Using and maintaining this position, the researcher's input in the grade-level meetings was based upon research and theory. At the outset of involvement, the researcher was reserved, easing into participation in these meetings (i.e., field entry, Patton, 1990). Over time, the researcher became more involved. The aim of this study was not to examine the efficacy of this professional development. It merely served as the context of the study, which examined the adaptations one teacher made to her literacy instruction and her rationales for adapting.

Participant

Ms. Anderson was selected for involvement in this case study using purposeful sampling so that the likelihood of observing teacher adaptations would be maximized. A teacher was selected from this particular school because the school was diverse and was engaged in professional development focused on project-based

literacy instruction. This setting seemed particularly conducive to studying teacher adaptations because the diversity and the instructional emphasis on project-based instruction were likely to compel and allow the teacher to adapt her teaching. This particular teacher was selected because she taught in the third grade, a grade in which students' literacy proficiency ranges from emergent readers to highly competent readers—once again, a context likely to require teacher adaptability. Moreover, this teacher was deemed effective by the building administrators and by the researcher, who had worked with the teacher in a PDS setting for the previous two years.

Ms. Anderson, an African American, has taught third grade for three years. She completed her teacher education at the local university, interning at this elementary school and then joined the staff after graduation. Ms. Anderson has served as a cooperating teacher for interns assigned to the school for two years. She has been observed to be an enthusiastic teacher who develops great rapport with her students.

Two years ago when Ms. Anderson joined the third-grade team, she taught with a veteran team of teachers who focused their instruction on raising high-stakes test scores and used programmatic instruction. This team of teachers planned their instruction as a group, so all classes were doing the same assignments throughout the day, every day of the week. However, the year of this research, Ms. Anderson worked with three new grade-level colleagues who had different instructional aims than her previous grade-level peers. While this new team planned collaboratively, there was much more individual autonomy in each teacher's instruction and the goal of teaching followed the school's professional development effort in creating empowered and motivated learners. Ms. Anderson expressed in planning meetings that she was open to new ideas but was accustomed to the more rigid teaching style that was dictated by her previous grade-level team.

Data Collection

Following the tradition of case study methods (Yin, 2009), multiple sources of data were collected to answer the research questions guiding this study: weekly observations in grade-level planning meetings, teacher lesson plans, observations of the teacher's literacy instruction, and post-observation interviews with the teacher.

During participant-observation in weekly planning meetings, the researcher recorded field notes on the proceedings of the meetings. In addition, lesson plans were collected prior to each classroom observation. These data allowed the researcher to identify adaptations that were made in the planned lesson more easily.

Observations of Ms. Anderson's literacy instruction occurred nine times across three weeks. Observations ranged from 45 minutes to one hour and 53 minutes, with a total of 12 hours and 41 minutes of observation. All observations were audiotaped for later analysis. An observation protocol was used to record field notes. The protocol has space for recording general proceedings of the instruction and adaptations the teachers made. The researcher was aware of the teacher's plans having attended the teachers' grade-level meetings and obtained a copy of the teacher's

lesson plan each day. When an adaptation was observed—identified as a teacher action that is a response to an unanticipated student contribution, a diversion from the lesson plan, or a public statement of change—the adaptation was recorded in the field notes. On the same day as the observation, handwritten field notes were typed to provide more detail from memory.

After each observed lesson, the researcher interviewed Ms. Anderson. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for subsequent analysis. An interview protocol guided these interviews. In interviews, the researcher verified that identified adaptations were indeed spontaneous changes by asking, "When I saw you (explain adaptation) during the lesson, was that a spontaneous change, something you had not planned?" If the teacher indicated it was an adaptation, the researcher asked, "Why did you make that change?" Ms. Anderson's response to this question demonstrated her rationale for adapting as she did. This interview was semi-structured, probing as needed to encourage elaboration to elicit a comprehensive answer (Creswell, 2005).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using previously established coding systems. In previous studies examining teachers' adaptations, a team of researchers used the research literature and previous experiences studying teachers' adaptations to create codes for the adaptations that teachers made and their rationales for adapting (to find out more about the instrument validity and reliability, see Duffy, Miller, Kear, Parsons, Davis, & Williams, 2008). The coding systems can be seen in Appendixes A and B.

Findings

Ms. Anderson's Literacy Instruction

As described above, Ms. Anderson was teaching with a completely new grade-level team during the school year in which this research took place. She made it clear that the new team was an adjustment for her. Specifically, this new team shared ideas and planned projects together yet maintained a large degree of autonomy. In grade-level planning when discussing project-based literacy instruction, the emphasis of the school-wide professional development plan, Ms. Anderson noted she was taking "baby steps" in this direction. She elaborated that she was used to a very teacher-directed mode of instruction with her previous grade-level peers.

During observations of Ms. Anderson, she separated her literacy teaching into three parts: word study, guided reading, and teacher-directed reading of the basal. Word study followed the format from *Words Their Way* (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2007), where students studied sets of words for a week; groups and words were based upon the results of a spelling inventory. Guided reading followed the format set forth by Fountas and Pinnell (1996), where students are grouped by reading level and the teacher begins by setting a purpose for reading and then works

with each group member individually, guiding the student through questioning based upon the purpose of the session. During observations of Ms. Anderson, the basal reading focused on murals. The teacher read most of the story aloud, and each day an activity followed the reading. As a final project, students created their own murals.

Throughout the observations in Ms. Anderson's classroom, she adapted her instruction 20 times. She "invented an example or an analogy" six times; she "changed the means by which objectives were met" five times; she "inserted a mini-lesson" three times; she "suggested different ways students could deal with a situation or problem" three times; and she "omitted a planned activity or assignment" three times. Ms. Anderson offered a variety of rationales for her 20 adaptations. The most common codes used to describe why she adapted were "to help students make connections" and "using her knowledge of her students to alter instruction," both of which were offered five times. Ms. Anderson adapted three times "because the objectives were not met"; twice "to challenge or elaborate"; twice "in anticipation of upcoming difficulty"; once "to teach a specific strategy or skill"; once "to check students' understanding"; and once "to manage time."

One example of an adaptation occurred during a guided reading lesson. The teacher planned to incorporate test-type language in the lesson, so she asked students to draw conclusions while they were taking a picture walk. The students were confused by the term *draw conclusions*: one student referred to drawing illustrations and another referred to visualizing (drawing pictures in your head). At this point, the teacher abandoned this discussion, explaining they would come back to the idea of drawing conclusions later. This adaptation was coded as "omitting a planned activity or assignment." When asked why she omitted this portion of the guided reading lesson, Ms. Anderson replied:

> *They have been drawing conclusions all along. I just hadn't put it that way. I was just trying to throw some testing vocabulary in there to see what they knew… what I wanted them to get was that they were drawing conclusions; they just didn't know they were drawing conclusions. I just used a big fancy word for it and it threw them all off.*

This rationale was coded as "because the objective was not met." In this example, Ms. Anderson was trying to get students to be metacognitive about their strategy use when reading. However, the term "drawing conclusions" confused students. Therefore, Ms. Anderson adapted by abandoning this portion of the lesson as it was not the primary focus of the lesson.

In another example from guided reading, Ms. Anderson was reviewing important vocabulary with students before reading the text. They were discussing the word "surprised." Students had difficulty describing what the word meant, so Ms. Anderson adapted her instruction by having the students explain a time when they were surprised. This adaptation was coded as "invented an example or an analogy" because the teacher had the students create examples that might illuminate for them the meaning of the word. She said she adapted in this way

> *because they weren't understanding what a surprise was. They could tell me times when they were surprised. I hate for a student to tell me something that, yes, it's kind of on the ball, but it wasn't what I was looking for so I reasked the question, so they'd kind of see "Oh, that's what she's asking."*

This rationale was also coded as "because the objectives were not met." Ms. Anderson adapted her instruction to clarify a word's meaning for students. They demonstrated only partial understanding of the word, so the teacher made a minor adaptation to her instruction, pulling from students' own lives, in attempt to support their understanding.

One adaptation occurred as students were reading a basal story in pairs and completing a graphic organizer about the story. Ms. Anderson walked from pair to pair to assess students' progress and to provide support as needed. One pair was demonstrating difficulty in completing a portion of the graphic organizer that asked students how other characters felt about the main character. Ms. Anderson adapted her instruction by relating the story to the students' own lives and then rewording the graphic organizer based upon this example. This adaptation was coded as "changes the means by which the objectives are met" because she modified the question students were thinking about to make it more comprehensible to them. She said she adapted in this way because

> *I was trying to get him to realize how he would feel if people wrote him letters or…how he reacts when he gets a letter…I'm very empathetic…sometimes that's bad. I think that's a skill that they need to at least begin to understand early because part of what I want to do as a teacher is prepare them not just to pass the grade but to prepare them for the rest of their lives and rest of the world, so what they'll come in contact with. That's very important to me.*

This rationale was coded as "to help students make connections" because the teacher was trying to help the student connect to the story. In this example, the teacher adapted her instruction to make the activity and the story more accessible to the student.

In another example, a group of students was re-reading the assigned basal story by alternating each sentence. The teacher adapted by asking the group to read the story aloud together. This adaptation was coded as "suggests to students a different perspective" because she offered students a different manner in which to complete the reading. Her rationale for this adaptation was as follows:

> *I was going to let them pick how they wanted to read, but I know each of them are at different reading levels. If they read sentence-by-sentence, the meaning would get all lost. It would just be "your turn, your turn. Okay, your turn." I knew Alice was a stronger reader.*

This rationale was coded as "using knowledge of students to alter instruction" because she used her knowledge of the students' reading levels to change the manner

in which the group was reading the assigned text. In this example, Ms. Anderson used her knowledge of her students and her objective of the reading to enhance the students' participation within the reading.

The culminating activity for the basal unit under study was for students to create their own murals. Students completed their murals and displayed them around the room. Ms. Anderson had planned for students to share individually their murals with the class while the other students asked questions. The teacher adapted her instruction immediately prior to sharing and inserted a lesson on how to be a good audience: *"Let's take a moment to discuss how to be a good audience."* She discussed what the audience should and should not be doing. This adaptation was coded as "inserts a mini-lesson" because the teacher included unplanned instruction that followed the format of a mini-lesson, describing the concept (in this case, being a good audience) and providing explicit models or examples. Ms. Anderson described her rationale for adapting in this way as follows:

> I didn't plan to do that, but I know that Friday they're going to watch the seniors' presentations. I know I won't be here Friday, but they don't know that, so I thought, "this will be a really good time to talk about how to be a good audience.

This rationale was coded as "in anticipation of upcoming difficulty" because the teacher was thinking ahead about future events in the students' lives. This example illustrates how this teacher was considering not only the instruction that was currently taking place but also future experiences her students will have.

The students posted their murals in the classroom, and the class walked from mural to mural, asking the "muralist" questions about his or her work. After visiting half of the murals, Ms. Anderson adapted her instruction by concluding the activity before all murals were visited. This adaptation was coded as "omitting a planned activity." The teacher offered the following reason for adapting: "*Part of it was time and part of it was they were getting very restless. And when they get restless, I might as well be talking to myself at that point.*" This rationale was coded as "uses knowledge of students to alter instruction" because the instructional action taken was based upon her knowledge of her students. This example demonstrates the complex thinking that takes place during instruction. As the students completed the assigned task, the teacher was monitoring students' participation and paying attention to the pacing of the school day and making instructional decisions based upon her observation, which is occurring simultaneously with the delivery of instruction.

Another adaptation occurred within the same activity. Students hung their murals anywhere they liked in the classroom. Ms. Anderson adapted by asking the students why they placed their murals where they did and then comparing this idea to the real world. She explained that muralists should take care to decide where they paint murals to ensure that they are in places where people can see them. This adaptation was coded as "suggests a different perspective to students." She adapted in this way

because she wanted to draw a parallel between what they were doing in the classroom and what occurs in the real world. For that reason, this rationale was coded as "to help students make connections." This scenario is another example of Ms. Anderson attempting to make real-world connections between the work students are completing in school and life outside of school.

Limitations

This research has several limitations. Most notably, this study is limited by the methods employed. Because this study was part of a collection of case studies examining adaptive literacy instruction, it was limited in its duration. The study included nine observations across three weeks. Therefore, few conclusions can be drawn about this teacher's instruction. A similar limitation is the fact that the research reported here only includes one teacher. Therefore, generalizations about adaptive instruction cannot be made from this study alone. Other limitations of this study include the reliance on self-report data to document the teacher's rationales and the sustained professional relationship between the participant and the researcher.

Nonetheless, this study, following the tradition of case study research (Yin, 2009), adds to the research literature by adding a rich description of an understudied aspect of literacy instruction: adaptive teaching. This report, then, in combination with other reports describing the collective data from this research agenda (Duffy et al., 2008; Parsons et al., 2010), provides a comprehensive research base for future studies of adaptive teaching. This systematic accumulation of various data embodies the social science research process, providing insight into a complex phenomenon (Yin, 2009).

Discussion

This study examined one third-grade teacher's literacy instruction using the perspective of adaptive teaching. Multiple observations of and interviews with the teacher addressed the research questions:1) In what ways does this third-grade teacher adapt her literacy instruction? and 2) What reasons does she give for adapting her literacy instruction? This research builds upon previous research on adaptive teaching. Previous studies have used frequency counts within coding categories to provide an overview of what it is teachers do when they adapt their instruction and their reported rationales for adapting (Duffy et al., 2008; Parsons et al., 2010). The research reported here used case study methodology to provide a more in-depth perspective of adaptive teaching during literacy instruction, describing one teacher's adaptations and rationales in detail. As a whole, these reports provide a robust research base for the construct of adaptive teaching.

Closely examining one teacher's adaptations and rationales has provided insight into how and why a teacher might adapt her literacy instruction. As the examples detailed above demonstrate, Ms. Anderson adapted her instruction in a

variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. Sometimes the adaptation was subtle, asking students to read chorally instead of alternating, for example. At other times, the teacher's adaptations were substantial, choosing, for instance, to abandon an instructional activity. Adaptations were almost exclusively in response to students. It is apparent that Ms. Anderson was constantly monitoring her instruction and her students' reactions, and adjusting her instruction accordingly. This monitoring and regulating is the heart of teacher metacognition (Duffy et al., 2009).

An important insight gleaned from this study is the complexity of the information Ms. Anderson used to adapt her instruction. Sometimes she adapted to maintain efficiency in the school day: "*Part of it was time.*" Other times she adapted because students were not getting the material: "*They weren't understanding.*" Occasionally she adapted based on students' cognitive readiness: "*I know that each of them are at different reading levels.*" Sometimes she adapted based upon students' affective dispositions: "*They were getting restless.*" At times, she adapted because of future experiences the students would be having: "*I know that Friday they're going to watch the seniors' presentations.*" Sometimes she adapted to make material more relevant to their own lives: "*I want to…prepare them for the rest of their lives and for the rest of the world.*" This case study is further evidence of the complexity of classroom instruction. There is much going on in the classroom that influences the teacher's instruction. To meet students' diverse needs it is important for the teacher to constantly monitor students' participation and to adapt instruction to help students participate in such a way that they can progress toward targeted goals.

Another salient finding from this case study is the power of context. As other studies have illustrated (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Valencia, Place, Martin, & Grossman, 2006), this study found that many contextual factors affected Ms. Anderson's instruction. For example, at the time of this study, the school in which she taught was engaged in a school-wide professional development effort emphasizing project-based literacy instruction. This context influenced Ms. Anderson's instruction. She planned the mural project in an effort to enact this professional development emphasis. As described above, many of her adaptations came during this project. This finding is similar to other studies of thoughtfully adaptive teaching that found that teachers adapt in various ways when implementing different types of tasks (Parsons, 2008).

Similarly, the previous grade-level team that she worked with was very influential to her instruction at the time of this research. She had worked with colleagues for the previous two years who were very structured in their literacy instruction and were focused almost exclusively on student achievement on standardized tests. These previous experiences affected the degree to which Ms. Anderson embraced the school-wide movement toward project-based literacy instruction. She expressed that she had to adjust to the new grade-level team that offered more autonomy in her literacy instruction—and autonomy is an important factor in teachers' adaptability. When teachers' instruction is structured or programmatic, as Ms. Anderson's had been, they are less likely to feel the freedom to adapt their instruction (Pearson, 2007).

In conclusion, this study illustrates the complexity of adaptive teaching and the complexity of studying adaptive teaching. As the descriptions of Ms. Anderson's adaptations and rationales show, extensive knowledge, close monitoring, and quick thinking are required to navigate effectively classroom literacy instruction. Because classroom instruction is so convoluted, research studying teachers' classroom instruction is difficult. A multitude of factors at various levels (school level, classroom level, etc.) affects teachers' instruction (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Valencia et al., 2006). This case study systematically documents and describes one teacher's adaptations. Accordingly, this report allows researchers and teacher educators to *see* adaptive teaching in action and methods that can document and categorize such instructional actions. Future study of teacher adaptations can build upon this study to provide additional insight into this important and complex aspect of literacy instruction.

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Appendix A—Coding System for Adaptations

1. The teacher modifies the lesson objective

2. The teacher changes means by which objectives are met (e.g., materials, strategy, activity, assignment, procedures, or routines)

3. The teacher invents an example or an analogy

4. The teacher inserts a mini-lesson

5. The teacher suggests different ways students could deal with a situation or problem

6. The teacher omits certain planned activities or assignments (for reasons other than lack of time) or inserts an unplanned activity or assignment

7. The teacher changes the planned order of instruction

Appendix B—Coding System for Rationales

A. Because the objectives are not met

B. To challenge or elaborate

C. To teach a specific strategy or skill

D. To help students make connections

E. Uses knowledge of student(s) to alter instruction

G. To check students' understanding

H. In anticipation of upcoming difficulty

I. To manage behavior

J. To manage time

K. To promote student engagement

WORKING WITH
K-12 LEARNERS

Best Literacy Practices for Children of Poverty: Implications for Schools, Teachers, and Teacher Preparation Programs

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Abstract

Children living in poverty and attending low SES schools are at greater risk of not learning to read and write. The most important and successful intervention for these children is effective teaching. This article documents the strategies, methods, materials, and motivational techniques that effective teachers of children of poverty have found successful. The 49 elementary classroom teacher participants responded to a web-based, open-ended survey. Results indicated that these teachers reported they were using research-based best practices generally accepted by experts in the field.

The United States ranks highest among all industrialized nations in the numbers of children living in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2010). According to the Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2009), 18% of all children 17 and younger were living in poverty in 2007. Additionally, the Child Well-Being Index predicts that the child poverty rate will rise to 21% by 2010 (Yeo, 2010).

While many variables impact the influence of poverty on children's lives (e.g., depth and duration of poverty, timing in a child's life, parents' choice) it is clear that children living in poverty are believed to be more educationally at-risk in reading (Cunningham, 2006), as it was found that the educational deficit of children in poverty was present at school entry and increased with every year of school they attended (Juel, 1988; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2007;

Stanovich & West, 1989). More specifically, research has indicated that children of poverty come to school with fewer emergent skills necessary for beginning to read (e.g., concepts about print, alphabetic knowledge, phonological awareness, language development) (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Hart & Risely, 1995). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2007), reported children living in poverty scored significantly lower in reading than children from middle- and high-income families. Additionally, as a result of these deficits, children from poor families are two times as likely to repeat a grade and/or drop out of school, than children from non-poor families (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). With almost 20% of school age children living in poverty and at potential risk for literacy failure, it is clearly important to identify practices that make a difference in teaching children of poverty.

Literature Review

Best Practices

Recognizing that there is significant controversy over what constitutes "best practices," no single instructional program, approach, or method has been found to be effective teaching all children to read. For the purpose of this study, we are defining best practices as evidence-based practices that have been documented to promote high rates of achievement and have a record of success that is both trustworthy and valid (Gambrell, Morrow & Pressley, 2007). There is evidence that when evidence-based practices are used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make gains in reading achievement (International Reading Association, 2002a, 2002b).

Research has shown that effective reading instruction is comprehensive (Xue & Meisels, 2004; Kainz & Vernon-Feagans, 2007). Comprehensive instruction involves explicit instruction in writing and the mechanics of reading, as well as, numerous opportunities for students to apply their skills in reading in authentic contexts (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Teachers who provide effective reading instruction also employ flexible grouping strategies to meet the instructional needs of students, engage, and motivate them to reach increasingly higher levels of achievement (Pressley, 2006). Thus, developmentally focused and comprehensive language and literacy instruction from teachers in high poverty schools has been found to have a positive effect on the literacy skills of preschool children living in poverty (Kainz & Vernon-Feagans, 2007).

Teachers Make a Difference

One of the most important factors in helping children of poverty succeed in school is the opportunity to be taught by knowledgeable teachers. Research studies indicate that the quality of teachers has an effect at least as large as students' backgrounds—e.g., income, parent education, and other family factors (Ferguson,

1991; Ferguson & Ladd, 1996; Strauss & Sawyer, 1986). It has been found that students who have effective teachers in several successive years have significantly greater gains than those who are assigned to less effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, Bransford, & LePage, 2005). Additional studies have confirmed that consistent, high quality, classroom instruction dramatically influences students' achievement levels from low income families (Snow, 1991).

Researchers have noted the importance of the teacher as a decision-maker as a key factor in effective teaching (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2005; Flippo, 1998, 2001; Pearson, 1996). Teachers must take into consideration the cultural context and community of learners, understand the strengths and needs of their individual students, and be able to adapt instruction to support high levels of literacy learning. Pearson (1996) noted that teachers must be able to understand literacy well enough to adapt the learning environment, materials, and methods to particular students and environments, identify best practices that will foster reading development, and make informed decisions that will impact the learning of individual students. Students do not learn with a "one-size-fits-all" curriculum. Thus, teachers must make decisions about instructional practices that are grounded in constructivist learning theory and that enable children to reach their learning potential. Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2007) identified ten evidence-based best practices that are generally accepted by experts in the field as "common ground" for meeting these goals. Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni's (2007) ten recommended best practices are:

1. Create a classroom culture that fosters literacy motivation.
2. Teach reading for authentic meaning-making literacy experiences: for pleasure, to be performed, and/or to perform a task.
3. Provide students with scaffolded instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension to promote independent reading.
4. Give students plenty of time to read in class.
5. Provide children with high-quality literature across a wide range of genres.
6. Use multiple texts to link and expand vocabulary and concepts.
7. Build a whole-class community that emphasizes important concepts and builds upon prior knowledge.
8. Balance teacher- and student-led discussions of texts.
9. Use technologies to link and expand concepts.
10. Use a variety of assessment techniques to inform instruction (p. 19).

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by principles of sociocultural theory in which literacy is viewed within the context of social practice and power (Gee, 1991; Perez, 1998) and social justice theory (Freire, 2000), which recognizes the inequality in society

and attempts to promote mobility and opportunities for families living in poverty and individuals marginalized because of race. Differences in the social worlds and cultural identities of children affect the meaning they bring to and take from text. These differences have resulted in placing less value on the diverse knowledge and experiences of students with varying abilities from different backgrounds. Consequently, socioculturally relevant instructional approaches are recommended to promote comprehension and learning in socioculturally diverse classrooms (Hammerberg, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Social and cultural dimensions of literacy are also reflected in social justice theory. Social justice theory recognizes the inequality in society that have privileged some groups over others. Economic and racial inequities have resulted in persistent gaps in reading achievement between children living in poverty and their economically advantaged counterparts in urban and rural areas (Fram, Milller-Cribbs, & Horn, 2007), thus supporting the need for improved instruction for children living in poverty.

This research, grounded in sociocultural and social justice theories, attempted to understand how to promote the cognitive engagement of children in poverty. Specifically, the research questions were:

(1) What literacy strategies, methods, and materials do elementary school teachers find most effective for teaching elementary school children in poverty?

(2) What literacy practices do teachers find most effective for assessing and evaluating children in poverty?; and

(3) What strategies do teachers find most effective for motivating children in poverty to read and write?

Methods

Participants

Elementary school teachers from Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas, North Dakota, and Minnesota were identified in one or more of the following ways: (1) teachers were successfully engaged in a graduate program of study at one of the researchers' universities, (2) teachers were recommended by a school administrator as an exemplary practitioner, and/or (3) researchers had personal knowledge of each teacher's success in teaching children of poverty. The selection criteria used in the study were based upon a previous study conducted by Camp (2008).

High poverty schools were defined as public schools where more than 75% of students were eligible for free or reduced lunch as defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2010). Teachers who participated in this study were from urban, suburban, and rural areas. They identified their teaching assignments as ESL pull-out, resource room, instructional resource, interventionists for math and reading, literacy coach, team teacher, instructional support, and classroom

teachers. Some teachers taught both K-3 and grade 4-6 students. Ninety-five percent of the teachers taught K-3 students and fifty-nine percent of the teachers taught students in grades 4-6 in suburban and urban schools. These totals were above 100 percent because many of the teachers served students from more than one grade level. Teachers in this study averaged eight years of experience teaching in high-poverty schools. The majority of the respondents were African American females with one Caucasian and one African American male.

Procedures

The researchers developed a survey that included non-structured/open-ended questions designed to address the research questions of the project. The 14-question survey was initially sent to 10 elementary teachers. Based on feedback from the pilot, the researchers modified the survey, editing for clarification and conciseness. The final nine-item survey (see Appendix A) was posted on a web-based platform (*Survey Monkey*) enabling the survey data to be sent anonymously and directly into a database for analysis. The web link was sent via personal e-mail to invite the identified 123 teachers to participate in the survey. Follow-up e-mails were sent to request participation. Data were collected over a period of two months with a 40% return rate (*n* = 49).

Analysis

Other than demographic information, all but one survey question was open-ended, yielding rich and in-depth qualitative data. Teachers were prompted to include multiple responses to each question and data were analyzed qualitatively. One question asked teachers to describe their approach to reading instruction. Three instructional approaches were defined and a fourth response option of "other" was provided.

All survey data were sent to one researcher who compiled the information collectively before sending it to the other three researchers for analysis. Each researcher used an inductive approach to create categories of responses using an open coding process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Assigned categories were then compared to ensure peer debriefing for consensus and establishing inter-rater reliability. In order to establish validity and trustworthiness for these data, purposeful sampling as well as an inquiry audit were conducted. Data were categorized into three main areas: (1) Instruction, which included instructional frameworks, instructional approaches, and strategies, (2) Assessment, and (3) Motivation. Once categories of responses were determined a simple tally was taken of how many times a strategy, assessment, or procedure was reported.

Results

Instruction

Instructional Approaches and Materials. Eight percent of teachers identified their approach as skills-based, promoting the mastery and automatic use of subskills that can later be applied to reading and writing tasks. Four percent of participants identified their approach as literature-based, promoting reading whole pieces of literature as a basis for instruction. Eighty-eight percent of teachers identified their approach as comprehensive, promoting the teaching of subskills through authentic reading, writing, thinking, and listening activities. No teachers responded to the fourth response option of "other."

Teachers were asked about the materials they used and if they had a choice in selecting materials for use in their classrooms. Every teacher reported that mandated materials, core materials, and district curriculums were provided, but they had flexibility and choice in supplemental materials to be used with the required materials.

Instructional Frameworks. From the open-ended questions, researchers categorized a number of teacher responses as instructional frameworks, as opposed to specific strategies. There were four instructional frameworks that were named by the teachers—gradual release of responsibility, guided reading and writing, cooperative learning, and multiple intelligences.

The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) was reported by many teachers. This model depicts the concept that responsibility for task completion should be shifted gradually over time from modeling by the teacher to independent application by the student. Teachers' responses demonstrated the importance of providing levels of support in both reading and writing. A specific teacher wrote, ". . . lots of opportunities to read with group, peers, teacher, and independently allows students to make the most reading growth." Another teacher shared, "I lead the children in completing the first few [graphic] organizers in a group, next children are asked to complete different areas of the organizer in a partnership or individually, depending on their readiness. Finally, children are gradually released to complete organizers independently."

Guided reading and writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) and small group reading instruction (synonymous terms) were reported by teachers as flexible instructional frameworks that support student learning. The teachers repeatedly indicated the importance of having children read at their instructional levels. A teacher response included, "Small group guided- reading instruction allows students to read books at their levels." Another teacher shared, "Guided reading in small groups helps provide support in reading in a way that doesn't intimidate them [students] to read or respond publically during instruction."

Teachers also reported shared writing and small group instruction on targeted skills, cooperative learning, and multiple intelligence models as effective frameworks in working with children of poverty.

Strategies. Teachers in this study reported multiple instructional strategies to accommodate the various learning and cognitive styles of learners in their classrooms. The complete list of direct responses from the teachers were categorized and reported in Table 1. In this section, we will include a representation of strategies reported.

An overarching finding was the importance teachers placed on modeling, explicit instruction, and providing ample time for guided practice and independent reading and writing. Reading formats included class read-alouds by the teacher, whole class choral reading, echo reading, repeated reading, paired reading, independent reading, and readers' theater. Writing formats included shared writing, guided writing, journal writing, and independent writing.

Teachers wrote extensively about the reading material that was used for instruction. They thought it was important to provide a wide range of quality, authentic, multi-genre literature (including poems and songs) that focused on the personal interests of students. A teacher sharing included, "integrating more expository text engages many children of poverty. Students are constantly surrounded by expository text without even realizing it . . . Teaching students how to read and interpret expository texts allows students to apply reading to their real lives." Another teacher cautioned that, "because students often lack the background knowledge necessary to read the non-fiction texts extensive pre-reading instruction is needed."

Teachers reported using multiple forms of graphic organizers (e.g. I-charts, comprehension anchor charts, thinking maps). Their responses illustrate the value of using graphic organizers as instructional strategies: "The use of graphic organizers integrated into all subject areas is an instructional strategy that has proven successful in my school." "Thinking maps organize information and allow students to brainstorm and tap into prior knowledge." "Thinking maps/graphic organizers assist the children in chunking the basic concepts of the instruction without getting lost in the unfamiliar vocabulary and text." In addition, "Graphic organizers make thinking and objectives visible."

Activating prior knowledge was a valued pre-reading activity as illustrated by one teacher who wrote, "Activating prior knowledge tremendously benefits my students, and me because they get the idea ahead of time what we will be reading/ studying." Another teacher wrote, "When they [students] don't know much about the subject, it allows me to fill-in the blanks." Prior knowledge strategies included discussion, thinking maps, virtual and actual field trips, visual representations, and artifacts.

Teachers wrote about the importance of explicit instruction of vocabulary, word study, and phonics. A teacher response included, "I use vocabulary cards that display the word on one side and a picture on the other. The visual allows students a better understanding of the word. We review vocabulary words daily and talk about how we use and hear the words in our own lives." Teachers shared that they used authentic literature, poems, songs, and text from the morning message as a basis for explicitly teaching phonics.

Reading comprehension instruction was reported by teachers but few specific strategies were noted. One teacher explained that she used think-alouds to model how to comprehend using the seven comprehension strategies from *Mosaic of Thought* (Keene & Zimmermann, 2007).

Table 1: Instructional Reading Strategies, Methods, and Materials Reported as Effective by Teachers of Children in Poverty

Instructional Strategies, Methods, and Materials	Percentages Reported by Respondents
Formats for Reading Teacher read-alouds, whole-group choral reading, echo reading, paired reading, independent reading, repeated reading, reader's theater	37%
Methods Modeling; think-alouds; direct, daily, explicit reading and writing instruction; coaching, ample guided practice; plenty of within-class time to read and write; reading centers	35%
Prior knowledge Pre-reading instruction, visual representations, think-alouds, thinking maps, word study, discussion, virtual and actual field-trips, visual representations, and artifacts	33%
Texts Targeted to instructional reading levels; literature; wide genre (including non-fiction); personal interest, choice authentic literature, poems and songs; quality	27%
Formats for Writing Shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, journal writing, language experience, independent writing	27%
Vocabulary Instruction Modeling, discussions, word study, keywords (providing word cards for personal high frequency words used in writing), vocabulary cards (word and picture and/or definition), explicit vocabulary instruction	22%
Comprehension Instruction Thinking maps and anchor charts, comprehension constructors, modeling, discussions, strategy instruction, fluency	20%
Graphic Organizers I-charts, comprehension anchor charts, thinking maps	18%
Discussion Student led and teacher directed, small group/whole class	14%
Phonics/Sight Word Instruction Using quality literature, poems, songs, and morning message; direct, explicit instruction, whole word learning	14%

Assessment

Teachers were asked what types of informal, ongoing assessments they found yielded the most useful information about what children know and are ready to learn in their classrooms. The most commonly reported type of assessment was teacher observation documented by anecdotal notes. Teachers reported using running records and miscue analysis to gain information about children's decoding, fluency, and comprehension. Conversations, discussions, and reading and writing conferences were also used as informal assessment. Retelling activities were reported as informative. One teacher said, "While retelling activities are great instructional strategies, I find them to be a great assessment tool as well. . . . particularly because they [students] are allowed opportunities to express their understanding in their own words and their choices of words give me clues to their personal language experiences." Teachers also reported using graphic organizers, and attitude and interest surveys for assessment.

Writing conferences were utilized to assess spelling, and students' applications of the use of letters, sounds, sight words, conventions, and concepts about print. One teacher reported that she used hands-on activities as much as possible to assess learning in the primary grades (e.g. plastic letters to assess letter and sound recognition, sound discrimination, sound blending, and spelling). An intermediate grade teacher reported using utilizing many games that incorporate movement, music, or some level of competition in assessing student learning. Many of the assessment strategies reported overlapped with instructional strategies. For a complete list of assessments reported by teachers, see Table 2.

Table 2: Assessment Practices Found Effective for Assessing and Evaluating Children in Poverty

Assessment	Percentages Reported by Respondents
Teacher observation	50%
Anecdotal records	30%
Running records and miscue analysis	19%
Comprehension questions	14%
Student/teacher conferences	12%
Retelling	10%
Graphic organizers	10%
Discussions and conversations	10%
Writing samples and journals	10%
Attitude surveys and interest inventories	8%
Checklists	6%
Teacher-made tests	6%
Hands-on activities	4%
Language experience	4%
Vocabulary cards	1%
DIBELS	1%
DRA	1%
Words Their Way	1%
Quick Phonic Screener	1%
Developmental Spelling Inventory	1%
Fluency Probes	1%

There were three different published informal assessment tools that were identified by name: *DIBELS* (Good & Kaminski, 2002), *Words Their Way Spelling Inventory* (Bear, Invernezzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2008), and the *Developmental Reading Inventory* (Beavers, 2006). A complete list of books and commercial materials specifically named by the teachers as useful resources for teaching and assessment is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Books/ Commercial Materials/Assessments Specifically Named by Teachers of Children of Poverty as Being Useful to their Practice

Title	Context
Keene, E., & Zimmermann, S. (2007). *Mosaic of thought.*	Comprehension strategies
Boushey, G., & Moser, J. (2006). *Daily 5: Literacy independence in the elementary grades.*	Initiating stamina and independence
Beavers, J. M. (2006). *Developmental reading assessment (DRA).*	Assessing reading/benchmarking
Hasbrouck, J., & Parker, R. (2001). *Quick phonics screener.*	Targeting/assessing phonics instruction
Bear, R. D., Invernezzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2008). *Words their way: Word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling instruction.*	Targeting/assessing phonics and word work instruction
Good, R. H., & Kaminski, R. A. (2002). *Dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills.*	Fluency
Clay, M. M. (2000). *Running records for classroom teachers.*	Assessing reading processing, assessing strategy use

Motivation

Teachers encouraged self-efficacy in their students by establishing student ownership and setting high expectations for learning. Representative comments from two teachers provide examples of these principles. A comment one teacher stated included, "I have found that the key to motivating children in poverty stricken environments . . . is to first convince them of their absolute value and get them to believe in their abilities to succeed in any area they choose. Once they recognize their own abilities, there's no stopping them." Another teacher shared, "I find that many of my students have set their standard bars low and make it difficult for us as educators to reset. So daily I must raise the bar until the students internalize high expectations for themselves." Teachers found that allowing students to set personal, attainable goals provided a direct link between effort and success.

Teachers promoted ownership by providing authentic reading and writing experiences that tapped into the interests of the students. A comment one teacher shared is, "I can teach a child how to read and write; the topic may not necessarily be my choice, but using topics that are of interest to the child is essential." Another teacher noted that "students need to write about things they are familiar with and

interested in. The initial assignment has to be something they can relate to and give a personal experience." A teacher-related example supportive of these comments was a first grade class that authored a story about a cockroach that had jumped out of the shelf in the classroom. This language experience was written down to become a class book. This was not a topic their teacher would have chosen, but it provided a common, meaningful experience that resulted in literacy learning.

The importance of selecting texts that motivate is noted by a representative teacher comment, "I make every effort to take note of the interests of my students and purposefully choose reading materials on their level that match those interests. I share with them authors they can relate to that either have the same background from their upbringing, socioeconomic status, or ethnicity. This allows students to see they too can be successful readers and writers."

The key to motivating students of poverty is building teacher-student relationships and promoting a community of learners within the classroom. Strategies that promoted teacher-student relationships included interest inventories, teachers sharing their own passion for reading and writing, and sharing stories about themselves and their families. Teachers also provided regular, positive reinforcement, one-to-one conversations and conferences, and motivational speeches and reminders throughout the day. A teacher commented, "They [students] need to know and believe that the teacher believes in their potential for success. Students will work hard if they know you care about them." Teachers promoted a sense of community by implementing morning meetings, small group flexible instruction, opportunities for students to work collaboratively, and peer-supported opportunities for learning interactions such as paired reading, shared writing, and group discussions.

Other motivational practices included using a variety of genre, particularly non-fiction texts and providing choice of books and writing topics. Researchers categorized the direct responses of motivational strategies reported by the teachers. For the complete list reported, see Table 4 below.

Table 4: Strategies Found Most Effective for Motivating Children in Poverty to Read

Motivational Strategies	Percentages Reported by Respondents
Building Relationships/Community	37%
Sharing own passion for reading and writing, teacher excitement and eagerness, sharing own stories, one-to-one conversations and conferences, daily motivational speeches and reminders, consistency, interest inventories, modeling, positive feedback, positive reinforcement, praise, build positive relationships with students and family, high expectations, morning meetings, small and flexible grouping, peer collaboration, peer supported opportunities for learning, paired reading, shared writing, group discussions	
Materials and Text	28.5%
High interest, choice in reading and writing topics, multiple genres(including nonfiction, poetry and poems), stories with characters like themselves that face challenges, stories by authors they can relate to, visual aids,	

manipulatives, classroom libraries with various levels and types of text, wordless picture books, read-alouds

Goal Setting   20%
Student personal goal setting, appropriately challenged, positive reinforcement, positive feedback, charting success, extrinsic rewards slowly scaled back toward intrinsic

Establishing Self-efficacy   20%
Establishing student ownership of learning; setting high expectations for learning, convincing students of their own abilities to succeed; setting personal, obtainable goals; providing authentic reading and writing experiences; personal interest

Student Ownership   14%
Authentic reading and writing experiences, high student interest, sharing own stories, personal connections, opportunities to share reading and writing with the class

Peer Interaction   <1%
Peer support, peer conversations, small group instruction, opportunities to share work with peers

Discussion

Sociocultural theory informs the instruction in and operation of exemplary language arts classrooms (Morrow, Rueda, & Lapp, 2009) by emphasizing the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in support of student learning. It also extends students' understanding and use of their knowledge and experiences as a foundation for acquiring their knowledge and skills in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). It is important for teachers to utilize students' diverse knowledge, experiences, and varying abilities and backgrounds in educational planning to provide differentiated teaching and to create classroom communities that are well-organized and managed. Such effects can effectively address the persistent gaps in reading achievement between children living in poverty and their economically-advantaged counterparts (Fram, Milller-Cribbs, & Horn, 2007).

Teachers in this study recognized that children of poverty required additional support, particularly in terms of engaging in a learning community and building individual confidence. Teachers reported that when students were allowed to pursue their own topics of interest, learning became more relevant to them and they were more successful. The types of strategies, motivation techniques, and assessments practiced by the teachers in this study were reflective of the social cultural theory in which literacy is viewed with the context of social practice and power (Gee, 1993; Perez, 1998). However, there is a need for teachers to differentiate instruction based upon students' academic needs and interests. Teachers promoted the concept of self-regulated learning and regularly placed children in positions of power within their own communities of practice through personal goal setting and peer interaction and discussion.

Teachers reported that they had flexibility in choosing materials, strategies, and assessments that best fit their students' needs. Having the choice to make instructional decisions that adapt to particular learning contexts and best suited to the learning of individuals was key when working with children of poverty.

One of the most apparent findings from the data was the significance teachers placed on the importance of motivation as an essential component of reading instruction (Gambrell, 1996; Godling & Palmer, 1995). Teachers' recognition of the importance of reading motivation was generated from both internal factors (natural interest), and external features (rewards or behaviors) (Hertz & Swanson, 1999).

Conclusion

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the involvement of more teachers would have made the study stronger. Second, the data from these teachers were self-reported. A logical follow-up would have been to confirm the data by observing and interviewing teacher participants. Third, the survey itself could have been limiting. Fourth, in hindsight, it is believed that question #7 limited participant responses by providing definitions for instructional approaches since no teacher responded in the "other" category.

Implications

With the increased numbers of children of poverty in U.S. schools, it is important that educators identify instructional factors (best practices) that will potentially lead to improved student success in reading and writing. The goal of this study was to examine the instructional practices of effective teachers of children of poverty. Findings from this study indicate that successful teachers of children of poverty utilize instructional strategies that are consistent with all but one of the ten principles of evidence-based best practices generally accepted by experts in the field (Gambrell, Morrow & Pressley, 2007). Teachers did not report using technology; perhaps because the question was not asked. Teachers need to not only know evidence-based best practices, but be able to orchestrate an integration of such practices to provide comprehensive literacy instruction to their students. This study documents best practices in action.

School administrators and curriculum leaders should note the importance of teachers as decision-makers. Teachers must be able to adapt curriculum to specific learning contexts and individual student needs. Creating classrooms that promote learning communities and caring classroom environments is key in the teaching of children of poverty. School leaders should also realize that motivation for learning came from teachers' promotion of student self-efficacy and interests, and appropriate levels of instructional materials and teacher scaffolding. Teachers, not programs, make the difference.

Teacher educators, who teach both pre-service and in-service teachers, could enhance the theory-to-practice focus of their courses by recognizing techniques that are effective and effectively used by teachers of children of poverty. Teachers at all grade levels who work with diverse socio-economic groups would benefit from the rich descriptions of practice documented from the teachers in this study.

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Appendix A: Teacher Survey:
Maximizing the Cognitive Engagement of Children of Poverty

Question 1. How would you categorize the type of classroom you are currently teaching in?
Open ended Response

Question 2. What grade(s) are you currently teaching?
Pre-K
Kindergarten
1st grade
2nd grade
3rd grade
4th grade
5th grade
6th grade

Question 3. How long have you been a teacher in a high poverty school?
Open Ended Response

Question 4. What have you found to be successful in motivating children of poverty to read and write in your classroom. Describe.

Question 5. The overarching goal for reading and writing instruction is to help children become active, self-regulated, independent readers and writers. Please describe three research-based instructional strategies to teach reading and writing that you have found successful with children of poverty. Describe.

Question 6. What types of informal, ongoing assessment have you found to yield the most useful information about what children know and are ready to learn in your classroom? Describe.

Question 7. How would you describe your approach to reading/writing instruction? A skills-based instructional approach promotes the mastery and automatic use of subskills that can later be applied to reading and writing tasks. A literature-based approach promotes reading and writing whole pieces of literature as a basis for instruction. A comprehensive approach promotes the teaching of subskills through authentic reading, writing, thinking, and listening activities.

Skills-based
Literature-based
Comprehensive approach
Other

Question 8. What instructional materials are used to teach reading in your classroom?
Open ended Response

Question 9. Are instructional reading/writing materials district mandated, or do you have a choice in what you use? Explain.

An Investigation of Literature Circles and Critical Literacy: Five Zones of Opportunity for High-Ability Students

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Abstract

This ethnographic case study investigated how literature circles provided an optimal differentiated learning context for high-ability (sixth-grade) readers that centered on the connection between critical pedagogy and collaborative reading of sociocultural issues. The study was conducted in a sixth-grade gifted reading classroom during the course of one school year. Data analysis was conducted using principles of inductive coding and grounded theory. This study found literature circles provide five zones of opportunity for gifted middle school students: zone of inquiry, critical thinking, and knowledge formation; zone of affective development and self-awareness; zone of cultural awareness and place in the world; zone of criticality and social action; and zone of critical discussions.

Ongoing longitudinal studies have demonstrated that advanced learning opportunities for the gifted during their K-12 schooling years provide positive pathways for development (Lubinski, & Benbow, 2006; Neihart, 2007; Renzulli, & Reis, 2009). In conjunction, meta-analyses have shown that grouping the gifted only matters if teachers provide students differentiated curricula (Adams-Byers, Whitsell, & Moon, 2004; Rogers, 2002). Nevertheless, only a few classroom-based intervention studies have been undertaken to demonstrate the direct impact of differentiated curricula on high-end student learning (Assouline, Colangelo, Lupkowski-Shoplik, & Lipscomb, 2003; Avery & VanTassel-Baska, 1999).

Differentiated instruction for the gifted learner is an approach to teaching that is inclusive and guides teachers in various aspects of their practice. It does not mean grading gifted students harder than you grade other students, or providing more work for students to stay busy (Tomlinson, 2005). It is a continuous process of learning about students' needs and interests and using that knowledge to guide instruction. Teachers use their knowledge of students to determine how content

is presented, what activities are appropriate, and how to guide students in demonstrating what they have learned (Tomlinson, 1999). According to Winebrenner (2000), teachers of the gifted and talented are interconnected by two themes: (1) providing challenging opportunities for gifted students, and (2) making classroom provisions to accommodate gifted students' unique needs.

The process of differentiating instruction is most effective in a flexible and supportive learning environment, which encompasses both the physical setting of the classroom and its climate. Use of literature circles is a popular approach to literature-based reading that promotes social interaction among groups of students who meet on a regular basis to create meaning from texts through discussion and collaboration (Daniels, 1994, 2002). In addition, literature circles have the potential to provide students with a forum from which to question as they read, to know the author's intent, and to understand the historical, social, cultural, and political influences in their lives (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997). Substantial amounts of research have shown that student engagement in discussion about texts improves reading comprehension, higher-level thinking skills, and increased motivation (Almasi, 1995; Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). Further, Hill, Johnson, and Noe (1995) contend that student discussion provides the opportunity to "communicate one's ideas in a clear, detailed manner through conversation, writing, or an aesthetic response" (p. 108).

Statement of the Problem

Across the educational landscape, the role of gifted education is at a difficult crossroads. The field is criticized for grouping practices seen as counter to the current interest in inclusion (VanTassel-Baska, & Stambaugh 2005). Furthermore, gifted education is considered irrelevant by some critics because reform initiatives promote critical thinking, interdisciplinary curriculum, and project work for all students (VanTassel-Baska, 1998).

However, many regular classroom teachers are faced with the dilemma of how to meet the needs of their diverse learners. Given time restraints and working in an era of high-stakes accountability, it has been reported that many classroom teachers now focus their attention on low-performing students (Davi, & Rimm, 2004). As a result, many students who are identified as gifted and talented are not as challenged in classrooms today, and many schools that do offer specific program services for gifted and talented students are organized in ways that fail to translate into talent development for advanced learners (VanTassel-Baska, 1998). As concerns continue to mount on the status of today's gifted education programs coupled with questions about meaningful contexts for instruction, the nature and extent of student learning becomes the central concern.

Literacy development for high-ability students is best achieved in literature-rich environments with opportunities for students to participate extensively in discus-

sions, activate their consciousness, connect to prior experiences and knowledge, and elicit high-level cognitive responses (VanTassel-Baska, 1998). Therefore, this study investigated how literature circles could provide an optimal differentiated learning context for high-ability (sixth-grade) readers. More specifically, this study investigated the connection between critical pedagogy and collaborative reading of sociocultural issues for gifted students. Subsequently, the focus of this study was on the cognitive processes associated with constructing meaning from print. However, this view of reading also included sociocultural and critical perspectives of literacy that highlights interactions among learners, use of multicultural texts, and literacy contexts. As a result, this study examined the following research question: *How does the instructional environment of literature circles provide differentiated learning opportunities for gifted middle school (sixth-grade) students?*

Methods

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study drew from ethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003), social constructivism (Au, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978, 1987), critical transformational theory (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1997), and transactional theory of reader response (Rosenblatt, 1994; Smagorinsky, 2001). These perspectives defined particular points-of-view and framed a set of assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and the goals and aims of the research process.

Because this study was a natural inquiry, an ethnographic perspective provided the lens from which to describe the learning culture in which the gifted readers socially interacted to construct meaning in literacy events (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003). The social constructivist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991) provided a lens from which to explain how gifted readers gained an understanding of text in a manner that perceived reading as a social practice. Correspondingly, the critical transformative perspective provided a lens from which to characterize the process that high-ability sixth-grade readers took to overcome the asymmetrical power relationships presented in their texts and the wider community at-large (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1997). Finally, the transactional theory of reader response (Rosenblatt, 1994; Smagorinsky, 2001) provided a lens from which to understand and explain the literate practices of high-ability readers engaged in social interactions of reading response.

Practitioner Inquiry

For purposes of this study, the methodology adopted a natural inquiry approach that supported the teacher-researcher tradition. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), a teacher inquirer is considered the "passionate participant . . . engaged in facilitating the multi-voice reconstructions of his or her own construction as well as those of all other participants" (p. 215). The role of teacher-researcher was

an active one, as it required the role of an active investigator who was involved in the research setting's central activities and one who assumed the responsibilities to move the group forward and facilitate the learning process as the gifted resource specialist. To make informed decisions, the teacher-researcher needed to be able to see what was happening and what was being produced in the context of literature circles (Creswell, 1998; Gee & Green, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that further allowed the engagement with data in a reflexive manner and responsive process, ask questions of the data, analyze, and raise new questions. Mohr, Rogers, Saqnford, Nocerio, Maclean, & Clawson (2004) explains that when a teacher assumes the role of researcher, the teacher is "paying attention in a different way" (p. 49) and provides a unique perspective in which to examine classroom events and to pose questions that cannot be asked by anyone else.

Research Context

Smith Intermediate School (a pseudonym) is one of seven schools located in a small city public school system in the southeastern United States, consisting of three elementary schools, two intermediate schools, one middle school, and one high school. The city is historic, having been founded in 1850 with roots in textiles, but has recently experienced a revitalization because of its connection with NASCAR racing.

At the time of this study, Smith Intermediate School had a population of 787 students in grades four through six. The demographics of this school were 76% European Americans, 15% Black, 4% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 1% Native American, and 2% Multi-racial. Economically- disadvantaged students accounted for approximately 29% of the student population and 1% of the student population was classified as limited English proficiency. Expenditures per pupil were just under seven thousand dollars with a student teacher ratio of 28:1.

The school offers English as a Second Language (ESL) to students on a pullout basis. In addition, Smith Intermediate School houses two self-contained special education classrooms. Special education teachers serve students who are identified learning disabled (math, reading, and writing) in a resource capacity. Correspondingly, licensed gifted specialists in a resource setting serve students who meet the criteria for a gifted and talented program (reading and math).

Participants

The participants attend Smith Intermediate School (pseudonym). The 21 sixth-grade participants (eleven females and ten males) were from one gifted reading resource classroom. The participants were enrolled in the gifted program through two classifications: 11 were "identified" and 12 were "qualified." A student who was "identified" academically and intellectually gifted in reading scored 95% or above on both their intelligence and their achievement tests. A student who is "qualified" to receive gifted services are high scoring students, but missed scoring above the 95%, and was strong recommended by their teacher. The participant's ethnicities

were 15 Caucasian students, 2 Hispanic students, 2 African American students and 2 Asian students. The SES was based on the parents' level of education, occupation, and free or reduced lunch. One student was from the wealthy class, three from the upper-middle class, four from the middle class and 13 from the working class. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Because the 21 eleven and twelve year olds met the criteria for service in this classroom, a convenience sampling technique was used.

The Gifted Reading Program

The 21 high-ability readers were pullout each day from their homerooms for a 90-minute block of instructional reading time five days a week. The schedule was such that while the gifted specialist in a resource room served the gifted readers, the homeroom teachers taught reading during this same time to their regular education students. The sixth-grade gifted readers then returned to their homerooms to complete their core subjects.

While attending the gifted reading block, the participants received the curricular objectives informed by the state in reading and language arts, but in the form of anenriched curriculum in order to meet the needs of an adapted gifted reading program from *The William and Mary Language Arts Program for High-ability Learners* (VanTassel-Baska, Zuo, Avery, & Little, 2002).

Organization of the reading program was adapted from *The Reading Workshop Block* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001), which is an organized set of language and literacy experiences that consists of independent reading, guided reading, and literature study. Reading response activities were operationalized through interactive read-alouds, literature circle discussions, reading response journals, and reading conferences. While the bulk of this study focused on literature study through the context of literature circles, all components of the reading workshop were utilized to provide explicit instruction in critical literacy and demonstrate effective reading and writing response strategies that student participants applied in literature study.

Procedures

Literature circles permit teachers to play multiple roles and assume various stances during literature discussion, moving from explicit instruction, and modeling, to scaffolding and coaching, to facilitating in which students take primary responsibility for enacting participatory structures. This flow of activities allows for a "gradual release of responsibility" (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) and corresponds to three developmental stages in literature circle participation that Kong and Pearson (2003) characterized: (1) teaching by telling, (2) teaching by modeling and scaffolding, and (3) learning by doing. For purposes of this research study, the teacher-researcher adapted this developmental process with the classroom-reading program. This study occurred from mid- August to late May 2008.

Teaching by Telling. "Teaching as Telling" (Kong & Pearson, 2003) is

the first stage of literature circle development and is characterized in which the teacher explicitly instructs, models, and leads literature study. In this research study, "Teaching by Telling" encompassed a period that roughly spanned the first quarter of the school year (mid-August to mid- October 2007). It was during this period that groundwork was laid in order to build a community of learners (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and to set the tone for the study. During whole-class meetings, the practitioner-researcher created a collaborative learning community by leading discussions on how students can help and learn from each other through response. The goal was to allow the students to accept that all responses are interpretations and that each student has life experiences to share as contributing members of a learning community.

The dual role of teacher-researcher required the teacher to be an active participant. Acting as a full participant (Gold, 1958; Spradley, 1980), interactive read-aloud sessions were implemented to introduce the participants to the concept of multicultural literature. The main objective of this practice was to raise student awareness about dominant and oppressive ideas that were related to an issue of social justice. To reinforce this point, selections of children's literature were chosen for the interactive read aloud lessons:

- Bridges, R. (1999). Through My Eyes
- Browne, A. (1998). Voices in the Park
- Bunting, E. (1998). Fly Away Home
- Shange, N. (1997). White Wash

In addition to creating a classroom learning community, "Teaching by Telling" (Kong & Pearson, 2003) was a time to introduce students to various components of effective literature study as well as the books that they would be reading during literature circle time. These books included:

- Konigsburg, E. (1996). The View from Saturday
- Armstrong, W. (1996). Sounder
- Yolen, L. (1988). The Devil's Arithmetic
- Jiang, J. (1997). Red Scarf Girl
- Ellis, d. (2000). The Breadwinner

To prepare for literature study, the teacher-researcher explicitly taught and modeled the various literature circle roles, the response log formats that corresponded with each role, and the following guidelines for the implementation of literature circles (Daniels, 1994, 2002):

1. The teacher-researcher presented the text before the literature study through a book talk.
2. The teacher-researcher formed the discussion groups by having the students choose numbers by ballots, numbering one through four.
3. Each member within a group was allocated a literature circle role, completed

      his or her reading individually, and prepared for the group's discussion by completing his/her role assignments (discussion questions, connections, character profiles, and vocabulary activities).

4. All discussion took place within the literature circle. As the discussion concluded, the groups decided how much of the text would be read before the next meeting and each member was allocated a new role.

5. Steps 3 and 4 were repeated until the text reading was completed.

6. When the text reading was completed, the groups planned and presented a literature showcase of their design (Reader's Theater, Power Point, or Role Play) as an extension project for a sharing session.

For purposes of this study, one book was read at a time and discussed by all groups. In addition, the students were permitted to form new groups with each book in a literature study.

      Four literature circle roles were adapted from Daniels (1994). These included *Discussion Director*, the student who led the group by preparing a brief summary of the pages read and then devised questions to provoke meaningful thought and discussion; the *Literary Illuminator*, the student who identified a controversial or a provocative passage to share with the group to elicit group dialogue; the *Creative Connector*, the participant who found a way to link the reading to his or her own life experiences, text to text, and text to world; and the *Word Picker*, the group member who selected a few words to share with other group members and planned an activity to teach the words.

      Two new roles were developed for this study to address strategic practices in critical literacy in order to challenge the gifted students to interrogate the author, perform personality profiles on the stories' characters, to investigate silenced voices, and to examine the sociocultural influences of the texts. First, the role of *Character Investigator* (Soares, 2009) required the student to consider character profiles (physical, intellectual, and socioeconomic status) to determine how the character attributes were related to the characters' positions in the text. The new role required the student to examine characters with limited roles who claimed little space in the text to determine if their presence had been silenced for a reason because they were rejected by the author and then to conversely examine dominant characters to determine if they were favored by the author (see Appendixes A, B, & C) and provide textual evidence to justify their conclusions.

      The second new role was the *Critical Profiler* (Soares, 2009) which required the student to challenge the author's stance, examine the sociocultural influences in the text, and provide alternative texts by offering how the text would be shaped if told from a different point-of-view or time and place (see Appendix D). The most significant aspect of this role required the students to examine the power relationships between the characters and then relate the cultural and power differentials in the texts to real-world contexts.

      Finally, "Teaching as Telling" (Kong & Pearson, 2003) was a critical time for the

teacher-researcher to use guided reading time to explicitly instruct students on how to make quality written responses using multiple critical response forms for dialogue journals (see Appendix E for one example). These six forms were carefully designed and adapted to permit the student participants to enter into criticality. Emphasis was given to higher levels of comprehension on responses and interpretations, that the students experienced through the voices and perspectives of others. Hence, the response forms provided a means to nurture this process and to be both informative and transformative for their developing sense of "selves" as individuals and members of a learning community (Gee, 2002; Harre, 1987).

   Teaching by Modeling and Scaffolding. Stage Two, "Teaching by Modeling and Scaffolding," (Kong & Pearson, 2003) highlighted literacy activities through the implementation of fishbowl discussions. The main goal of this stage was to transition from teacher-led to student-led literature circle discussions. This structure further allowed the teacher-researcher to move from full participant to a participant observer role (Gold, 1958; Spradley, 1980) by gradually releasing responsibility to the high-ability readers (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Specifically, this stage initiated an increase in student-centered talk and provided the time, space, and opportunity for participants to observe, appropriate, practice, and develop the knowledge and skills they needed for participation in literature circle discourse while the teacher-researcher acted as a facilitator.

   The "Teaching by Modeling and Scaffolding" stage (Kong & Pearson, 2003) was further a time to show students commercially prepared videos (Allen & Bridges, 2008; Daniels, 2008) on literature circles. Through mini-lessons, the teacher-researcher participated in literature circle activity to model how to engage in higher levels of thinking and engage students in critical conversations about the text. It was also a time when the teacher-researcher conducted student conferences during independent reading time to share anecdotal records, focusing on students' personal and critical responses during reading response activities.

   Learning by Doing. Kong and Pearson (2003) offer that the third stage in literature circle development, "Learning by Doing," is an overt effort on the part of the teacher to move the students to a higher level of engagement with the texts. This third stage involved the bulk of the study, and during this period the students assumed full responsibility for literature circle study and the teacher-researcher assumed the role of observer (Gold, 1958; Spradley, 1980).

   Accordingly, "Learning by Doing" became a time during independent reading for student-teacher conferences, whereby groups, as well as individual group members met with the teacher-researcher to evaluate learning. Posing as observer participant (Gold, 1958; Spradley, 1980), the teacher-researcher revisited strategies for engaging in complex literature discussions, reviewed anecdotal records, and probed further with the participants to gain a greater understanding about the students' literacy experiences. This stage began during the final week of January of 2008 and continued through the month of May 2008.

Data Sources

In order to gather data, the teacher-researcher used a multiplicity of data sources that are best understood in terms of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consisted of original materials that were created by the teacher-researcher and participants at the time of each event or shortly thereafter. The primary sources included: (1) transcripts of audio-tapes and videotapes, (2) anecdotal records, (3) research log and field notes, (4) dialogue journal entries, (5) student and teacher conference transcripts, (6) student surveys and questionnaires, and (7) student-produced artifacts.

The secondary sources were used to evaluate the primary sources (Fetterman, 1989). These documents took the form of lesson plans, the language-arts' objectives for sixth-grade, and school district and state-related policy and curricula documents. Data from both primary and secondary sources enabled the data to be triangulated across the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

According to Spradley (1980), the goal of data analysis is to make sense out of data in order to discover similarities and differences, build typologies, or find patterns about the phenomena under study. For purposes of this research study, data were analyzed according to the prescribed coding methods that follow the typical protocol of a case study involving an ethnographic perspective (Gee & Green, 1998; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999; Spradley, 1980), which meant perusal of the data for emerging themes and categories, followed by revision of those themes and categories with every round of analysis. Specifically, data analysis involved an ethnographically grounded approach and focused on the context of literature circles as unique social spaces and the manner in which readers construct meaning.

Grounded theory is a common approach in teacher-researcher studies because it is a way to generate theory from data that are grounded in the lived experiences of participants in a study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Subsequently, teacher-researcher began the processing the data by coding pertinent words, phrases, and sentences using transcripts from audiotapes and videotapes, as well as recorded student and teacher conference transcripts, field notes, anecdotal records, and surveys. The inductive nature of grounded theory enabled the teacher-researcher to embrace an interpretive stance in which subtle degrees of contextual meaning were considered, rather than an objective stance. From this stance, the teacher-researcher began to construct categories (Leininger, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1997) that emerged from analysis of the literacy practices within response activities to identify how the participants engaged the texts and the types of practices demonstrated, thinking comparatively in terms of properties that would permit further analysis between the data. Specifically, the researcher categorized data, developed codes, and then refined and renamed the codes as new data was integrated, searching for possible relations among the categories across activities, the data sources, and the student participants. As patterns emerged during this phase, the teacher-researcher

scrutinized the data more closely to see what was happening and what was being produced in the context of literature circles to respond to the question: *How does the instructional environment of literature circles provide differentiated learning opportunities for gifted middle school (sixth-grade) students?*

Results

Zones of Opportunity

Pursuant to the research question: *How does the instructional environment of literature circles provide differentiated learning opportunities for gifted middle school (sixth-grade) students?;* the teacher-researcher found that the instructional environment of literature circles provided differentiated learning opportunities for gifted middle school (sixth-grade) students. In addition, literature circles provided *zones of opportunity* (Soares, 2009) where each reader became an active participant in the construction of meaning by drawing on both textual and contextual information as well as his or her own prior knowledge and experiences. The five *zones of opportunity are*: (1) zone of inquiry, critical thinking, and knowledge formation, (2) zone of affective development and self-awareness, (3) zone of cultural awareness and place in the world, (4) zone of criticality and social action, and (5) zone of critical conversations (see Appendix F).

Zone of Inquiry, Critical Thinking, and Knowledge Formation. The first *zone of opportunity* underscores the finding that literature circles initiate collective inquiry, collaboration, and communication from which the student participants were able to make purposeful, conscious choices when finding solutions to problems, answers to their questions, and decisions regarding their reading content as they worked to co-construct meaning. In other words, this study found that literature circles provided a zone for thinking, inquiry and knowledge formation. From analysis of the data, three domains were found to support this finding: (1) inferential modes of thinking, (2) reflective modes of thinking, and (3) creative modes of thinking.

Results consistently showed that literature circles supported inquiry and provided opportunities for the students to become thinking readers who looked beyond the printed word as they interacted and made meaning. Through interaction as a community of learners (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the students consistently applied reasoning to critical thinking in order to make thoughtful evaluations about textual themes and characters' behaviors. Further, the interactive social setting forced reflection of existing beliefs and values, raised questions, and initiated inquiry as members worked together to formulate meaning from the text. For example, while investigating the topics of prejudice and cultural privilege while reading and responding to *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996), the students' use of inferential thinking allowed the participants to arrive at inferences on the basis of a given body of information in the text. To do so, the students used textual information to draw inferences. For example, Tim commented, "Julian shouldn't

be treated that way just because he's different."

Holly added, "He's [Julian] being labeled in a harmful way just because he looks different and dresses different. The other classmates make fun of him just because he dresses like someone who goes to school in India."

These comments highlight how the students drew upon textual references to Julian's habit of toting a book satchel, his dress attire of shorts and knee socks, and his sharp British accent, to draw the conclusion that Julian was a victim of social and cultural prejudice. One student, Kimberly, made the claim that people are judged by appearance, whether it is the condition of their home, the color of their skin, or the types of clothes they wear, and that appearances are misleading. The students' comments in this brief excerpt illustrate how reasoning was applied to critical thinking in order for them to make the evaluation that Julian was bullied and labeled in a negative way. Specifically, the participants developed knowledge about the negative effects of stereotyping and believed that Julian was targeted because he did not "fit" the mainstream norm (Giroux, 1993).

Consistent patterns of data analysis further showed that collaborative literature discussions validated, broadened, and transformed individual interpretations and promoted greater understanding of texts. Using inferential, reflective, and creative modes of thinking, this study found that literature circles provided a zone for thinking on the one hand and inquiry and knowledge formation on the other.

Zone of Affective Development and Self-awareness. The second *zone of opportunity* highlights how the nature of literature circles provided the participatory structure for the students to internalize cognitive structures, such as power domination and silenced voices, as well as the feelings and identities that were relevant to the interaction (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). By reading multicultural literature that reflected a power differential between groups of people, the students were presented with diverse perspectives and engaged in socially mediated experiences that involved both cognitive and affective abilities. Bloom (1985) determined that the manner in which students deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, attitudes, and appreciations can be classified as examples of the affective domain and the associated behaviors are both indicative of and common to one's affective development.

The manner in which the participants dealt with things emotionally can be found while exploring the imbalance of power and the silenced voices in *Sounder* (Armstrong, 1969) where words such as discriminates, dominates, and unfair were used repeatedly while describing the main character's unfortunate circumstances in the novel. The story *Sounder* involves a sharecropper family trying to survive under Jim Crow Laws in the South.

For example, Jane commented, "You know, I'm worried about the Boy [main character]. It's Christmas and he's lost his dad and dog."

Jeremiah added, "Yeah, he's [Boy] lonely. He [Boy] thinks his dog is dead and

he [Boy] doesn't know where the sheriff has taken his father. All he wants to do is locate his father and give him a cake for Christmas."

Tomas assisted by pointing to the Boy's hardships when he said, "This is an example of the cruelty the Blacks experienced during this time in the South. I think the author [Armstrong] does this to show us the prejudice."

"Yeah, I agree. I know I feel sorry for him. The Boy didn't do anything but he's [main character] having to suffer," Zoe concluded.

This brief excerpt highlights the collaborative nature of literature circles as a useful technique in facilitating development of affective behaviors such that the feeling dimension of learning became evident. As the students perceived and inferred the emotional state of the Boy with their own, they in turn voiced their own conscious affective state through channels of communication.

Zone of Cultural Awareness and Place in the World. The third *zone of opportunity* highlights that literature circles created zones of cultural awareness and allowed the students to develop a sense of being in the world. As the students engaged in socially mediated experiences while responding to texts (Rosenblatt, 1978), they developed the skills to: (1) recognize that people are not the same, (2) recognize that similarities and differences are both important, and (3) celebrate diversity by looking beyond the differences by taking a closer look at the cultural connectedness among mankind. These findings are in keeping with Encisco (1994) who discovered that when students are engaged in the co-construction of meaning, they are confronted with the differences they see in others which in turn engages them in discussions about their own cultural and social identities.

Zone of Criticality and Social Action. According to Greene (1995), readers should look to literature for the missing voices in their community and to disrupt the boundaries of prejudice and social injustice. This study consistently found that literature circles became sites for the participants to become critically literate persons who reflected on what was wrong in their world and use the enabling power of language to change that world. Specifically, literature circles provided a fourth *zone of opportunity* from which to demonstrate reading from a critical stance and to take social action. Because critical literacy is about interrogating textual practices, reading for the students became an understanding of the real world and comprehending involved constructing and reconstructing that world (Freire, 1970).

Further, this study found that as the students became producers and consumers of critical literacy through increasing cultural awareness, consistent patterns emerged that showed they engaged in four important activities involving discussion from a critical literacy stance. Students: (1) questioned the author's view of the world, (2) filled in the gaps and silences that frequently occur in texts, (3) identified how characters are represented and positioned, and (4) developed agency by acting on injustices by composing alternative viewpoints and constructing new texts. Through discussions that reflected a power differential between groups of people, the students consciously gave thought about whom was missing in the world of texts, concur-

rently broadened their conception of self (Harre, 1987) in their world, and voiced the actions they would take to enact social change in the world at-large.

The findings are consistent with researchers who found that when students focus on controversial issues (Cervetti, Pardeles & Damico, 2001) such as race, gender, and class, literacy is then viewed as a social issue and students learn to negotiate real-world experiences through response, inquiry, and social action (Ciardiello, 2004). In other words, literacy is more than just reading and writing, it is a political and social practice as well.

Zone of Critical Conversations. From data analysis, this study found: (1) that student-led discussions, (2) dialogue journaling, and (3) third spaces provided the opportunity structures for students to engage in critical conversations, a fifth *zone of opportunity*. Additionally, the study found that discussion that centered on multicultural issues offered a powerful vehicle for incorporating critical literacy practices. As the students engaged in texts, heavily-laden with issues of democracy, freedom, equity, and social justice, critical conversations about silenced voices and marginalized groups grew into sharper focus. Analysis of the transcripts consistently found that the seemingly tangential talk that led to these critical conversations was crucial to aiding students to use their texts as mediational tools between them and the world around them (Wertsch, 1991). From this perspective, both the texts and the social contexts were found to be cultural tools for establishing critical conversations. In conjunction, analysis of the data found that dialogue journaling was a continuum of the type of talk that emerged from literature circle interactions and paralleled the developing critical literacy stance over the course of the study that permitted the students to engage in complex discussions about issues of social justice.

Conclusion

In this investigation, the connection between critical pedagogy and collaborative reading of sociocultural issues for gifted students was highlighted to examine how participation in literature circles provided differentiated learning opportunities for gifted sixth-grade readers. Literature circles are a widely accepted approach to reading instruction and can permit teachers to play multiple roles with their students, moving from teacher-centered discussions, to shared stances, to more student-centered stances. Insights gained from this teacher-researcher study can inform future and current classroom educators who hope to improve learning opportunities for gifted readers.

Literacy for high-ability learners involve the opportunity to question and search as they strive to understand who they are and how they fit in their world. As a result, students' voices are central to social learning interaction and students' voices build dialogue. Teachers need to understand that gifted learners need a forum to express their thoughts and their diverse opinions as good classroom discussions lay the groundwork for democratic participation throughout life by giving students a sense

of power within their learning community and the community at-large. In addition, this study suggests that the linkage between higher-order conceptual development, reading comprehension, and culturally diverse connections is of considerable importance for gifted readers. When teachers create culturally responsive classrooms, students understand and negotiate differences across cultures and students learn to be pluralistic in their thought, behavior, and affect (Ladson-Billings, 1990; Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 1997).

A further implication from this study suggests that when teachers adopt a sociocultural perspective of reading, they know that the focus is on mutual understanding, replacing the focus on individualistic learning; therefore, the learner is a member of a learning community. Closely associated with this premise is the power of critical literacy that helps gifted readers comprehend at levels that require them to think beyond the information on the printed page and critically analyze the author's message. Teachers should know that critical literacy invites gifted readers to question, examine, or dispute the power relations that exist between readers and authors and promotes reflection, transformation, and action (Freire, 1970). Subsequently, teachers need to know that critical literacy provides opportunities for gifted students to engage in differentiated literacy experiences, including the making of meaning and voicing of reflections while reading culturally and diverse literature.

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Appendix A
Character Investigator

Name _____Book _____

In this role, you will consider the characters and their attributes that the author leads you to value (or like) and reject (or dislike). You will select **one character** that seems to hold the most authority or power. Evaluate their physical, intellectual, cultural, political, and emotional attributes that tend to support their positions in the text. Write down the textual clues that give you this impression. You are also responsible for identifying the character's point-of-view and invite your group members to debate if you have the "voice" right. You will repeat this process for **one character** who is not as powerful or who is not as favorably exposed by the author. Investigate the character who claims little space in the text and propose to your group your thoughts on why the author has limited the character's speech, thoughts, and participation. Describe an aspect from the story from that character's point-of-view and invite your group members to determine if this "voice" is right. In both character investigations, justify your conclusions and provide the textual evidence. Then use the following questions for discussion with your group:

Questions for Discussion

- What is meant by role?   What is position?
- What is the role of the character?   What position does a character hold?
- What role has the power?   How are other characters positioned?
- How does the role affect others?   What are their views?
- Are the roles the same/different?   What influences the roles?
- How does the role influence others?   Explain your reasons.
- Who is missing from the text?   Who is allowed to speak?
- Whose views are excluded or privileged?   Who is quoted?

Appendix B
Character Investigator
"Valued Character"

Name	Physical/Intellectual	Cultural Identity	Socioeconomic	Role	Position

Write down the textual clues that give you this impression. Write the page numbers and paragraph numbers. Begin your identification with a few words from the text in a quote. As a character investigator, you are also responsible for identifying the character's point-of-view and invite your group members to debate if you have the "voice" right.

Appendix C
Character Investigator
"Rejected Character"

Name	Physical/Intellectual	Cultural Identity	Socioeconomic	Role	Position

Write down the textual clues that give you this impression. As a character investigator, you are also responsible for identifying the character's point-of-view and invite your group members to debate if you have the "voice" right. Write the page numbers and paragraph numbers. Begin your identification with a few words from the text in a quote.

Appendix D
Critical Profiler

Name _____Book _____

Your job is to evaluate the text and challenge the author's stance, examine the sociocultural influences in the text, and provide alternative texts. To do this, you will first interrogate the text and question the author's motives for writing and then consider how the text would be different if told from another point-of-view or in another time and place. The most significant aspect of this job is to examine the power relationships between the characters and then relate the cultural and power differentials to the real world and your world.

Questions for Your Group:
- How are teenagers, young adults, or children constructed in this text?
- Which positions, voices, and interests are at play in the text?
- How does the text construct a version of reality? Whose reality?
- What view of the world is the text presenting?
- Can you identify any stereotypes in this text? What do the stereotypes represent?
- How is power used in the text? What effect does power have on others?
- What do the characters do about the balance of power in this text?
- What have you learned about the aspects of culture in this text?
- What are the values held in this text?
- What values do the characters have or show in the text?
- Do the values held have an influence on the outcomes, events, or situations?
- How else could the text have been written?

Appendix E
Interrogate—Connect—Take Action (ICTA)
(Adapted from Richards, 2006)

Name _____ Book_____ Date _____

The purpose of this strategy is to critically engage with text by evaluating the problems of characters who are confronted with political, racial, religious, cultural, and gender-biased issues. This strategy requires you to interrogate the human indecencies presented in the text, to connect to the events described in the text with your own life, and then to consider how you will work to act on the unfair injustices that you read and are current in your world today.

Interrogate	Connect	Take Action

Appendix F
Five Zones of Opportunity and How They Were Formed

Zones	Reader Response Experiences
Zone of inquiry, critical thinking, and knowledge formation	Comprehension
	Student discussion
	Personal responses
	Connections
	Reflections
	Inferences
	Dialogue writing
	Critical thinking
Zone of affective development and self-awareness	Listening and responding
	Sharing opinions
	Making connections
	Dialogue writing
	Organizing values
	Internalizing values

Zone of cultural awareness and place in the world	Reading diverse texts
	Understanding differences
	Student discussion
	Making connections
	Appreciating diversity
	Dialogue writing
Zone of criticality and social action	Student discussion
	Reading diverse texts
	Dialogue writing
	Criticizing the author
	Identifying injustices
	Seeing multiple views
	Reshaping social world
Zone of critical discussions	Student discussion
	Comprehension
	Using critical literacy
	Dialogue writing
	Third spaces
	Connections
	Reflections
	Re-symbolizing

Note. The five *zones of opportunity* emerged from the active participation of the gifted sixth-grade readers in this study, reflecting that interaction between the learners, the use of multicultural texts, and the literacy context were critical factors when considering differentiated learning opportunities for the high-end sixth-grade participants.

Reading Demands: A Comparison of Narrative, Expository, and Popular Press Texts

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Abstract

In this study, document analysis was used to compare the comprehension demands of narrative, expository, and popular text selections. The text selections were compared using the following dimensions: (1) vocabulary, exploring an array of features of the words used in each text sample; (2) the availability of illustrations, classifying their type and whether they were central or peripheral to understanding the text; (3) the role of general and culture specific prior knowledge; and (4) the text's inferential load, noting the number of inferences and the classification of them as basic, advanced, or multifaceted. Overall, the analysis revealed that all three-text selections were similar in all dimensions, which supports the idea that teachers can use varied texts in their classrooms to support reading achievement and build reading strategies.

As indicated by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2007) report, concerns exist about the reading attainments of our nation's youth. As our nation's attention has focused on early readers, as indicated by Reading First and Early Reading First initiatives, the plight of the adolescent readers, and especially middle school students, have received little attention from the educational community. This idea is reinforced when one looks at the Department of Education's website where only one article of the 25 posted explicitly targets adolescents.

This study focused on adolescents and the complex arena of their reading achievement. With the increase in required curriculum, the amount of reading that students do in school is lessened (Popham, 2009) and the competition between

reading and students' many and varied interests has reduced their out-of-school reading (Bettis & Roe, 2008). In addition, the in- and out-of-school texts that are read by adolescents are very different. Traditionally, school sanctioned reading has included narrative selections in language arts classrooms, either from tradebooks or anthologies and when students proceed to their disciplinary classes, they primarily read the content textbook. However, in their out-of-school reading, students tend to read popular press selections such as magazines, video game directions, and text messages.

Regardless of the text type, reading involves interactions between the reader, the text, and the context. Cartwright (2008) characterizes these many interactions as a "complex cognitive juggling act" (p. 3). Since texts, in part, determine the nature of a reader's cognitive tasks, understanding the basic possibilities that various texts afford, assumes importance.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories posit this project. First, this study supports the idea of broadening the concept of reading to include the many types of literacies that define today's world. This goes beyond school literacy to include all kinds of print (including popular media) as well as technological literacy in its many forms (Hoffman & Goodman, 2009). This stance also embraces the notion that literacy is socially situated (e.g., Gee, 1996; Street, 1995) and acknowledges the range of literacy practices that entice adolescent readers and writers from gaming (Selfe & Hawisher, 2007), to magazines, to trade books (e.g., Moje, 2000).

Second, the willingness to engage in reading matters. As Stanovich (1986) explained more than two decades ago, when he invoked the concept of the Matthew effect, reading begets reading. However, schools do not always promote students' interest in this important activity. To capture this problem, Gallagher (2009) coins the term 'readicide' which she defines as "the systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in schools" (p.2). To counteract this, Booth (2006) proposed including an array of reading materials such as magazines, songs, and comics. This array provides a balance in the types of reading that Gallagher (2009) promotes for students' reading materials and renews a commitment to reading for pure fun by following students' out-of-school choices. Overall, it brings attention to what Tatum (2008) calls the "text neglect" (p. 43) and its role in the reading lives of adolescents.

Purpose of Study

Even though adolescents read popular text out-of-school, it remains underused in middle level students' classrooms (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). As popular texts are more widely read out-of-school by adolescent readers, it maybe practicable to lessen the boundaries between in- and out-of-school readings by recognizing the potential

of using popular press in the classroom. The hope would be to influence the amount of reading done by students and, in turn, their reading achievement. However, one wonders if students are allowed to read beyond the traditional curriculum, do these less privileged texts afford a comparable reading experience?

This research initiates a discussion on this basic question by directly comparing the comprehension demands of sample texts from the narrative, exposition, and popular press categories. It led to the following research question: How do the reading demands of narrative, expository and popular press texts compare? Previous research has made certain comparisons about texts. For example, Spadorcia (2005) compared high-interest and low-level books and McCrudden, Schraw, and Hartley's (2004) considered specific features. However, none of these studies directly compared text types. Following this line of inquiry coincides with Moje's (2008) call to "analyze the nature of texts youths read both in and out of school and document the demands of those texts" (p. 78).

Following Moje's (2008) recommendations, this study examined the reading demands of the three different text types by analyzing four dimensions to see if they required the same amount of reading skills to gain understanding of the text. The first dimension was vocabulary words and the different features of the words. These features included: synonym (S), antonym (A), grouping (G), summary (SU), simile (SI), definition (D), and/or appositive (A). The second dimension was the availability of illustrations. The illustrations can either play a central or a peripheral role in understanding the text. The third dimension was prior knowledge. Here the word meanings can be determined through one's general understanding or one's cultural understanding. Finally, the fourth dimension is the inferential load of the text: basic, advanced or multifaceted. Basic inferencing is the easiest, as it typically occurs within a single sentence and always leads the reader to make one decision. Advanced inferencing typically requires the reader to join information across sentence boundaries but the inferences always follows the reader to understand the author's meaning.

Methods

Text Selection

For this collaborative project, researchers worked in pairs to select two sample texts from narration, exposition, and popular texts. These selected texts needed to typify something that a seventh-grade student might read. The expository selections came from textbooks used in seventh-grade classrooms. The narrative texts needed to be trade books selected for an award such as the Newberry or written by a well-known author and typically selected by teachers for classroom libraries or assigned texts. The popular press selections needed to have a reputation as being familiar to and read by seventh grade students.

From the three selected texts, six excerpts, two from each text type, were selected. It was determined by the researchers to examine passages that contained 200 words and was a freestanding excerpt. This way, the excerpts were comparable.

The narrative selections (called NT1 and NT2) came from *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) (NT1) and *Morning Girl* (Dorris, 1999) (NT2). The expository selections came from *A History of US: The First Americans* (Hakim, 1999), a seventh grade social studies textbook. The first excerpt (ET1) came from Hakim's (1999) work, an article titled *Mound for Mound, Those Are Heavy Hills*, and the second passage (ET2) from *MLKs, Senior and Junior*. While popular press items may include magazines, manuals, internet sites and the like, the two popular press pieces analyzed for this project were magazine articles that have a target audience of preteen and teen-aged girls. The first sample (PP1), *Stop the Skank Talk* (Redd, 2008), was from the October issue of *Cosmogirl*. The second sample two (PP2), *From Russia with Love* (McGrath, 2008), was from the October online issue of *Teen Vogue*. These samples used an expository text structure.

Data Collection and Analysis

To compare the texts, an analysis of the written text was done (Goldman & Wiley, 2004). As Goldman and Wiley explain, "discourse analysis provides a means to more systematically engage in the descriptive analysis and comparison of written texts" (p. 64). In making the many judgments that this analysis involved, the researchers worked collaboratively to determine decision points, develop tables for reporting, and guarantee comparable decisions across teams.

Vocabulary. The work of several vocabulary scholars guided a format for considering the words used in each text selection (e.g., Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Scott & Nagy, 2004). First, the words in each text selection were examined for their frequency of use and whether they were discipline specific. Beck and her colleagues labeled these low-frequency discipline specific words as Tier 3 words. In addition, it was noted whether a word had multiple meanings. Then, since some readers encounter words that they cannot pronounce, it was noted whether the use of phonics or context clues could provide assistance. Next, since other readers often fail to understand the meaning of a word, it was determined whether the context offered support for inferring it. This is important as the availability of assistance while reading becomes especially important for words that readers seldom encounter in print such as those that are unique to a specific text or domain of knowledge. (See Table 1 for the chart that guided the reporting of these qualitative judgments.)

Table 1: Vocabulary Decisions Made for Each Text Excerpt

Word (all words read) (Do not count numbers, e.g., 50, 2; exclude proper nouns, e.g., Luther; count abbreviations such as p.m.) Place an * next to a Tier 3 word – one that is low frequency, often limited to a specific content area, and best learned when a need arises.)	Repeated Words (tally)	Multiple Meaning (Y/N)	Word analysis (pronunciation) For all words, indicate whether amenable to strategy use for pronunciation (Y/N). If Y, indicate whether phonics (P) or context © applies.	Word analysis (meaning) For all words, indicate whether amenable to strategy use for meaning (Y/N). If Y, then indicate the type of assistance available: synonym (S), antonym (A), grouping (G), summary (SU), simile (SI), definition (D), or appositive (A).

In addition, each word was analyzed using the MRC Psycholinguistic Data Base (Wilson, 1988), an on-line dictionary that allows an examination of words around 26 linguistic and psycholinguistic attributes. Six categories were selected: (1) written frequency which examines the number of times that a word appears in print, (2) familiarity rating, or the possibility that a reader would have previously encountered the word, (3) meaningfulness, which considers the links between a word and other words, (4) age of acquisition, the time when a reader might understand it, (5) pronunciation variation, noting whether a word has one or more options for saying it, and (6) morphemic status, a consideration of affixes and roots.

Each pair of researchers worked together to classify and tally the words used in each text selection. The two groups of researchers then worked together to compare the results. Comparing and contrasting the tallied results continued until both groups agreed on the tally data. (See Table 2 for the chart used by each team to track these features).

Table 2: MRC Psycholinguistic Ratings

Word	Written Frequency	Familiarity rating	Meaning-fulness	Age of acquisition	Pronunciation Variation	Morphemic status

Illustration Support. The use of graphs, charts, tables, pictures, and other visual features can influence the comprehension of text (e.g., Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003). These different features were all classified as illustrations. Next, the text selections were examined to determine if illustrations were used, and if so, did they have a central or peripheral role in helping the students understand the text.

Each pair of researchers worked together to classify and tally the illustrations in the text selection. The two groups of researchers then worked together to compare

the results. Comparing and contrasting the tallied results continued until both groups agreed on the tally data.

  General and Culturally-specific Prior Knowledge. Prior knowledge of the topic being studied has been shown to contribute positively to one's comprehension of the topic (Fisher, Frey & Ross, 2009). Thus, while analyzing these texts, prior knowledge was classified as either general (necessary information to understand the topic) or specific (information that holds roots in an identified culture).

  Each pair of researchers worked together to classify and tally the prior knowledge need to understand the selection. The two groups of researchers then worked together to compare the results. Comparing and contrasting the tallied results continued until both groups agreed on the tally data.

  Comprehension: Inferential Load. Comprehension involves an ability to make inferences (e.g., Fisher, Frey, & Ross, 2009). For this analysis, each selection was tallied into three inferential categories. The first category was a basic inference. Typically, this type of inference occurs within a single sentence, but always leads to one decision. Correctly identifying the referent for pronouns and adverbs provides an example of a basic inference. The second category, an advanced inference, requires a reader to cross sentence boundaries to grasp an author's meaning and generally leads to one decision. Using clues to infer the setting of a text represents this type of inference. The third category was labeled as multifaceted. For multifaceted inferences, readers might make various interpretations and remain in keeping with the author's central meaning.

  Each pair of researchers worked together to classify and tally the types of inferences used to aid comprehension. The two groups of researchers then worked together to compare the results. Comparing and contrasting the tallied results continued until both groups agreed on the tally data. (Refer to Table 3 for the chart used to track inferences.)

Table 3: Tallying Inferences

Inference # Use ( ) to indicate the place in the text where the inference occurred and its number.	Basic inference Typically occurs within a single sentence, but always leads to one decision.	Advanced inference Typically joins information across sentence boundaries, but following the author's meaning does not allow divergence.	Multifaceted inference The content allows for multiple decisions that do not lead a reader to misinterpret the author's central meaning.
1			
2			

Findings

  In reporting the findings, the data is presented across each of the comprehension components examined. This made the comparison across all three texts easier and helped to answer the research question: How do the comprehension demands of narrative, expository, and popular press texts compare?

Vocabulary

Frequency and Discipline Specific Words. Of the 200 words contained in the narrative excerpt, NT1 had 112 (56%) words that appeared only once. The selected excerpt contained no Tier 3 words. In the NT2 excerpt, 127 (64%) words occurred once and contained no Tier 3 words.

Of the 200 words found in the expository text excerpt, ET1 had 114 (57%) words that appeared only once. In addition, three words in the ET1 excerpt (archaeology, mica, obsidian) represented Tier 3 words. In the ET2 excerpt, 109 (55%) words occurred once. No Tier 3 words appeared in ET2. The total percentage of the occurrence of Tier 3 words was low (1.3%).

Among the 200 words in the popular press excerpts, PP1 contained 120 unique words with 40% of the words being repeated at least one time while the PP2 excerpt contained 155 unique words, with 43% of the words being repeated at least once. These PP selections contained no Tier 3 level words. However, the popular text contained slang words such as funky, flirt, skank, and sluts.

Multiple-meaning Words. In the NT1 excerpt, 84% of the words had multiple meanings while 89% of the words in the NT2 excerpt had multiple meanings. In the ET1 excerpt, 85% of the words had multiple meanings while 95% of the words in ET2 had multiple meanings. In the PP1 except, 93% of the words and 99% of the words in PP2 had multiple meanings.

Word Analysis: Pronunciation. In NT1, 68.8% of the individually occurring words could be pronounced using phonics. Less than 1% of the pronunciation of these words could be obtained using context alone. In NT2, phonics enabled the pronunciation of 70.9% of the words, while readers could rely on context alone to pronounce less than 1% of the words. Thus, the combined 69.9% of the pronunciation of words in both narrative texts decodable through phonics far exceeds the combined 0.8% of the pronunciation of words through context.

In looking at the ET selections, ET1 contained 90 words (78.9%) that were amenable to phonics. This number increased to 88.1% for ET2. Like the narrative selections, these numbers dropped for using context, 3.5% for ET1 and 0% for ET2.

The majority of the words in the PP passages were decodable using phonics (60% of the unique words in PP1 and 83.2 % unique words in PP2). No words in either PP passage were amenable to context as a strategy for pronunciation. Collectively, these numbers indicate that phonics as a decoding strategy plays a crucial role in the pronunciation of vocabulary across these selections while the use of context holds a slight chance for success.

Word Analysis: Meaningfulness (Context Clues). The use of context clues affords one way for students to infer the meaning of an unknown word. Authors often make use of the following options: (1) synonyms, (2) antonyms, (3) groupings, (4) descriptions and examples, (5) summaries, (6) appositives, (7) definitions, and similes. However, the findings of this study indicated that few of the word meanings were amenable using a contextual strategy.

In the narrative excerpt, 3.6% of the word meanings could be determined using contextual strategies in NT1 while 1.6% of the word meanings were amenable using contextual strategies in NT2. Combined, only 2.5% of the words in NT1 and NT2 allowed readers to determine the meaning of the words using contextual strategies alone.

The analysis of the expository excerpt showed that 13.2% of the words could be determined using a contextual strategy in ET1 while 17.4% of the words in ET2. Combined, 30.6% of words in ET1and ET2 allowed readers to determine the meaning of words using contextual strategies.

In the PP selections, only one word from each passage had a simile or an appositive available as a strategy for meaning. No other types of assistance, such as synonyms, antonyms, grouping, summary, simile, or definition, were found. Overall, context plays a relatively minor role to assist in the comprehension of the vocabulary words in these texts. (See Table 4 for a comparison of these vocabulary features across text types.)

Table 4: A Comparison of Vocabulary Attributes for Each Text Type

Text Type	# single occurrence words	Discipline Specific Words (Tier 3)	Multiple Meaning words	Words w/ pronunciation amenable through phonics	Words w/ pronunciation amenable through context
Narrative	239	0	207	167	2
Expository	223	3	188	186	4
Popular press	275	0	236	176	0

MRC Psycholinguistic Ratings - Written Frequency: The possible scores range from zero to 69,971 with higher numbers indicating higher frequencies of words used in written texts. , The high frequency of words use helps to build comprehension, as the more it is used the more it will give the reader the ability to recognize the word and have fluency while reading. Applying this tool to the NT texts revealed an average rating of approximately 3,067. The two ET texts had an average frequency of 3,245 while the two PP texts had an average of 3,015. On average, these text excerpts fell within a comparable range for frequency (see Table 5).

MRC Psycholinguistic Rating - Familiarity Rating: The possible scores range from 100 to 700 to compare words with those that a typical English language speaker would know. Again, a higher score indicates higher familiarity with the word, which in turn aided fluency and led the reader to better comprehension. However, it must be noted that not all of the texts' words keyed into the MRC database. Therefore, the findings represent a subset of words rather than their entirety (See Table 5).

Words in both NT readings had an average familiarity rating of 586. Words in the ET readings had an average familiarity rating of 575. The average rating of both PP readings was 571. While these ratings favor the narrative texts as having the most familiar words, there is not a big gap between the expository and popular press readings. This indicates a comparable possibility for a reader to encounter these words in other texts and increases the possibility for a reader to know them.

MRC Psycholinguistic Ratings: Meaningfulness: This refers to an association with other words. Again, higher scores (within a range of 100 to 700) indicate more associations, which add to better comprehension. NT texts rated an average of 644, ET text averaged 647, while PP text averaged 599. This shows that the PP text has fewer word associations and thus may be harder to comprehend (See Table 5).

MRC Psycholinguistic Ratings: Age of Acquisition: This score makes a judgment about the relative learning of a word. A score of 700 indicates that a word would typically be learned by the age of 13 or beyond while a score of 100 indicates that a word would be learned between the age of one and two. Like the ratings for meaningfulness, not all of the words in these texts were calculated in the database (See Table 5).

NT results indicated that the 17 words rated in NT1 resulted in an average rating of 334.9, with a range from 144 to 500. The 18 words in NT2 had an average rating of 280.6, with a range from 217 to 411. Combined, words in the two narrative excerpts have an average rating of 307, ranging from 144 to 500 for the Age of Acquisition. For the two NT readings, the average rating was 307, with a range from 144 to 500. For the two ET readings, the average rating was 329 with a range from 166-626. NT2 had an average rating of 280.6, with a range from 217 to 411. Combined, words in NT1 and NT2 averaged 307. Thus these words were learned by the age of 4. ET calculations stemmed from an analysis of 35 words. For ET1, the average of acquisition was 359. ET2 had an average of 307. These numbers coincide with ages five and six, meaning that, on average, the expository texts should be understandable by a six-year-old. The lowest rating determined was 166 (ages zero to two), for the word *face*, found in ET2, and the highest rating was 626 (ages 11 to 12), for the word *mica* from ET1.

For PP, the eleven words analyzed from PP1 and the 27 words from PP2 received a combined average of 340. Similar to the other two text types, this average score puts the age of acquisition average in the five- to six- year-old range. To reiterate, the information garnered regarding age of acquisition is not completely representative of the texts as a whole. However, based on the words analyzed, the three texts' averages were comparable.

MRC Psycholinguistic Ratings: Pronunciation Variation. The text words were examined and rated for their pronunciation variation. They could receive a rating of A or B. When a word received an A rating, it means that a word only varies by the location of stress as in the word object. When a word received a B rating, it means that the word has potential to differ phonetically, as in the

word moderate. This determines whether a word has more than one way to say it. In NT, six words in each text (a total of 12) rated B, which indicates the potential for a word to differ phonetically. In the ET samples, 17 words received a B rating. Nine words in PP1 and six words in PP2 resulted in a B rating.

MRC Psycholinguistic Ratings: Morphemic Status. This rating determines whether the potential exists for a word to exist as an affix, such as able. This distinction can affect a reader's pronunciation and understanding of this letter strong. One word in ET2 and one in NT1 received a rating of P, indicating the potential for a word to exist as a prefix (See Table 5).

Table 5: A Comparison of MRC Psycholinguistic Data for Narrative Text

Text Type	written frequency rating	Familiarity rating	Meaningful-ness rating:	Age of acquisition rating	Pronunciation variation rating	Morphemic status rating
Narrative average	3,067	586	644	307	----------------	--------------
Narrative range	1-69,971	450-689	480-784	144-500	----------------	--------------
Expository average	3,245	575	647	329	----------------	1
Expository range	1-69,971	253-633	484-922	166-626	----------------	0-1
Popular press average	3015	571	599	331	B:14 O:1	--------------
Popular press range	1-69,971	377-632	420-760	181-544	B or O	--------------

Illustration Support

In the narrative excerpts, no illustrations appeared. For comprehension of these excerpts, students needed to rely solely on the text features in conjunction with their prior knowledge.

Both ET1 and ET2 excerpts included a black-and-white picture. In ET1, this illustration was a complete view of the 1,300-foot-long Serpent Mound. This picture served a central purpose in assisting comprehension as the text in ET1 introduces findings of the 30 mounds in Ohio. Similarly, the illustration accompanying ET2 was central to comprehension. The picture, a photo of Martin Luther King Junior delivering a sermon at a church, supported the controlling idea of the text—Martin Luther King Junior's nonviolent approach to racial equality for African Americans.

PP1 contained a picture of candy hearts that had words written on them that were examples of the "skank talk" the article described. This illustration was not central in understanding or advancing the text, but it did relate to the content. PP2 had an illustration in the form of a photograph. The photograph was of the super model that was being described in the article. This illustration was also peripheral

rather than essential for comprehension.

General and Culture Specific Prior Knowledge

Neither narrative text excerpt had references that required specific cultural understanding for comprehension. NT1 had three incidents of general prior knowledge dependence and NT2 had four incidents.

ET1 and ET2 had three incidents in which comprehension was dependent upon general prior knowledge. One incident occurred in ET1. The passage stated, "…*at the time when Christ lived.*" In this instance, readers need to know about the period when Christ lived in order to know the time when those mound builders' culture developed. The other two incidents occurred in ET2. One required knowing about Thoreau and Gandhi. The second required readers to know the relation of Christian ideas to Martin Luther King's belief in a nonviolent movement in order to comprehend the meaning of the passage.

A total of five cultural references was included in the PP passages, two in PP1 (i.e., *Lewisville*, and *North Carolina)* and three in PP2 (i.e., Anglo, Russia, and Moscow). Additionally, on two occasions in PP1 the reader must rely on a specific type of general knowledge (slang and idioms) in order to make sense of the concepts and ideas in the article (i.e., *skank* and *"put us down"*). (See Table 6 for a direct comparison of general and culture specific prior knowledge.)

Table 6: A Comparison of Prior Knowledge Dependence and Illustration Support for

Text type	Culture specific Knowledge	General Knowledge	Incidents of Illustration support
Narrative	0	7	0
Expository	0	3	2
Popular press	5	2	2

Comprehension: Inferential Load

NT1 required that readers make 38 basic inferences, those that lead to a single decision, eight advanced inferences, in which information may cross sentence boundaries but should lead to a single understanding, and four multifaceted inferences, in which content may allow for multiple decisions. NT2 requires 22 basic inferences, 20 advanced inferences, and 11 multifaceted inferences. Across these two texts, students were required to make 60 basic inferences, 28 advanced inferences, and 15 multifaceted inferences to understand these text excerpts. Most of the inferential load led readers to a single conclusion maintained within sentence boundaries.

In the ET excerpts, basic inferences regarding pronouns were the most common. For example, *they* appeared four times in ET1 and once in ET2, and *he* appeared twice in ET1 and seven times in ET2. Combined, these excerpts included

20 examples of basic inferences. With regards to advanced inferences, six appeared in ET2 and four in ET1. ET1 contained three multifaceted inferences.

PP1 and PP2 had 60 examples of basic inferences. The 37 basic inferences in PP1 accounted for 68% of the total excerpt inferences. PP2 contained 23 basic inferences that accounted for 62% of the total. In combination, 65% of the inferences made for both texts are basic. PP1 had 15 instances (28%) of advanced inferences. For PP2, 11 advanced inferences (30%) existed. Finally, PP1 required two multi-faceted inferences (4%). In PP2, three multi-faceted inferences (8%) must be made. (See Table 7 for a direct comparison of types of inferences and these text excerpts.)

Table 7: A Comparison of the Inferential Load for Each Text Type

	Basic inferences	Advanced inferences	Multi-faceted inferences
Narrative	60	28	15
Expository	20	10	2
Popular Press	60	26	5

Limitations

Several limitations of these findings exist. First, they are limited to six text excerpts. Changing the texts and the excerpts from them would assuredly impact the specific data that we collected and analyzed. Second, and as previously acknowledged, the use of popular press items that focuses on a female audience also inserts a limitation since many other options exist (e.g., magazines that target male audiences). However, confidence remains that much can be learned from the patterns that the selected excerpts unveiled. This intentional focus to look at magazines read only by girls introduced an additional limitation into this work. Another limitation is that fact that not all texts were keyed in, as talked about earlier.

Discussion and Implications

As attempts to understand and acknowledge the range of materials that students read continue, these data further support the findings of other researchers who call for the infusion of text variety into middle level students' classrooms—especially those texts stemming from popular culture (e.g., Heron-Hruby & Alvermann, 2009). This direct comparison, however, adds to the suggestions for improving overall litracy practices for middle school students (e.g., NCEE, 2008). These findings offer new assurances that teachers can address areas of importance while allowing students to read their outside reading choices into the classroom.

Conducting an examination of these six excerpts from narrative, expository, and popular texts allowed for a comparison of text demands that are required by the reader in order for comprehension to occur. This, then, permitted insights

regarding the appropriateness of these various texts for use in middle level reading instruction. Looking across these samples, there are both similarities and differences in the excerpts.

First, the lack of illustrations that appeared in these texts was surprising. This makes the text unnecessarily harder for those students who are visual learners. Thus, it is believed that more attention and time should be spent on putting appropriate pictures into texts that relate and are linked to the central message of the text.

Second, while looking at the findings on illustrations, it would appear that the popular press excerpt would be the hardest to read, as it is the only excerpt that did not relate to the central message of the text. Thus, if one thinks reading popular text is easy, this supports that notion that it may not be as easy as one expects. In addition, it requires students to use more inferencing, as the picture is not related.

Third, in considering the various components of vocabulary, this study showed that only two of the measures were different, as these three text types place comparable vocabulary demands on the reader. The first difference was that only the expository selections had Tier 3 words. Combined with the scant availability of context for any of these text excerpts to infer a word's definition, this strengthens a need to give prior attention to these unique words when they appear. In addition, readers are hampered if they do not have an ability to quickly determine a word's specific meaning for the context where it appears. Simply stated, polysemous words, words with more than one meaning, are ubiquitous and thus need to be talked about before reading begins. The second difference was in the word's pronunciation and it appears that a strong understanding of phonics is helpful to the reader in determining unknown words. Thus, teachers need to talk the time to talk about the various multisyllabic words and how they can be broken into syllables for word analysis.

Finally, an ability to make a variety of inferences assumes importance across these text excerpts. While multifaceted inferences appear in more frequency in the narrative excerpts and the least in the expository pieces, this can perhaps be explained by the nature of the genre. Fiction invites personalized understandings. Nonfiction holds facts. Of importance here, popular press excerpts favorably compare with the inferential demands of narrative and exceed the amount noted for exposition text, thus teachers should not be afraid to use popular text when helping his/her students learn to read.

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Teaching Questioning with Media Texts in Middle School Language Arts

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Abstract

This article describes a collaborative action research (CAR) study that involved comprehension strategy instruction with sixth grade students who utilized various media texts (i.e., newspaper, magazine, and online articles; magazine advertisements; magazine websites; television commercials). A university-based researcher collaborated with a middle school language arts teacher to determine the impact of the instruction on students' ability to generate questions. Results indicated that the students wrote fewer irrelevant and incorrect questions following intervention instruction. In addition, the students generated more questions that asked for clarification of vocabulary and were related to social issues showing more awareness of issues related to gender, race, and economic messages.

This study was the result of the collaborative efforts of a university-based researcher and a middle school language arts teacher. The classroom teacher wanted to increase her knowledge about integrating different types of texts into her language arts curriculum and enhancing her current comprehension strategy instruction. She expressed an interest in questioning because her sixth grade students had indicated that they wanted to learn more about using that strategy. In addition, the teacher wanted her students to learn to question the implicit and explicit messages in media. The researcher wanted to extend her investigations involving media literacy instruction with adolescents (Linder, 2008, 2009), and she wanted to focus on questioning because of its multiple applications with print texts, media texts, and electronic texts. Because media texts appeal to young adolescents, the researcher wanted to utilize them for the strategy instruction, but she also wanted to determine whether students would generalize their use of questioning learned with the media texts to their reading of more traditional school-sanctioned texts.

Conceptual Frameworks

This study investigated reading strategy instruction designed to develop the questioning skills of sixth grade students as they read various media texts. Research and literature related to effective literacy instruction for adolescents and comprehension instruction informed this investigation.

Literacy Instruction for Adolescents

Often middle school teachers simply assume that their students have already acquired all the skills necessary for decoding words and comprehending text. However, explicit reading instruction should extend beyond the elementary grades, as students continue to encounter more complex text structures that include more technical vocabulary (International Reading Association/National Middle School Association, 2002). Effective adolescent literacy instruction should acknowledge students' engagement with a wide array of print and digital texts and address the unique needs of this age group (National Council of Teachers of English, 2007). In addition, instruction should recognize their multiple and shifting identities, adopt an expanded notion of literacies and texts, respond to the individual needs of the learners, and attend to their desire for socialization (Alvermann, 2002; Luke & Elkins, 1998; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999; NCTE, 2007). Motivation is also a critical component of literacy instruction for adolescents, and teachers should strive to motivate their students by providing them with "real" purposes for reading, allowing them choice with interesting texts, and making connections between their in- and out-of-school literacies (Dunston & Gambrell, 2009; Purris & Block, 2007).

By acknowledging students' out-of-school literacies, middle school teachers honor their knowledge of and competence with texts of popular culture, both print and electronic (Coiro, 2009). The National Council of Teachers of English (2007) has stated, "When students are not recognized for bringing valuable, multiple-literacy practices to school, they can become resistant to school-based literacy" (p. 3). The inclusion of texts representing students' out-of-school reading allows teachers to acknowledge the value and pleasure these texts provide for students (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; NCTE, 2007; Purris & Block, 2007). Results of a recent international reading test indicated that the greater the diversity of texts read by the 15-year-old students, the higher their levels of reading engagement and achievement (Brozo, Shiel, & Topping, 2007/2008). Therefore, middle school literacy instruction that exposes students to a wide variety of genres in print and electronic formats encourages them to read widely and promotes continued reading development.

Comprehension Instruction

As students transition from the intermediate grades into middle school, comprehension instruction should continue to be a priority for their teachers (Brown, 2008; Fisher, Frey, & Ross, 2009; NCTE, 2006). Literacy researchers have documented the reading practices of good readers and identified the com-

prehension strategies utilized by the most effective readers with print texts (Block & Pressley, 2007; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pressley, 2000; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; RAND, 2002) and electronic texts (Coiro, 2009; Coiro & Dobler, 2007). These studies frequently cite strategies such as predicting, questioning, creating mental images, determining importance, summarizing, and connecting to prior knowledge. Researchers have also suggested that comprehension strategies used for reading electronic texts, although similar to reading print texts, are more complex, less linear and requires instruction that makes explicit connections between the two text formats (Coiro, 2009).

The comprehension strategy instruction in this study approached questioning from two theoretical perspectives: the *cognitive perspective* and the *sociocultural perspective* (Brown, 2009). The cognitive perspective is informed by studies that explore the behaviors of proficient readers, metacognition, and strategy use. The sociocultural perspective focuses on the interactions between the reader and the text that are shaped by the various social interactions of the reader and the value-laden messages of the texts. This study emphasized the importance of self-questioning during reading (i.e., cognitive perspective) and the need to raise questions about the explicit and implicit messages in texts (i.e., sociocultural perspective).

Purpose of Study

In order to determine whether students would apply the questioning techniques learned with media texts to their reading of more traditional school-sanctioned texts, two research questions guided this study:

1. How did comprehension strategy instruction utilizing various media texts affect the types of questions generated by sixth grade language arts students when reading a traditional, school-sanctioned text?
2. How did comprehension strategy instruction utilizing various media texts affect the types of questions generated by sixth grade language arts students when viewing and reading a media text (magazine advertisement)?

Methods

Setting

This study was conducted in a junior high school situated in a suburban, upper-middle class community approximately 35 miles west of Chicago. The school opened for the 2007-2008 school year and houses about 600 students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The student population is approximately 82% White, 5% Black, 9% Hispanic, and 4% other racial/ethnic groups. Only 9% of the students are classified as low income, and the rate of student mobility is just above 7%. The students at this junior high school have demonstrated solid reading ability, with 91% of the students meeting or exceeding the reading standards on the state assessment in 2008.

Participants

Participants included one sixth-grade classroom comprised of 32 students (20 girls and 12 boys) who were enrolled in an accelerated language arts class. Students were recommended for this class at the end of fifth grade based on several criteria: (1) performance at or above the 90th percentile on the fifth grade reading subtest on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), (2) a score above 216 on a student's cognitive abilities assessed by InView testing from CTB/McGraw-Hill, and (3) teacher recommendation.

Participants also included the university-based researcher and the classroom teacher. The researcher was a faculty at the university located approximately 10 miles from the junior high. During the study, the researcher functioned as a participant-observer, assuming responsibility for teaching the lessons but also observing the students and teacher throughout the process. The classroom teacher was in her seventh year of teaching and had recently obtained her masters degree in reading. This was her first year teaching classes for the academically accelerated students. Serving as an observer-participant in this study, the classroom teacher observed the lessons as they were presented by the researcher, recorded anecdotal notes during class discussions, participated in the discussions, and assisted with the use of the technology in her classroom.

Research Design and Intervention

This investigation was a collaborative action research (CAR) study. Pine (2009) identified these characteristics of CAR: university faculty and classroom teacher mutually define the research problem and collaborate in seeking solutions, the research findings are used in solving problems, teachers develop competency in research while university faculty engage in field-based investigation, and teachers become agents of their own professional development. Collaboration between the researcher and classroom teacher occurred on a regular basis throughout the investigation.

The intervention consisted of a series of 15 lessons presented by the researcher in 45-minute lessons on Mondays and Fridays during the first three months of 2009. The lessons involved two approaches to questioning: (1) writing questions based on the content of the text and (2) asking questions about the text. The first set of lessons taught students to pause periodically while reading, generate questions, and evaluate the appropriateness of their questions. This is consistent with both the cognitive approach to strategy instruction and with relevant research (Block & Pressley, 2007; RAND, 2002). By evaluating the questions, they had written while reading newspaper and magazine articles (see Appendix A), the students learned the value of writing relevant rather than tangential questions (Block & Pressley, 2007).

The second set of lessons approached questioning from a sociocultural perspective, utilizing the *Five Key Questions That Can Change the World: Lesson Plans for Media Literacy* (Share, Jolls, & Thoman, 2007). The five questions used to interpret the media messages were:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently?
4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

These questions focus on the authorship, format, audience, content, and purpose of media messages and have been used in research related to media literacy activities embedded within a high school English curriculum (Hobbs, 2007; Hobbs & Frost, 2003). Questioning the gender, cultural, and economic messages of media is crucial in a market that is designing literature/media/product campaigns targeting young consumers such as middle school students (Sekeres, 2009). These questions formed the basis for students' responses as they viewed popular magazine websites, analyzed magazine advertisements, and reviewed commercials from Super Bowl 2009.

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to establish the credibility of this CAR study related to students' questioning abilities, data collection methods were triangulated (Pine, 2009). Data were collected using three methods: a researcher-developed pre/post instruction assessment, student work samples, and field notes of the researcher and classroom teacher.

Pre/post instruction assessment. In order to determine whether students' questioning was changed because of the intervention, the researcher administered a pre/post instrument to collect samples of students' questions. For the pre-instruction assessment involving a traditional text, students were given copies of the first part of the *Homesick* excerpt that had been marked at three different places, directing them to stop reading and write two or three questions based on the text.

After completing the part of the pre-instruction assessment with the traditional school-sanctioned text, the students were directed to write three to five questions about the second text, a media text that was a copy of a cell phone advertisement for South Pole Mobile. The major visual element in the advertisement was a female model, and a smaller image of the phone was pictured in the lower right corner. The main part of the text advertised free music and camera phone.

The post-instruction assessment also featured a traditional text and a media text. The students were directed to write questions for the second half of the *Homesick* excerpt, and they also wrote questions for a cell phone advertisement for Verizon Wireless in which a hand held a Blackberry Storm cell phone..

Student work samples. The second data collected during the study were artifacts of students' work during the first set of lessons, the students' work consisted of questions written while reading *news and magazine a*rticles. The students indicated where they paused in their reading to write questions for each section of the text. For the second set of lessons, sheets designed to address the Five Key Questions

(Share, Jolls, & Thoman, 2007)were completed by students as they read and analyzed popular magazine websites, magazine advertisements, and commercials from the 2009 Super Bowl. The students also wrote questions for the blog entry about the high price of Super Bowl ads (O'Hern, 2009).

Field notes. The final data collected during the study were the field notes of the researcher and the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher recorded samples of student-generated questions, adding students' comments, and evaluations of the questions. During the study, the researcher and the classroom teacher met to write their impressions of the lessons. The researcher also recorded students' discussion points and comments during the activities related to the Five Key Questions.

Two types of data analysis were employed in this CAR study. First, data were analyzed and coded throughout the study using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), revealing patterns and themes in students' responses. An example of the coding that was developed for examining student-generated questions is shown in Appendix B. Following the initial coding, descriptive statistics related to students' responses were also calculated to provide numerical data.

Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether students would apply their use of questioning strategies they learned with the media texts to their reading of a more traditional school-sanctioned text. The study was guided by these two questions: (1) How did comprehension strategy instruction using various media texts affect the types of questions generated by sixth grade language arts students when reading a traditional, school-sanctioned text? (2) How did comprehension strategy instruction using various media texts affect the types of questions generated by sixth grade language arts students when viewing and reading a media text (magazine advertisement)? Results are reported for each of these research questions.

Questioning with a Traditional School-Sanctioned Text

Students were given an autobiographical narrative selection from their reading anthology for the pre- and post-instruction assessment (see Appendix A). Table 1 summarizes the analysis of the categories of questions generated by the students before and after instruction.

Table 1: Types of Questions Written about *Homesick*

Type of question	Before instruction N=230 No. of responses (%)	After instruction N=239 No. of responses (%)
Irrelevant	16 (7.0)	20 (8.4)
Incorrect based on content	53 (23.0)	18 (7.5)
Missed inference in text	53 (23.0)	40 (16.7)
Clarify—prior knowledge	27 (11.7)	28 (11.7)
Clarify—vocab.	2 (0.9)	20 (8.5)
Clarify—text	16 (7.0)	8 (3.3)
Clarify—character	35 (15.2)	28 (11.7)
Social issues	9 (3.9)	15 (6.3)
Promote further reading	19 (8.3)	34 (14.2)
From first part[a]		28 (11.7)

[a]—questions represented information that had been read in the pre-intervention assessment

A number of changes were noted in the questions generated by the students. First, the students wrote fewer questions that were incorrect based on the content of the selection or that indicated they had missed information that was inferred in the text. These changes suggest that the students read the text with greater comprehension following instruction. Second, the students wrote more questions that asked for clarification of vocabulary and promoted further reading. The increase in these types of questions would imply that the students were writing more questions that were important, would help them make meaning from the text, and would extend their learning of the topic. Finally, the students wrote a greater number of questions that were related to social issues referenced in the text, showing more awareness of issues related to gender, race, or economics. An unanticipated result was the increase for questions generated in the post-instruction assessment, perhaps

based on their increased need to clarify vocabulary in the second half of the excerpt or their continuing need for background information.

Questioning with a Media Text (Magazine Advertisement)

The second type of text used for the pre- and post-instruction assessment was the pair of cell phone advertisements taken from *Seventeen* magazine. An advertisement for South Pole Mobile was the advertisement used prior to instruction, and Blackberry/Verizon Wireless was used post-instruction. An analysis of the questions written for the advertisements is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of Questions Written about the Advertisements

Type of question	Before instruction N=123 No. of responses (%)		After instruction N=135 No. of responses (%)	
Visual elements	37	(30.0)	29	(25.9)
Clarifying information	18	(14.6)	26	(19.3)
Target audience	0	(0)	12	(8.9)
Race/gender	0	(0)	7	(5.2)
Fees/prices	16	(13.0)	14	(10.4)
Economic motivation	30	(24.4)	5	(3.7)
Product	22	(18.0)	27	(20.0)
Wording	0	(0)	9	(6.6)

The types of student-generated questions showed a number of changes from pre- to post-instruction assessment. First, the students wrote more questions that sought to clarify information in the advertisement and were about the specific product, indicating that they were working to make meaning from the advertisement. Second, following the series of lessons, the students wrote questions regarding the target audience, wording used in the advertisement, or race/gender issues, questions absent prior to the instruction. These results suggest that the students were reading the advertisements through a more critical lens. Third, the students generated fewer questions related to the visual elements in the advertisement, fees, and prices for the cell phone/wireless service, and the economic motivation of the advertiser. A

decrease in these types of questions may have been indicative that students were less concerned about these elements due to the differences in the cell phone advertisements. Specifically, the picture of the female model in the first advertisement prompted questions regarding her connection to the sale of the product, and the offer of a "free music & camera phone" caused students to ask about information placed in the fine print as well as the reasons for this type of misrepresentation.

The findings from the pre/post instruction assessments provide evidence that following the instruction, the students were writing a greater number of questions that helped them make meaning from both types of texts. When reading the school-sanctioned text, students wrote more questions to clarify the meaning of vocabulary and to promote continued reading of the text. With the cell phone advertisements, they wrote more questions in an attempt to clarify information about the product and about the wording used in the text. The increase in questions written for both types of texts related to social issues, target audience, and race/gender illustrated students' increased awareness of the underlying gender, race, and economic messages in texts.

Limitations

A number of limitations were inherent in this CAR study. First, the questioning lessons were presented only twice a week, and the classroom teacher presented the remainder of the time the reading instruction. Although the classroom teacher was not providing explicit instruction in questioning, other factors from these lessons may have contributed to the changes in the students' questioning skills. Next, the rather homogeneous population utilized in this study had been identified for an accelerated program, and their results may not be typical for more heterogeneous classroom populations. In addition, a limited number of students participated in the investigation. Finally, because action research is undertaken for improving classroom practice and student performance within a specific context, the generalizability may be limited. Although a number of limitations have been noted, these results have implications for comprehension strategy instruction that utilizes texts related to adolescents' in school and out-of-school reading.

Discussion

Comprehension strategy instruction in questioning was effectively applied to media texts, producing positive changes in these sixth graders' ability to generate questions. Several conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, students did benefit from evaluating and discussing the questions they had written for the newspaper, magazine, and blog texts. The evaluation of the questions allowed the students to determine their appropriateness, and the discussion allowed the researcher and teacher to hear students' explanations for their questions.

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Second, teachers should note that various factors within texts might influence the types of questions written by the students. When reading the stimulant addiction article from *Scholastic Scope*, the students' questions were more focused on the adolescent storyline than on the information. This is consistent with literature noting that students benefit from explicit instruction in reading different types of text structures that do not adhere to traditional formats (Block & Pressley, 2007; Coiro & Dobler, 2007).

Third, this study underscored the impact of students' background knowledge and vocabulary when they are attempting to comprehend text. Students wrote numerous questions related to the need for background knowledge or definitions of specific vocabulary terms. This is consistent with literature that suggests students use comprehension strategies to make meaning at the word level as well as within the text passages, and that teachers should attend to the need for developing students' vocabulary and background knowledge for reading a passage (Block & Pressley, 2007; Fisher, Frey, & Ross, 2009; RAND, 2002).

Fourth, providing the students with the Five Key Questions (Share, Jolls, & Thoman, 2007) for critiquing media helped them begin to examine texts for messages related to gender, race, and economics and also provided the classroom teacher with a framework for her future work with traditional and media texts. These results are consistent with the research of Hobbs who found that the use of the Five Key Questions produced changes in the way students critiqued media messages and the manner in which teachers incorporated media into their instruction (Hobbs, 2007; Hobbs & Frost, 2003).

Finally, the class discussions played an important role throughout the lessons by promoting an environment of collaborative meaning making in which no person's reasonable interpretation was privileged (Brown, 2008). Open discussions in which the young adolescents and adults voiced their interpretations and findings allowed the discussants to hear many different perspectives and experience how a single text could elicit a multitude of interpretations. Students were able to utilize their out-of-school literacies to make meaningful contributions. The discussions also gave the researcher and teacher the opportunity to ask questions that challenged students' thinking about media messages.

The classroom teacher was in a unique position to continue with her group of students into seventh grade, and a message from her emphasized the continued impact of this CAR study.

> *I wanted to let you know how effective your time has proven to be with my students. As we have started the year "getting in shape" by reviewing strategy use, they have exercised their questioning skills so much more frequently than in the past. They even remembered the kinds of questions (important, interesting, and irrelevant) and have discriminated which kind they have at times… The reading of [Flowers for] Algernon has really caused them to initiate some great questions, both important and interesting. (Personal communication, September 12, 2009)*

As articulated by this language arts teacher, instruction using texts generally reserved for students' out-of-school literacy practices not only brought about changes in the way her sixth graders read the media texts, but it also impacted the manner in which they read their school-sanctioned literature. For this group of students, the use of texts representing their out-of-school literacy practices attracted and maintained their interest while providing opportunities for their use of comprehension strategies.

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Appendix A

Pre-instruction Assessment
- First half of *Homesick* excerpt (Fritz) in *Elements of Literature*
- South Pole Mobile advertisement, December 2008/January 2009 issue of *Seventeen*

  Writing Questions from the Text
  - "Pet Owners Feel Fiscal Bite, Emotional Pain" from January 29, 2009 *USA Today*
  - "Ohio Teen Killed Mom Over Video Game" from January 13, 2009 *AOL News*
  - Article from February 6, 2009, issue of *Scholastic Scope*

   i. "Robert's Sudden Stardom" about Rob Pattinson
   ii. "Stimulant Addition"
- "Are Super Bowl Ads Still Worth the Price?" from January 26, 2009, Marketing Shift website blog

Writing Questions about the Text (based on the 5 Key Questions):
- South Pole Mobile advertisement from pre-instruction assessment
- Magazine websites identified in initial survey
- NMagazine advertisements
- Commercial from the 2009 Super Bowl, (http://superbowlads.fanhouse.com)

Post-instructtion Assessment
- Final half of *Homesick* exceprt (Fritz)
- Verizon Wireless advertisement, December 2008/January 2009 issue of *Seventeen*

Appendix B
Coding Used for Categories & Examples of Students' Questions for Homesick

Categories	Examples of Students' Questions
Irrelevant	Is Prisoner's Base a fun game? Does the narrator like Miss Williams?
Incorrect based on content	Is the narrator a boy or a girl? Does Ian get in trouble for beating her up?
Missed inference in text	Why does the narrator [sic] not sing "God Save the King" like everyone else?
Clarify—background knowledge	What is the River God? Why did Lin Nai-Nai's husband remarry? Why are the British deciding things for people?
Clarify—vocabulary	What is the main character's father's study? Why are these sections called "concessions"?
Clarify—text structure	Why does this story bounce around? Ex: they go from talking about a river, to chicks, then to school, and being an American.
Clarify—character	Why doesn't she sing, even when she begins to get hurt? Why is she so happy that the boat was "hers"?
Social issues	Does the narrator feel that she needs to have the American culture? Is anyone doing something about signs or posters saying NO CHINESE [sic]?
Promote further reading	Where is Jean going instead of school? What will the teacher do? Will she go to school tomorrow?

Middle School Students' Perceptions: What Teachers Can Do to Support Reading Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of what teachers can do to promote the four elements of self-efficacy: confidence, independence, metacognition, and stamina (CIMS). The following questions guided the study: (a) Do middle school students believe they possess the elements of reading self-efficacy (CIMS)? (b) Are there gender differences? (c) What do middle school students believe teachers can do to help them become more self-efficacious readers? (d) What do middle school students believe teachers do that hinders reading self-efficacy? The study was grounded in Bandura's (1997, 2006) self-efficacy research and used a framework developed by Johnson, Freedman, and Thomas (2007) to examine the four elements of reading efficacy. To become more self-efficacious readers, middle school students recommended that teachers provide more time to read at school, allow them to make their own book choices, provide access to a variety of books, offer assistance (instruction), and encourage them to read. Recommendations for middle school classrooms are discussed.

Adolescence brings with it many changes and challenges. Adolescents themselves undergo dramatic biological, cognitive, and social/emotional changes (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). The physiological changes affect not only their physical abilities but also influence their self-esteem, self-confidence, and approach to learning in school (Manning, 1993). The cognitive changes provide individuals with the ability to think more abstractly, to engage in more sophisticated problem solving, and to use more self-regulatory behaviors than in previous years (Schurr, Thomason, & Thompson, 1995). Adolescents also undergo changes in social relationships. They tend to shift their allegiance from adults to peers, who influence their developing feelings of self-worth (Swafford & Bryan, 2000). At the same time, middle school introduces various structural changes, such as departmentalization, ability group-

ing, and impersonal school bureaucracies (Harter, Whitesell, & Kowalski, 1992; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005; Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). All of these changes affect adolescents' competency-related beliefs, self-efficacy beliefs, and intrinsic motivation for reading and learning in the content areas (Eccles, Midgley, et al., 1993; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005).

Today, more than ever before, individuals need to exert greater personal control over their learning (Bandura, 2006). This phenomenon, coupled with the complexities of new literacies, accentuates how important it is for teachers to use all available resources to promote adolescents' self-efficacy and literacy development. One important resource is the students themselves (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). In this study, middle school students were asked to describe what teachers could do to promote their reading self-efficacy.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura (2006) defined self-efficacy as the "core belief that one has the power to effect changes by one's actions" (p. 3). Research has shown the powerful influence of self-efficacy on goal fulfillment, level of motivation, persistence during difficult tasks, and academic achievement, including reading achievement (Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001). Other research revealed that self-efficacy impacted students' use of self-regulatory reading strategies (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990), their beliefs about the cause of successes and failures (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996), and their attitudes and interests (Pajares, 2003). Furthermore, self-efficacy was a predictor of the learning motivation of gifted ninth grade students (Schick & Phillipson, 2009). When students' cognitive abilities and/or skills were the same, students with stronger self-efficacy were more persistent when completing difficult tasks and were more likely to apply self-regulatory strategies (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996; Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). Not only could self-efficacy affect students' achievement, but also conversely, achievement could contribute to or detract from students' self-efficacy (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007).

While self-efficacy and achievement are related, the instructional practices utilized by teachers have an impact on both. For example, teacher modeling, guided practice, and independent practice helped learners successfully perform a new or difficult task and, consequently, tended to raise self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 2003; Schunk & Pajares, 2005; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). Relatedly, when peers experienced success with tasks, self-efficacy increased, whereas seeing others fail lowered self-efficacy (McCabe, 2003). Schunk and Rice (1991) found that increases in self-efficacy and the utilization of comprehension strategies depended on instruction and teacher feedback, while others (McCabe, 2003; Schunk & Meece, 2006) found that encouragement by teachers influenced self-efficacy, but only when the encouragement was consistent with students' own feelings of success. In a study by Johnson, Freedman, and Thomas (2007), teachers identified pedagogical factors they believed influenced students' reading self-efficacy. These factors included: (a) a

supportive and responsive classroom environment, (b) teaching and learning (e.g., connecting with students' lives, independent reading), (c) curriculum planning (e.g., scaffolding), (d) affective interactions (e.g., encouragement), and (e) specific strategies (e.g., sharing prior knowledge).

Numerous studies have examined gender differences in reading achievement and self-efficacy. Past research has revealed that boys often struggled with school-related literacy tasks while girls outperformed them, demonstrated more competence, and tended to value reading more than boys (Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993; Mucherah & Yoder, 2008; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (as cited in Pajares, 2002) reported that gender differences were not always evident, while Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) found girls to be more self-efficacious than boys.

This study focused on reading self-efficacy of middle school students. Reading is essential for learning in all content areas; therefore, learners' reading self-efficacy is especially important to their academic achievement. The study was grounded in Johnson et al.'s (2007) research-based framework for reading self-efficacy. It was field-tested with teachers in classrooms and professional development meetings as well as secondary and middle school students. As a result, Johnson et al.(2007) identified and defined four elements of self-efficacy: confidence, independence, metacognition, and stamina (CIMS).

Confidence, the first element, reflects the strength of readers' beliefs in their reading capabilities. Confidence influences what people choose to read and how they feel about reading-related tasks. The second element, *independence*, is a reader's ability to evaluate a text, determine strategies necessary to read the text, and apply those strategies during reading. The third element of CIMS is *metacognition*. It involves "knowledge of self as reader, self as a thinking being, and self as decision maker, choosing which strategy or process to employ when reading" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 53). Metacognitive readers monitor their comprehension and use self-regulatory strategies during the reading process (Baker & Brown, 1984). *Stamina*, the last element of self-efficacy, refers to a reader's perseverance when attempting a difficult task, self-regulation of time use, and maintenance of a literacy task without continuous teacher or peer assistance. Stamina is similar to what Santa (2006) referred to as active persistence and Pajares (1996) called resilience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of what teachers can do to promote the four elements of self-efficacy: confidence, independence, metacognition, and stamina (CIMS). The following questions guided the study:

1. Do middle school students believe they possess the elements of reading self-efficacy (confidence, independence, metacognition, and stamina)?
2. Are there gender differences?

3. What do middle school students believe teachers can do to help them become more self-efficacious readers?
4. What do middle school students believe teachers do that hinder reading self-efficacy?

Methods

Setting

This study took place in a suburban middle school in a mid-sized southeastern city in the United States. The school was large (889 students) compared to other middle schools in the district (761 students) and the state (662 students). The school had 56 classroom teachers; eleven of whom taught Language Arts, which suggests an 81:1 student-to-teacher ratio in that curriculum area. The neighborhood school consisted of students from an area that included predominantly middle-class, single-family homes and several apartment complexes. Of the 889 students in the school, 71% were Caucasian, 21% Black, 5% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and less than 1% American Indian. Approximately one-third (32%) of the student body was economically disadvantaged. At the time of this study, 68% of eighth grade students, 69% of seventh graders, and 74% of the sixth graders scored proficient or higher on the End-of-Grade reading test.

Participants

Participants in this study were a sample of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students taking regular language arts classes or language arts classes for the academically/intellectually gifted. The number of students varied across the administration of four surveys, because they could choose to participate (or not) at any time. The Confidence survey was completed by 195 students (103 girls and 92 boys), the Independence survey by 185 students (96 girls, and 89 boys), the Metacognition survey by 157 students (86 girls and 71 boys), and 167 students (92 girls and 75 boys) completed the Stamina survey. Because students had the option to participate (or not) when each survey was distributed, there was variance in the sample sizes. Student absences also accounted for some of the differences.

To maintain the highest level of confidentiality for both the teachers and students, one teacher served as the researcher's contact and distributed the surveys to the language arts teachers who agreed to participate. Similarly, each survey was completed confidentially; therefore, further descriptors of participants were not available.

Materials

Four open-ended surveys, developed by Johnson et al. (2007), were used to collect data. Survey 1 examined the students' reading confidence (C). Survey 2 examined students' independence (I). Survey 3 examined students' metacognition

(M). Survey 4 examined students' stamina (S). Originally, the instruments were given to 100 teachers to determine what they thought they did to promote their students' reading self-efficacy (i.e., CIMS). However, the instruments were then modified so they could be used to examine secondary and middle school students reading self-efficacy. These modified instruments were administered to 300 students in four states (MI, TX, OH, KY), from schools with diverse student bodies. Johnson (personal communication, April 7, 2010) reported that no differences were found in relation to students' socioeconomic status or ethnicity/race. Gender differences had not been determined. (See Appendix A for all survey questions.)

Data Collection Procedures

For each element of CIMS, a packet was assembled and distributed to the contact teacher at the school, who then distributed the surveys to language arts colleagues, who agreed to participate. The identity of the teachers who participated was known only by the contact teacher to maintain confidentiality. Each packet contained surveys and Discussion Guidelines, patterned after those used by Johnson et al. (2007) and in consultation with Johnson (personal communication, September 5, 2007).

Teachers administered the four surveys on different days, over a period of two weeks to students who agreed to participate. On the first day, teachers introduced the concept of Confidence, using the Discussion Guidelines. Teachers were encouraged to modify the guidelines as they saw fit to ensure that their students understood the concepts. The same procedures were followed for each element of CIMS. (See Appendix B for the complete Discussion Guidelines.)

Data Analysis

Questions one and two. To analyze the data, first the surveys were sorted by each component of self-efficacy. Because previous research indicated that self-efficacy sometimes differs by gender (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons as cited in Pajares, 2002), each group of surveys was sorted by gender. Frequency counts for each element were tabulated by gender.

All student responses to the first question were read and coded. Students' answers were identified as "yes," "no," "sometimes," or "no answer." Examples of answers coded as "sometimes" included: "Sometimes I am," "I am sort of," or "I usually am." Then the frequency of each response was tabulated by gender and for all students. Percentages were calculated for each element of CIMS, due to the variation of the response numbers for each element.

Questions three and four. The data were analyzed using inductive procedures described by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) and Merriam (1998). First, responses to question three from each survey were read. Then, the data were examined again to identify responses that suggested similar ideas, which were grouped together. (See Appendix C, Step 1: Group Student Responses.) Next, a code was identified to label (describe) each group. (See Appendix C, Step 2: Assign Initial Codes.)

Then responses were reread to determine consistency. Upon closer examination of responses in a group, sometimes it was necessary to refine groups. For example, "Books" was an initial code. On further examination, it became clear that student responses referred to books in different ways; sometimes they referred to book choices and sometimes they referred to access to books. Consequently, the groups were refined (separated) into more specific groups: Book Access and Book Choice. (See Appendix C, Step 3: Groups Refined.) Other times, responses in two groups seemed to be related. When this was the case, the groups were combined into a larger category. Then a theme was designated to describe the new category. For example, two groups initially coded as *Time to Read* and *Read Aloud More* were combined and labeled with the theme *Time to Read*. (See Appendix C: Step 3: Groups Combined.)

Similar procedures were used to analyze the data for question four. A written record of the analysis (similar to the example in Appendix C) was kept for each element of CIMS and for each question. Then the records were examined for patterns. Five overarching themes described student perceptions about how teachers support *and* hinder each CIMS element across both questions three and four. The themes were (a) time to read, (b) book choice, (c) access to a variety of books, (d) teacher assistance, and (e) encouragement.

Findings

The findings are organized as follows. First, student perceptions of their own reading confidence, independence, metacognition, and stamina are reported. Then, student perceptions of how teachers support and hinder the elements of reading self-efficacy are described. The findings for questions three and four are organized by the themes that cut across the elements of CIMS.

Questions One and Two: Do middle school students possess the elements of CIMS and are there gender differences?

The middle school students self-reported whether they possessed each element of CIMS (yes), did not possess each element (no), or sometimes possessed each element (some). Seventy-nine percent of students reported they were confident readers; 91% reported they were independent readers; 62% reported they were metacognitive readers and 62% possessed reading stamina (see Table 1). When examining the data by gender, the same percentage (92%) of boys and girls reported they were independent readers. In contrast, 11% more girls than boys reported they were metacognitive readers (67% to 56% respectfully). Eight percent more girls than boys reported they were confident readers (83% and 75% respectfully); similarly, 8% more girls reported they possessed reading stamina (65% and 57% respectfully).

Table 1
Students' Reported Possession of CIMS

	Confidence (C)		Independence (I)		Metacognition (M)		Stamina (S)	
	n = 195		n = 185		n = 157		n = 167	
Boys	Yes	75%	Yes	92%	Yes	56%	Yes	57%
	No	10%	No	2%	No	14%	No	17%
	Some	12%	Some	2%	Some	16%	Some	19%
	NoAns	3%	NoAns	4%	NoAns	14%	NoAns	7%
Girls	Yes	83%	Yes	92%	Yes	67%	Yes	65%
	No	11%	No	3%	No	9%	No	7%
	Some	6%	Some	3%	Some	12%	Some	21%
			NoAns	2%	NoAns	12%	NoAns	7%
Total Students	Yes	79%	Yes	91%	Yes	62%	Yes	62%
	No	10%	No	3%	No	11%	No	11%
	Some	9%	Some	3%	Some	13%	Some	20%
	NoAns	2%	NoAns	3%	NoAns	14%	NoAns	7%

Questions Three and Four: What do teachers do that support and hinder reading self-efficacy?

Five themes described students' responses to questions three and four: (a) time to read, (b) book choice, (c) access to books, (d) teacher assistance, and (e) encouragement. Because the answers to these questions are intricately related, the results for both questions are reported under each theme.

Time to Read

Teachers support CIMS. Time to read was a theme that cut across reading confidence, independence, metacognition, and stamina. To better support CIMS, the data revealed that teachers should provide more time to read and require fewer non-reading tasks in class and for homework. Examples of "non-reading" tasks were writing reports, preparing book projects, and taking notes.

Teachers hinder CIMS. The data analysis revealed that the lack of time to read in school and visit the school library hindered students' reading CIMS. Relatedly, some students reported they did not have enough time to read at home because of non-reading-related homework, such as the tasks noted above. In addition, some students stated that teacher read alouds and books on tape limited their opportunities to read independently and their time to practice reading orally. When students did not have opportunities to read aloud, some students stated their oral reading confidence was impacted negatively.

Book Choice

Teachers support CIMS. Students reported that providing them with more opportunities to choose books supported their reading CIMS. Students also indicated they would be more interested in reading and would choose to read more often if they were allowed to make their own selections.

Teachers hinder CIMS. Lack of book choice hindered students' reading confidence, independence, metacognition, and stamina. Student responses included "force me into reading something I don't enjoy" and "assign[ing] whole class books that may not be appropriate for everyone." In many instances, responses were related to *Accelerated Reader (AR)*. For example, "AR limits how high you can read" and, conversely, "[sometimes] goals are too high and books are too hard." Several students also noted how specified readability levels made them feel; "[the book] level makes you feel stupid if it's low." These comments reflect the inefficacious nature of limiting students' opportunities to choose books, depending on the readability level.

Access to Books

Teachers support CIMS. Students noted that access to "more books," "more interesting books," books on different reading levels, and (to a lesser extent) different genres supported their reading confidence, independence, and stamina. On the other hand, students did not mention that access to books provided metacognition support.

Teachers hinder CIMS. Students reported that a lack of access to books about different topics, books of various genres, and a range of readability levels hindered all elements of CIMS.

Teacher Assistance

Teachers support CIMS. Students valued the assistance teachers provided as they developed reading CIMS. Sometimes students specified that providing just the right kind of assistance (e.g., "prompts") would be especially helpful. They also suggested that teachers "find out where your [students are] having trouble and [then provide] help." Students also wanted particular assistance to help them choose books to read for enjoyment (i.e. "help me choose books I like"); however, this was only on occasions when students specifically asked teachers for assistance. When students wrote about how teachers could support their metacognition, they

stated that teachers could teach them how to use strategies such as "go back and reread" and "ask questions during reading." Some students even suggested that teachers "model different ways to figure out a book."

Students also described the need for assistance with specific troubling aspects of reading, for example, vocabulary. Sample comments included "help us with context clues" and "give us key words to read about." To support oral reading confidence, students suggested teachers provide opportunities to read with a partner, in small groups, or with the teacher.

Teachers hinder CIMS. Sometimes teacher assistance hindered students' reading confidence, independence, metacognition, and stamina. In those instances, the data revealed that too much or not enough assistance was a problem. Too little teacher assistance was reported in comments such as "[they] don't teach us to use metacognition" and "[they] tell us to read independently but don't help us." Examples of assistance that hindered oral reading confidence and independence were teacher read alouds and listening to books on tape. Students also expressed that their reading confidence was hampered when teachers "make them" read aloud when they did not choose to, or when they thought they did not read well.

Encouragement

Teachers support CIMS. The students reported that teacher encouragement supported all elements of CIMS. Their suggestions included comments such as "[teachers should] compliment me on what I do right" and "believe in me." To support reading stamina, in particular, students wrote that teachers should "encourage us to read quicker" and "encourage us to read for longer periods of time."

Teachers hinder CIMS. The data analysis revealed that teachers hindered students' reading CIMS through negative comments and, to a lesser extent, through their body language. Examples of negative comments included: "tell us we're going to fail if we don't study," and "correct us in a rude way." Examples of discouraging body language were "[teachers] glare at you when you forget your homework" or "[teachers] roll their eyes and suck on their teeth if we read a word wrong."

Limitations

One limitation of this study was that students' self-reports of their reading confidence, independence, metacognition, and stamina were based on their feelings toward reading in general rather than toward specific reading tasks. Another limitation is consistent with all descriptive research; the findings are not meant to be generalizable to other populations. Third, only middle school students were studied. Fourth, teachers were instructed to modify the Discussion Guidelines so the concepts may have been introduced differently. Fifth, because students could decide not to participate in the study at any time, the same students did not complete all four surveys.

Discussion

Middle school students have the reputation of being unmotivated, unwilling, and/or unable to read in school. This problem may be remedied, in part, by providing an environment in school that supports students' reading self-efficacy. The purpose of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of what teachers can do to promote the four elements of self-efficacy: confidence, independence, metacognition, and stamina (CIMS).

Participants in this study reported that time to read would support their reading self-efficacy. Nevertheless, even when provided with time to read, it appears that the students in this study would not choose to read unless they had access to a variety of interesting and familiar reading materials and were free to choose the texts they read.

Student choice of reading materials was important to the participants in this study. They particularly objected to the confines of *Accelerated Reader* and designated reading levels determined by the program. Students also were opposed to teacher-imposed (or teacher-selected) read alouds, class novels, and non-reading requirements. Regardless of the instructional programs or practices used, students resisted when their choices were restricted. Like previous research (Brozo, 2006; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004), there was evidence that boys in this study possessed less reading confidence, metacognition, and stamina than girls. When students are allowed to choose the texts they read, they are provided the opportunity to control the reading topic as well as the amount of effort and stamina they invest in the reading. Students often choose texts about which they have a well-developed schema or interest. Consequently, choices provide opportunities for students to read with confidence and to use metacognitive strategies without the burden of challenging vocabulary and lack of content knowledge that often interferes with reading.

To become self-efficacious readers, these students needed to experience reading in an instructional context in which they felt supported. In this study, students reported that teacher assistance was especially important to support their metacognition. They identified assistance that provided just the right kind and amount of help--not too much or too little--as a factor that supported their reading self-efficacy. Evidently, these students did not mind reading unfamiliar or challenging texts if teachers provided them with appropriate assistance to negotiate those texts.

Not only did students in this study report that teacher assistance promoted reading self-efficacy, they also wrote that support in the form of encouraging words and actions was also critical. Encouragement often motivates students to persist in new or challenging tasks (Baker & Beall, 2009), thus enhancing reading stamina. In addition, teacher encouragement helps students recognize how capable they are (Pajares, 2006), which may promote reading confidence.

Much has been written about the benefits of read alouds to students of all ages (Richardson, 2000; Wharton-McDonald & Swiger, 2009). In this study, students perceived that teacher read alouds (or books on tape) were hindrances

to their development of oral reading confidence and independence. It is possible that these students believed that read alouds provided too much assistance or that read alouds were provided because teachers did not believe they were capable of reading particular texts. It is also possible that these students did not have a clear understanding of the purpose of a read aloud, thus they were unable to appreciate the potential benefits.

The context within which reading engagements occurred in this study was crucial for supporting reading self-efficacy, particularly oral reading confidence. Although reading aloud in front of a class was not a practice that students relished, students suggested that collaboration with a partner, small group, or the teacher would be helpful to develop oral reading confidence. Perhaps students viewed the purposes of oral reading in small groups as opportunities to encourage one another and provide peers with instrumental help. Collaborative, peer-mediated environments were not recommended by participants in this study as supportive for all elements of reading self-efficacy. This finding contradicted research (e.g., Dole, Nokes, & Dritts, 2009; Wharton-McDonald & Swiger, 2009) that supports the importance of peer-mediated collaboration. A possible explanation for this contradiction was that the surveys specifically asked about teacher support and did not ask about peer support.

Recommendations

In middle school, students are expected to read increasingly complex texts with confidence, coordinate independently the use of multiple metacognitive strategies, and read with stamina even when texts are difficult. Yet, instructional support to help middle school students become self-efficacious readers is traditionally lacking. Students need to learn how, when, and why to use multiple strategies for comprehending texts (Wharton-McDonald & Swiger, 2009). A gradual release of responsibility teaching model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) is one way teachers can assist students as they develop metacognitive knowledge and monitoring strategies. Scaffolding instruction with teacher encouragement creates a supportive learning environment in which middle school students tend to thrive.

Although participants in this study wanted to choose what they read, at times, they expressed the need for teacher assistance to find books that interested them. To do this, teachers must know their students' interests, activities they pursue outside-of-school, and the challenges and strengths they encounter when reading. Considering the variety of reading materials (e.g., electronic text, magazines, graphic novels), teachers must be ready to identify those that might appeal to individual students. Although participants in this study did not refer to reading materials other than books, research has documented the importance of bringing into the classroom all kinds of popular culture texts that students may read outside of school (Heron-Hruby & Alvermann, 2009; Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2008).

Students need the opportunity to choose some of the texts they read. However, without access to a variety of texts in the classroom and/or school media center *and* time to read, student choice may be of little consequence. By providing time for "plain reading" (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001, p. 350), students will be more likely to read for pleasure. However, this appears to be a luxury as many students say they have little time to read because of other schoolwork. Thus, teachers need to consider making fewer assignments about books and allow students time to actually read in school, as this will support their reading self-efficacy.

Significance

First, this study provided support to the reading self-efficacy framework developed by Johnson et al. (2007). Second, by using young adolescents as informants for this study, middle school students' voices were represented. Third, there is an increasing demand on students as 21st century learners to take responsibility to continue learning outside of school, so it is extremely important for teachers to help them become self-efficacious readers. This study added to the literature related to classroom factors that may promote reading self-efficacy.

Conclusion and Future Research

Teachers' instructional practices and other classroom factors support (and hinder) students' reading self-efficacy. What is needed is a developmentally-appropriate, instructional approach, sensitive to students' strengths, needs, and interests.

To extend this study, an examination of students' CIMS after reading particular texts could inform teachers about the kinds of texts with which students need more instructional support. In addition, to determine if students' perceptions do, in fact, increase reading self-efficacy and achievement, experimental or quasi-experimental research could be done to track the reading achievement of students when teachers purposefully plan and implement instruction that enhances reading self-efficacy.

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Appendix A

Survey One: Confidence

Gender: _____   Age: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____   Grade: _____

1. Are you a confident reader?
2. What can teachers do to help you become more confident in your reading ability?
3. What do teachers do that prevent you from being or feeling confident in your reading ability?

Survey Two: Independence

Gender: _____   Age: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____   Grade: _____

1 Are you an independent reader?
2. What can teachers do to help you become more independent in your reading?
3. What do teachers do that prevent you from being an independent reader?

Survey Three: Metacognition

Gender: _____   Age: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____   Grade: _____

1. Are you metacognitively aware when you read?
2. What can teachers do to help you become more metacognitive in your reading?
3. What do teachers do that prevent you from using metacognition in your reading?

Survey Four: Stamina

Gender: _____   Age: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____   Grade: _____

1. Do you have stamina in connection to reading?
2. What can teachers do to help you develop stamina for reading?
3. What do teachers do that prevent you from developing reading stamina?

Appendix B
Teacher Guidelines for Discussion
(to be used before students complete surveys)

[Note: The information below was used as guidelines for the pre-survey discussions. Teachers were <u>not</u> expected to use this information as a script. A copy of these guidelines was distributed to teachers with the blank surveys and a return envelope.]

Confidence
1. Distribute survey but ask students not to write until after the discussion.
2. Write the word, ***confidence***, on the board.
3. Ask students how they would define the concept. (<u>The point you're trying to bring out is</u> that **confidence relates to feeling sure about something**.)
4. Then ask students a question like **"Could a person be confident even if he or she wasn't successful? (**<u>The point is</u> that **you want to help students realize they can be sure of something, even something with negative outcomes**.) Provide them with examples such as the following: **"What if you didn't study at all for a test, could you be fairly confident that you will fail the test?"** of "If you hadn't trained, could you play an entire soccer game or run a 5-mile race?"
5. After you think they understand the concept of confidence, ask them: **"Can you have confidence when it comes to reading?"** Ask them not to share their answers aloud but to answer Question #1: "Are you a confident reader?"
6. After they finish, go on to Question 2. Note: Students who are not confident about their reading abilities may have difficulty with this question.
7. After they finish, introduce Question 3.
8. Place the completed surveys in the envelope provided by _____ [researcher's name]. She will pick the surveys up at the end of the day.

Independence
1. Distribute survey but ask students not to write until after the discussion.
2. Write the word, ***independence***, on the board.
3. Ask students how they would define the concept. (<u>The point you're trying to bring out</u> that **independence relates to feeling that they can do things without the help of others, can rely on themselves, and are free to make choices about what they do.**
4. Then ask students to **describe situations in which they did things independently.** After you think they understand the concept, ask them: **"What does it mean to have reading independence? Are you an independent reader?"** Ask them not to share their answers aloud but to answer Question #1 on the survey.
5. Go to Question #2 and ask student to respond in writing to: "What could teachers or schools do to help you to be more independent in your reading?"

6. When they finish, go on to Question 3: "What do teachers and schools do that prevent them from becoming an independent reader?"
7. Place the completed surveys in the envelope provided by _____ [researcher's name]. She will pick the surveys up at the end of the day.

Metacognition

1. Distribute survey but ask students not to write until after the discussion.
2. Write the word, ***metacognition***, on the board.
3. Because students are likely not to be familiar with the term, you may need to provide a definition of metacognition rather than asking students what they think it means as you did in the previous discussions. Explain what the word means generally, not in relation to reading. (**For example, metacognition refers to a self-awareness of what one knows (or understands) and what one does not know, and knowledge about what one can do when he or she doesn't know. It's basically a knowledge of self.)** <u>The point is</u> to help them **understand that metacognition relates to self-awareness in terms of skills, knowledge, and so forth.**
4. Discuss the idea of **metacognition in relation to activities students can relate to such as sports, doing math homework, or playing a musical instrument**. For example, you're doing math homework and are having difficulty solving a problem. **You know you did some parts of the problem correctly but you're not sure about others. So, you use different techniques you've used before to solve the problem.** You look back at the explanation in the textbook, look at other problems you worked previously, and may even talk to yourself as you try to solve the problem. (To the teacher: Feel free to use your own examples.) Encourage students to contribute their own ideas about situations when they demonstrated metacognition or metacognitive awareness.
5. When you think they understand the concept, ask them: Can you do the same kinds of things when reading? Ask them to write their answers rather than discussing them.
6. When they finish, go on to Question 2 and then Question 3
7. Place the completed surveys in the envelope provided by _____ [researcher's name]. She will pick the surveys up at the end of the day.

Stamina

1. Distribute survey but ask students not to write until after the discussion.
2. Write the word, ***stamina,*** on the board.
3. Ask students how they would define stamina or contexts in which they may have heard the word used.
4. Next, ask students about **situations which they had to have stamina to complete a task**. For example, they may have run a long race and knew they had to pace themselves so they wouldn't wear themselves out before they reached the finish line. Try to help students understand how they might also relate stamina

to academic tasks; **for example, they keep on working on a math problem, even though it's more difficult than they expected and is taking longer than they thought.** <u>The point is</u> to help them understand that **stamina has to do with perseverance and pacing oneself when a task may be difficult or last longer than expected.**

5. When you think students understand the concept, ask: Can you do the same kinds of things when reading? Ask them to write their answer on the survey rather than answering orally.
6. When they finish, go on to Question 2 and then Question 3.
7. Place the completed surveys in the envelope provided by _____ (researcher's name). She will pick the surveys up at the end of the day.

Appendix C
Example of Data Analysis—Question 3

	Step 1: Group similar responses	Step 2: Assign initial code	Step 3: Groups Refined (When groups were too broad)	OR	Groups Combined: (When groups were too narrow)	Step 4: Themes
Q3: Teacher Support	• Provide better books • Provide books of different genres • Interesting books • More books • Choose own books • Choose from short books, picture books (not just harder books)	Books	<u>Book Access</u>**:** Responses referred to access to books • Provide better books • Provide books of different genres • Interesting books • More books <u>Book choice:</u> Responses referred to student choice • Choose own books • Choose from short books, picture books (not just harder books)			**Book Access** **Book Choice**

Example of Data Analysis—Question 3

	Step 1: Group similar responses	Step 2: Assign initial code	Step 3: Groups Refined (When groups were too broad)	OR	Groups Combined: (When groups were too narrow)	Step 4: Themes
Q3: Teacher support	• No time limit for reading • More time to read • Few projects so have more time to read leisurely • Read aloud more (responses did not specify if referring to teacher or student read aloud)	Time to read Read aloud more			<u>Time to read</u>: Student responses refer to time to read; combined the two groups under one theme.	**Time to Read**

Example of Data Analysis—Question 3

	Step 1: Group similar responses	Step 2: Assign initial code	Step 3: Groups Refined (When groups were too broad)	OR	Groups Combined: (When groups were too narrow)	Step 4: Themes
Q3: Teacher support	• Teach more vocabulary • Help us understand words • Help me with words • Teach me to pronounce words	Vocabulary			Teacher Assistance: All student responses refer to teacher assistance; combined the two groups under one theme.	**Teacher Assistance**
	• Help you in reading • Tutor you • Find out where you're having trouble and help • Help me with different genres, dialects • Teach us reading strategies • Teach us about hidden factors in books	Teacher help				

Example of Data Analysis—Question 3

	Step 1: Group similar responses	Step 2: Assign initial code	Step 3: Groups Refined (When groups were too broad)	OR	Groups Combined: (When groups were too narrow)	Step 4: Themes
Q3: Teacher support	• Encourage me to read • Make us want to read, not just make us • Encourage me to read more challenging books	Encouragement			Teacher encouragement: Encouragement seemed to be more descriptive of student responses than teacher affect; therefore, encouragement was used to describe the theme.	**Encouragement**
	• Believe in me • Be nicer • Don't sound frustrated when I don't know words	Affect				

Example of Data Analysis—Question 4

	Step 1: Group similar responses	Step 2: Assign initial code	Step 3: Groups Refined (When groups were too general)	OR	Groups Combined: (When groups were too specific)	Step 4: Themes
Q4: Teacher hindrances	• Hard to find 25-point books • Not enough books	Books	Book Access Responses referred to lack of access to books. • Hard to find 25-point books • Not enough books			**Book access (lack of)**

Example of Data Analysis—Question 4

	Step 1:	Step 2:	Step 3:		Step 4:
	Group similar responses	Assign initial code	Groups Refined (When groups were too general)	OR Groups Combined: (When groups were too specific)	Themes
	• Books too difficult/too easy • Choose books for me Don't let us choose books • Limits books you can read • Can only read between particular levels • Levels make you feel stupid if they're low	Accelerated Reader	Book choice: Responses referred to lack of choice. • Books too difficult/too easy • Choose books for me • Don't let us choose books • Limits books you can read • Can only read between particular levels • Levels make you feel stupid if they're low		**Book choice (lack of)**

Example of Data Analysis—Question 4

	Step 1:	Step 2:	Step 3:		Step 4:
	Group similar responses	Assign initial code	Groups Refined (When groups were too general)	OR Groups Combined: (When groups were too specific)	Themes
Q4: Teacher hindrances	• Not enough time to read in school • Not enough time to read at home • Too many activities so no time to read in class • Too much vocabulary and not enough reading • Too many project • Too much time on AR	Time to read		Time to Read: Student responses refer to (lack of) time to read silently or orally; sometimes required to read aloud too much. Combined the two groups under one theme.	**Time to read (lack of, too much)**
	• Make us read aloud when we don't want to or don't read well • Don't read aloud enough (teacher reads, books on tape, won't call on some students to read aloud)	Read aloud			

Example of Data Analysis—Question 4

	Step 1:	Step 2:	Step 3:		Step 4:
	Group similar responses	Assign initial code	Groups Refined (When groups were too general)	OR Groups Combined: (When groups were too specific)	Themes
Q4: Teacher hindrances	• Don't explain what we read aloud • Don't help us when we have trouble • Not enough support Put pressure on us • Rush us	Teacher Assistance (not as dominant in Confidence as noted in other elements)			**Teacher Assistance (lack of)**