

Rural Teachers' Literacy Practices In and Out of the Classroom:

Exploring Teacher Characteristics and Literacy Tools

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Scholars who recognize the socially constructed nature of literacy acknowledge that important literacy processes take place across settings both in and out of school. Most of what is known about these trans-literacy practices relates to students, but little is known about the literacy practices of teachers in and outside of school. This study examines through survey research the in- and out-of-school literacy practices of teachers in a rural K-12 school district. The findings of the study suggest that for early career teachers, their out-of-school literacy practices are more deliberately connected to their literacy practices in school than for mid- and later-career teachers. This study calls for more descriptive research on the relationships between teachers' literacy practices and use of literacy tools outside of school, and their literacy practices and pedagogical approaches to literacy in school.

Keywords: literacy, teacher literacy practices, literacy contexts, rural literacy, out-of-school literacy

Research demonstrates a powerful relationship between the quality and quantity of texts children read at home with the levels of reading performance and development at school (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006; Marsh & Thompson, 2001; Roberts, Jergens & Burchinal, 2005). Most literacy scholars agree that connecting in- and out-of-school literacies supports the development of complex literacy skills and identities across contexts (e.g., Gaitan, 2012; Hull & Shultz, 2001; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004; Morrow & Young, 1997). Studies of content literacy show that when teachers attempt to connect the home literacies of students to school, students may be more willing to participate in meaningful ways in school literacies (e.g., Mantzicopoulos, Patrick, & Samarapungavan, 2013; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004; Siebert & Draper, 2008). While this scholarship centers on students, their peers, and their families, little research has documented how *teachers'* home literacy practices impact their literacy practices and instruction at school. For these reasons, the purpose of this study is to examine the home and at school literacy practices of teachers employed by one small rural school district in the central Midwest.

Being literate in the 21st century involves active meaning-making and communication across multiple modes and mediums (Alvermann, 2002; Buckingham, 2013; Gainer, 2012; Lin, Li, Deng, & Lee, 2013). Thus, for the purposes of this study,

literacy is defined as the process of using active meaning-making strategies (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, listening, visually representing, and viewing) to construct and represent meaning from texts in and across multiple modes (i.e., verbal, spatial, visual, auditory) through a range of literacy tools and texts (e.g., books, papers, newspapers, music, technological devices). The research questions that drive this study are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' literacy practices at home and their literacy practices at school?
2. How does this relationship differ by age, years of experience, and teaching assignments?

Theoretical Framework

When examined from socio-cultural and critical perspectives, literacy is a complex phenomenon that deeply influences our beliefs about ourselves and the ways in which we interact with others (Hall, 2012; Lycke, 2009; Wortham, 2003). The literacy practices in which we engage and the kinds of texts, devices, and tools with which we practice literacy allow us simultaneously to develop our knowledge about the world and about ourselves, and to communicate that knowledge using a variety of methods within and across social contexts. Literacy practices across

contexts position us socially and psychologically in the various activities of our daily lives, both in our private lives and at work.

These understandings are especially important in the context of schools. Literacy has become a central component of academic life at all levels and across all disciplines, gaining attention from educators, scholars, and policy makers. There is a plethora of research on connecting students' school and home literacies and on the importance of educators considering a variety of texts, literacy tools, content area literacy practices, and students' literacy histories (e.g., Draper, 2002; Siebert & Draper, 2008; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Pearson, Barr, Kamil, & Mosenthal, 2002), all in an effort to consider "what counts" as literacy and how to build bridges for meaning-making across texts and literacy practices (e.g., Finders, 1997; Finn, 2009; Ma'ayan, 2012; Seglem & Lycke, 2013). There is a scarcity of research that examines the literacies of teachers outside of the reading or English/Language Arts classroom and on teachers' literacy practices, either print-based or otherwise, outside of school.

Connecting Literacies across Contexts

In the past two decades, researchers have studied the importance of connecting students' in- and out-of-school literacies in order to bridge the gap between primary discourses learned at home and secondary, or academic discourses. For example, Luis Moll's (1992) now classic notion of "funds of knowledge" has been extended, though not always explicitly, into numerous studies that examine the knowledge and literacy practices with which students enter school. Third space (Gutiérrez, 2008; Moje, et al., 2004; Moje & Ellis, 2004) has been examined as a hybrid learning space where two "scripts" or two normative patterns of interaction intersect, creating the potential for authentic interaction and learning to occur. Within this space, the official talk of school and the talk of students outside school merge to create a new "script" that is generative of new knowledge in teaching and learning. Others have examined students' literacy practices outside of school in specific populations of youth, including working class teen girls (Finders, 1997; Ma'ayan, 2012), working class teen boys (Finn, 2009), urban adolescents (Haddix, 2011; Knoester, 2009; Skerrett, 2011), teenage mothers (Lycke, 2009), and graffiti artists known as taggers (MacGillivray & Curwen, 2007) in order to examine implications for ways in which out-of-school literacies might impact in-school literacies. They suggest that teachers may affirm the out-of-school literacies of students and connect these literacies to the formal curriculum, thereby enhancing

students' in-school literacy engagement and success.

Culturally responsive literacy practices value students' home cultures as they learn to engage in the academic literacies presented by their teachers (Conrad, Gong, & Sipp, 2004; Gay, 2010; Turner, 2007). Kesler (2011) discusses how a curricular approach pairing critical literacy with culturally responsive pedagogy helps include students who may otherwise have been shut out by challenging texts. When teachers recognize and embrace critical literacy in the context of culturally responsive pedagogy, they may anticipate the many ways in which these texts may situate students and their families. In addition, teachers are positioned to become responsive to the unanticipated ways that students respond to texts.

Emerging in the late 1980s (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Gee, 1996; Street, 1993), a new literacy studies (NLS) approach to teaching and learning with texts has been useful in pushing literacy instruction beyond traditional instructional practices that emphasize individual mastery of abstract concepts and skills. New media literacy practices rely upon collaborative, social, and context-specific activity (Hickey, 2011). NLS emphasizes that the changing nature of work, language, and literacy demands that we take into account power relations embedded in language and social regulation of text, informal learning, and context-based sense-making (Larson & Marsh, 2010).

Literacy and Identity

Researchers have shown a strong connection between in- and out-of-school literacy practices and identity development. In this body of research, factors such as the availability of literacy resources and the opportunity to use them impacts the ways in which students are identified and identify themselves as literate. Moje, Luke, Davies, and Street (2009) explain that identity production is socially situated and dynamic. Hall and her colleagues (Hall, Johnson, Juzwik, Wortham, & Mosley, 2010) document across three secondary school settings how teachers use language deliberately to position themselves and their students as particular types of individuals and particular types of readers in relation to the literate acts in their classrooms or lives and expected identities for school success. Through literacy, texts, and media, we are poised to not only reflect the self, but also to produce the self. Thus, if particular text and media types construct particular identities, then when designing literacy curricula, educators must carefully consider the kinds of identity construction they are supporting and dismissing through teaching

and learning with particular kinds of texts and literacy practices.

Teachers' Literacy Practices

In spite of recent literacy research on students in and out of school from multiple angles, there is little information available about the literacy practices of teachers either in or outside of school. By extending from the research conducted on youth literacies outside of school, it is reasonable to assess that teachers' literacies will influence their literacy practices and identities in school. Recognizing these self-identifications and practices is vital as research has established how an educator's self-identity and dispositions, especially in the work place, are key places to begin investigations for change (Hurd, 2010). Teachers' educational backgrounds and occupational status significantly influence identity formation in this regard (Hurd, 2012a, 2012b, 2013). Further, their approaches to literacy in their curriculum and the texts they include, exclude, or overlook, will be impacted.

A few studies have been conducted that examine the ways that *reading* teachers, both pre-service and in-service, connect across home and school literacies, their own literate histories, and the development of an identity as reading teacher (summarized by Gomez, 2009). In her study, Gomez (2009) found that reading teachers value traditional forms of literacy (reading and writing) in their professional and personal lives, they read for information and for grading, but they do not spend as much time as they would like reading for pleasure. The reading teachers studied believe that their personal literate selves connect to their professional literate lives, some more "enthusiastically" than others, which paralleled their enthusiasm about supporting students' connections between personal and school reading and writing.

Teachers' Literacy Knowledge and Professional Development

The facts that research is extremely limited on teachers' literacy practices outside of school and on how those literacies influence their pedagogies and literate identities present serious challenges. While studies exist on preparing literacy educators, once preservice teachers become teachers, the research has little to say about their literacy practices outside of school and their approaches to literacy pedagogy as influenced by their own literacy practices. There is minimal research on how teachers' professional development impacts their thinking about literacy

and their pedagogies, especially in relation to new literacies and media literacy.

Graham (2008) found that teachers' digital literacies fell into three categories including "serious solitary self-taught," "serious solitary school-taught," and "playful social". Both types of "serious solitary" teachers used their digital literacies to "get on" at work with such activities as word processing. "Playfully social" teachers used their digital literacies to play games and to maintain and build friendships outside of school. None of the teachers in the study extended their personal digital literacies into the classroom. Kellinger (2012) studied teachers who use the tools of new literacies in their classrooms yet may not embrace digital literacy as a social phenomenon, neither in the classroom nor in their lives outside of school. He suggests that pressure to differentiate and meet standards may push teachers into using technology for drill and practice rather than for more authentic social meaning making. Burnett (2011) found that preservice teachers only partly engaged in the distributed and collaborative literacies associated with new literacies; they did not participate in media production and rarely engaged in playful social practices (Graham, 2008), also known as new literacy practices that are often associated with younger groups of people. Preservice teachers' new literacy practices were "highly contingent" on context, especially in regards to maintaining current self-narratives and resisting risky literacy practices when they might seem inappropriate in settings such as schools.

In a related study, researchers examined the gap between literacy educators' knowledge of content disciplines and the literacy strategies often suggested to content experts for use in their classrooms (Johnson, Watson, Delahunty, McSwiggen, & Smith, 2011). The study suggests that teachers who are content experts understand what it means to be literate in their disciplines and what texts are most salient to their disciplines literacy practices. Like the work of Draper, Smith, Hall, and Siebert (2005), this study points to a disjuncture between authentic content area literacy strategies and what literacy strategies are recommended to them by textbooks and other sources that offer "generic" strategies (see also Draper, 2002 and Siebert & Draper, 2008). While content area teachers may have deep understandings of major concepts, essential texts and literacy practices, little is known about how or if teachers engage with texts and literacies related to their content areas outside of school.

The few studies that examine teachers' out-of-school literacies emphasize texts and practices that originate in school, such as teacher-authors who describe their experiences as they attempt to learn a

literacy form of their students. For example, Mahar (2003) learned the Japanese art form, anime, in order to connect with his students' rich literate lives outside of school. While these types of literacy connections are important, they only begin to tell us about the literacies that teachers engage with outside of school. These challenges make it difficult for schools to understand the impact of teachers' literacies on their instruction and for professional development to initiate change where it might be warranted. While literacy teacher educators may understand the importance of the influence of home literacy practices on school literacy practices, this knowledge extends from what we know about students and not related to teachers themselves. If progress is to be made in research and pedagogies that nurture the literacies of all participants in literate communities, greater consideration needs to be given to how teachers experience literacy practices across different contexts of their lives.

Rural Literacies

The literate practices and identities of rural teachers and students cannot be characterized as wholly different from those of people in other contexts. However, literacy researchers across contexts understand that particular literacy practices shape and are shaped by the ways in which the inhabitants of those communities view themselves and their possible futures as participants in work, school, and family life (Bomer & Maloch, 2012; Comer, 2103; Edmondson, 2001; Schafft & Jackson, 2010; Ziegler & Davis, 2008). The fact that over fifty percent of school districts in the U.S. are in rural areas (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013) make the study of rural communities worth our attention. Rural researchers emphasize several characteristics of rural education that make the setting unique. For example, Lester (2012) writes about several factors that have potential to place rural children at risk for academic difficulties and disadvantage. She discusses the lack of influence rural community members have on education policy since rural schools are not on decision-makers' radar, a prevalence of poverty in rural communities-- 19.65% of rural families are considered to be below the poverty line (Durham & Smith, 2006), and the rural "brain drain" phenomenon that occurs when educated people relocate to suburban and urban areas in search of financial, educational, and employment opportunities.

Although lower student-teacher ratios often exist in rural areas as compared to urban or suburban allowing for more individual attention, less availability of specialty classes or a lack of teachers

trained in high need areas can be a problem for some schools, resulting in school and district consolidation. This issue is especially true for offerings of higher-level math and science classes, the arts, world languages, and for curricula and teachers serving students with special needs. Technology may help bridge this gap for some rural schools through the use of satellite and internet connections (Gollnick & Chinn, 2012). Edmondson (2001) advocates for a kind of rural literacy that informs "a new cultural model for rural life" (p. 9) where community members raise important questions about how school literacy practices might be aligned with neoliberal political agendas that may not support viable, democratic rural lifestyles for young people. In order to better understand the literacy needs and practices of rural students, it seems important to understand the in- and out-of-school literacy practices of their teachers as well.

Methodology

The current study was part of a larger, regional research effort initiated in 2010 to examine the intersections and divergences of literacy practices of teachers and students across home and school contexts. The phase of the project reported here presents an analysis of data gathered through an anonymous online survey that asked teachers in a small rural school districts about the literacy tools and devices they use, and with what frequency, both at school and at home. The researchers hoped to learn about the ways in which teachers across schools within a single public rural district (grades K-12) practice literacy in home and school contexts.

Context and Participants

The participating school district is located in a Midwestern rural town and is comprised of two schools, an elementary/middle level school (grades K-8) and a high school (grades 9-12). The town's population is approximately 2100 with a median family income at approximately \$59,524. The town is located within 30 miles of an urban university community with several post-secondary institutions including the authors' university, and it is within several hours driving distance from at least four major metropolitan areas.

The population of the town is predominantly White (97.96%), with smaller percentages of African Americans (0.24%), Native Americans (0.24%), Asians (0.15%), and residents of two or more races

(1.07%)¹. Significant increases in minority populations, especially that of African Americans (150.00%), were seen between the 2000 and 2010 decade, averaging an overall increase of 77.38% for all minority races. A population increase of 7.74% (148 residents) was experienced during that same decade.

The school district currently serves approximately 523 students, with 282 students at the elementary school, 80 students at the middle level, and 161 students at the high school. The percentage of students using the free and reduced-price meal program are 23.4%, 17.5%, and 21.1% at the elementary, middle and high school levels, respectively (Illinois Report Card, 2012). The distribution of racial identification among students in the district is similar to that of the town where 96.6% identify as White, 0.2% identify as African American, 0.2% identify as Hispanic, 0.4% identify as Asian, and 2.7% identify as two or more races. Our survey used the same racial designations as the US census and the teachers responses represented only two categories, 88% identified as White, and 11.8% identified as Asian / Pacific Islander. The district ratio of student-to-certified staff is approximately 14:1 with a higher student-to-teacher ratio at the elementary and middle levels when compared to the high school. The district employed 45 full-time teachers in the fall of 2012, and 19 (42%) responded to the survey. This sample included participants from all three schools with stronger representation from the elementary/middle level school (68%). Our analysis was conducted on 17 surveys (38% of the district's teacher population), because two respondents returned incomplete survey responses and were excluded from the data.

Data Collection and Tools

Anonymous data was collected from teachers in the school district through an online survey developed and managed by Select Survey at the authors' university. The authors served as the primary contacts with the schools. A research proposal form was completed for the school district, indicating information about literacy and the online instrument, the number of teachers and students desired, and the different levels of recruitment for the study. Once this information was approved and access gained, participants were notified by the superintendent of the consent forms and web links

whereby participants could access and complete the survey online.

The survey was available for teachers to complete for nineteen days. It was designed to determine the relationships between the use of various literacy practices and tools with which teachers engage at home and school. We also hoped to determine what relationships (if any) existed in teachers' literacy practices and tools and their demographic information, their length of service as teachers, and the grade level(s) at which they taught (teacher characteristics). The survey included both forced choice and open-ended questions. Survey questions asked teachers about their demographics (age, gender, race, years teaching, and grade level(s) taught), literacy definition(s), literacy skills and/or practices used at home and while teaching at school, personal descriptions and practices concerning reading and writing, and the types of and frequency of use of various types of literacies.

Survey Structure

When teachers completed the survey, they were asked to respond to four questions about their background/experiences. The first question asks teachers how long they have worked in the field of education. The second question asks how long they have worked as a teacher at their current school. The third question asks what level of students they currently teach. The final question asks how long they have worked as a teacher at that level. All four questions use the same response metric (less than one year, 1-3 years, 4-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and more than 15 years).

Analytic Approach

Our analysis was conducted using a quantitative analysis of the numerical data as well as a qualitative survey analysis of the diversity within and across categories. The report of our findings incorporates both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The quantitative data analysis revealed several important trends regarding teachers' age, gender in comparison with their literacy tool use and access. The qualitative analysis pointed to a range of richer descriptions of the teachers' literate lives in and out of school, but ultimately raised more questions than it answered. For the quantitative analysis, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine a range of literacy tools as dependent variables and

¹ Demographic data were retrieved from the 2010 US Census (<http://www.census.gov/2010census/>) unless otherwise noted.

several independent categorical population variables. The independent variables included age, gender, and years at level/type of level (i.e., elementary, middle, high schools, multiple levels). The dependent variables are outlined below in the Findings section.

The qualitative survey analysis included an investigation of the diversity within and across several categories of teachers, what are called independent variables for the quantitative analysis, to determine the diversity in teachers' literacy tool availability and use. Qualitative survey research is pre-structured and deductive in its approach. Jansen (2010) explains:

In the pre-structured survey, some main topics, dimensions and categories are defined beforehand and the identification of these matters in the research units is guided by a structured protocol for questioning or observation. In the pre-structured case the diversity to be studied is defined beforehand and the aim of descriptive analysis is only to see which of the predefined characteristics exist empirically in the population under study. (p. 4)

The diversity we sought to identify was predefined (Jansen, 2010) by the matrix of options for responding to survey questions. We did not interview participants, but the survey was designed around a set of themes including availability and use of certain literacy tools at home and at school. Possible answers were variable and inclusive allowing the participants to offer us a rich picture of what literacy tools they used, where, and how often.

Findings

Teacher Characteristics and Literacy Tools

In this section we discuss how the participants' literacy practices are related to availability and frequency of use of literacy tools at home and at school. Literacy tool use is disaggregated by teacher age, gender, and years at level/type of level. In addition, literacy tools are disaggregated by teacher characteristics to determine what influence these characteristics (e.g., age, gender, etc.) may have on classroom activities.

Literacy tools that teachers were asked to consider on the survey included books, magazines, personal computers/laptops/other personal electronic devices, newspapers, TVs, VCRs/DVDs/DVRs, music players (stereo, CD player, radio), and musical instruments. The survey also asked separately about specific electronic literacy devices teachers used and included cell phone or smart phone; personal computer; I-pad or other multi-use personal device; I-pod, MP3 player or other personal music player; and Nook, Kindle, or other electronic reading devices.

We separated electronic devices from other literacy tools since we could not assume that teachers shared our comprehensive definition of literacy tools which includes media devices. The complete listing of literacy tools was used in reference to questions asked of teachers concerning their literacy practices at home and at school.

General Trends

In examining the literacy tools and characteristics among all teachers' responses, we found that the distribution of teachers across grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school) varied, yet was comparable to the distribution of staff working within each of those same school buildings. Accordingly, 41.18% (n=7) of teachers reported working at the elementary level, 17.65% (n=3) at the middle level, 5.88% (n=1) at the high school, and 35.29% (n=6) reported working at multiple grades or levels.

Of the teachers working at all levels, 17.6% (n=3) identified as male, and 82.4% (n=14) identified as female. Also, 89.5% (n=15) identified as White/European American, with 10.5% (n=2) of participants identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander. A significant amount of the participants, 70.6% (n=12), reported being 41 years of age or older. Whether age and/or gender of a teacher influence the types and frequency of use of literacy tools will be addressed when the influence of teacher age/gender and grade level on literacy tools is discussed.

An examination was also conducted of the number of years teachers had worked and the number of years they taught at the same level or school(s). The majority of teachers (70.59%) reported having worked for 15 or more years in the field, while only 5.88% indicated they worked between 1-3 years. Regarding the number of years teachers taught, nearly two-thirds (64.7%) of the teachers indicated they had worked at their particular level and in their particular school(s) for 11 or more years. More than one-third (35.29%) of teachers responded they had worked at their current grade level(s) for five years or less; and less than one-quarter (23.5%) reported that they worked at their current school(s) for five years or less. The length of time a teacher has taught at a school(s), the school level(s), or has worked, in general, may influence the types and use of literacy tools. This will be addressed when the influence of teacher years at a particular grade level / school on literacy tools is discussed.

Literacy Tools Owned and Used at Home (Frequencies)

One research question concerns whether teachers' literacy tool use differed between home and school environments. The frequency at which each literacy tool is used may be a critical component in examining the teachers' home and school literacy practices. Their literacy practices can be better understood by delineating those tools with which they might most frequently engage. To learn about the frequency of literacy tool use by teachers at home and locations away from the workplace, we provided question stems, then teachers responded with a

frequency for availability and use of each literacy tool. For availability, teachers responded within options from a range of 0 to >100 and for frequency of use from a range of "several times per day" to "once per month." The stems were (1) How many of the following do you have in your home, (2) how often do you do the following in your home or other places outside of the work place, and (3) how often you use personal electronic devices (E-devices) in your home/other places outside workplace.

Table 1

Literacy Tools Owned at Home

Books	Frequency	Percent
21-50	1	5.9
51-100	4	23.5
>100	12	70.6
Total	17	100.0

Magazines	Frequency	Percent
2-4	3	17.6
5-10	2	11.8
11-20	3	17.6
21-50	4	23.5
51-100	1	5.9
>100	4	23.5
Total	17	100.0

TVs	Frequency	Percent
1	2	11.8
2-4	11	64.7
5-10	4	23.5
Total	17	100.0

Musical Instruments	Frequency	Percent
0	4	23.5
1	1	5.9
2-4	8	47.1
5-10	3	17.6
11-20	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Personal Computer and/or Laptop	Frequency	Percent
2-4	12	70.6
5-10	4	23.5
11-20	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

The highest frequencies for having access to particular literacy tools showed that a majority of teachers (70.6%) have a large amount (Books >100) of books in their homes, and 52.9% reported having at least 21 or more magazines; of those who owned TVs, 64.7% indicated having at least 2-4 at home. Interestingly, 76.5% of teacher reported having at least 2-4 musical instruments in their homes, and 70.6% having reported 2-4 personal computers/laptops (see Table 1). These figures suggest that a large number of teachers in the school district place an emphasis on having literacy tools that involve print materials, and they have regular access to alternative sources for receptive and expressive literacy practice involving televisions and musical instruments. However, because they own these tools, or have them in their homes, does not necessarily mean they use them. Examining the connection(s) to having access to certain literacy tools against frequency of use will be of particular interest in this regard.

In examining the frequency at which certain literacy tools are used at home, 64.7% of teachers indicated they read books between once and several times per day; 64.7% reported watching TV or movies between once and several times per day. In relation to listening to music, 82.4% reported occurrences between once and several times per

week. In looking at electronic devices, we found that the overwhelming majority of teachers (94.1%) reported using an electronic device for work tasks and for personal tasks while at home (see Table 2). This finding reinforces the notion that multiliteracies are an essential part of teachers' accomplishment of work tasks outside of school as well as for everyday tasks at home (Buckingham, 2006). In reference to having access to musical instruments, described in the previous section, nearly 60% of teachers reported not playing the instrument(s) at all (see Table 2). This indicates that even though the majority of teachers had musical instruments in their homes, an almost equal number do not use them.

As previously mentioned, teachers were asked about their use of specific electronic literacy tools at home or outside of the workplace as a separate set of responses from other literacy tools. The majority of teachers (94.1%) reported using their cell or smart phones and personal computers at least once to several times per day outside of school, and 70.6% indicated using a Nook/Kindle at least once per day (see Table 2). These findings corroborate the previous findings made about the presence of multi-literacies in teachers' daily lives. What levels of carryover these tools have to the classroom is explored in the next section.

Table 2

Frequency of Literacy Tools Used at Home

Read Books	Frequency	Percent
.00	1	5.9
once per day	4	23.5
several times per day	7	41.2
once per week	1	5.9
several times per week	1	5.9
once per month	3	17.6
Total	17	100.0

Watch TV or Movies	Frequency	Percent
once per day	7	41.2

several times per day	4	23.5
once per week	2	11.8
several times per week	4	23.5
Total	17	100.0

Listen to Music	Frequency	Percent
once per day	3	17.6
several times per day	11	64.7
once per week	1	5.9
several times per week	2	11.8
Total	17	100.0

Electronic Device for Work Tasks	Frequency	Percent
once per day	2	11.8
several times per day	14	82.4
several times per week	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Electronic Device for Personal Tasks	Frequency	Percent
once per day	5	29.4
several times per day	11	64.7
several times per week	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Cell Phone or Smart Phone	Frequency	Percent
once per day	2	11.8
several times per day	14	82.4
once per week	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Personal Computer	Frequency	Percent
once per day	7	41.2
several times per day	9	52.9
several times per week	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Nook, Kindle or Other Reading Device	Frequency	Percent
none	5	29.4
once per day	7	41.2
once per week	1	5.9

several times per week	1	5.9
once per month	3	17.6
Total	17	100.0

Literacy Tools Available and Used at School (Frequencies)

For determining teachers' access to and use of literacy tools at school and for teaching or work-related activities, we provided teachers with the same structure of stems and responses as we did for learning about their home access and use. The response ranges were the same as for stems related to home. Question stems for in-school literacy tool access and frequency of use included (1) How many of these do you personally have available for your use at school; and (2) how often do you use the following for teaching or work-related activities. The majority of teachers (76.5%) reported having a large

amount (>100) of books personally available for use at school. The majority (75%) reported having between 1 and 4 music players at school; 76.5% indicated having between 51-100 personal computers/laptops. A strong majority (82.4%) of teachers reported having no musical instruments for use at school (see Table 3). These figures seem to suggest that even though the majority of teachers had musical instruments at home or away from the workplace (though they did not use them), they did not have musical instruments available for use at school. As seen with the teachers' home access, a large number and range of literacy tools are available to them at school.

Table 3

Literacy Tools Available at School

Books	Frequency	Percent
11-20	2	11.8
21-50	1	5.9
51-100	1	5.9
>100	13	76.5
Total	17	100.0

Music Players	Frequency	Percent
0	2	11.8
1	9	52.9
2-4	3	17.6
21-50	1	5.9
>100	1	5.9
Total	16	94.1
Missing	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Personal Computer or Laptop	Frequency	Percent
1	5	29.4
2-4	2	11.8
5-10	1	5.9
21-50	3	17.6
51-100	2	11.8
>100	4	23.5
Total	17	100.0

Musical Instrument	Frequency	Percent
0	14	82.4
1	1	5.9
2-4	1	5.9
21-50	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Examining the connection(s) of certain literacy tools and their frequency of use at school addresses the study's research questions. We found that 82.4% of teachers indicated they use books between once and several times per day in their teaching or work-related activities. The majority of teachers (76.5%) reported using personal computers/laptops once to several times per day in teaching or work-related activities (see Table 4). It is not surprising that teachers would use books and computers with a high frequency during the school day. What our survey does not tell us is what is behind the decisions that

determine when and how to use these tools for curricular and instructional purposes.

While 17.6% of the teachers reported watching TV or movies once per week for teaching or work-related activities, a larger number of teachers (41.2%) reported that they do not use TV or movies at work. These numbers raise multiple questions regarding teachers' values and rationales for deciding whether or not to use media such as TV and movies. A further question to be explored relates to the content area and/or curricular purpose to which teachers find value in using these tools or not.

Table 4

Frequency of Literacy Tools Used at School

Read Books	Frequency	Percent
once per day	1	5.9
several times per day	13	76.5
several times per week	2	11.8
once per month	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Watch TV or Movies	Frequency	Percent
none	7	41.2
once per week	3	17.6
once per month	7	41.2
Total	17	100.0

Personal Computer or Laptop	Frequency	Percent
once per day	7	41.2
several times per day	6	35.3
several times per week	3	17.6
once per month	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Influence of Teacher Age and Gender on Literacy Tools

Employing a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), literacy tool use was disaggregated by teacher age. This analysis was conducted to determine what influence age had on access to literacy tools and their frequency of use. Significant associations were found for two literacy tools, books and musical instruments, and teacher age, $p = .004$ and $.006$, respectively (see Table 5). The findings regarding books showed that teachers between the ages of 18-30 owned twice as many books as those between 51 and older. This is an interesting finding as it contradicts, to some degree, the notion that younger generations may engage less frequently in purchasing and/or reading books, as compared to older generations. One might expect to see the opposite with digital literacies and a digital generation (Buckingham, 2006). The finding regarding musical instruments showed that teachers age 51 and older owned twice as many instruments as those between the ages of 26-40. The actual frequency of use, however, among these ages was shown to be insignificant. At the very least, this finding suggests that veteran teachers may have contact with or live with others, possibly their own children, who own instruments. Regardless, the finding that certain teachers have more books or musical instruments reinforces the notion that avid readers engage in multiple literacies at various ages.

Significant associations were also found among teachers using certain print sources at work for teaching/work-related activities and teacher age.

When responding to this question on the survey, teachers within the 26-30 year old age-range reported higher mean scores for reading magazines and newspapers, several times per day. Teachers of other ages had notably lower frequencies for readings newspapers during the day, week, and/or month. These results reinforce the findings seen above concerning books and suggest that relatively younger teachers still use newspapers and magazines more often than other teachers, both veteran and beginning teachers (see Table 5). It also suggests that some teachers may still employ traditional methods for keeping up with local and world events. Questions raised by these results are related to the purposes by which teachers use magazines and newspapers and whether it can be seen directly in their design of lessons and activities. It is plausible that teachers use newspapers and magazines to remain current about the communities where they live and work, policy issues affecting their jobs, or other aspects of their lives that fuel other interests outside of school.

Comparable associations were found among teachers using certain literacy tools for personal use by gender. Male teachers reported higher frequencies for reading books and newspapers, several times per day, as compared to female teachers (see Table 5). Accordingly, female teachers' mean scores for how often they engaged with reading these literacy tools were lower, only once per week. Questions raised by these findings suggest differing gender roles outside of the work place, perhaps affording males more reading time than females.

Table 5

Influence of Teacher Age and Gender on Literacy Tools

Oneway ANOVA For Literacy Tools By Age						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Books	Between Groups	4.416	5	.883	6.624	.004
	Within Groups	1.467	11	.133		
	Total	5.882	16			
Musical instrument	Between Groups	17.025	5	3.405	6.208	.006

Within Groups	6.033	11	.548
Total	23.059	16	

Frequency Of Literacy Tool Use By Age

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
Read magazines	18-25	1	6.0000	.	.	.	.	6.00	6.00
	26-30	1	6.0000	.	.	.	.	6.00	6.00
	31-40	3	4.0000	2.64575	1.52753	-2.5724	10.5724	1.00	6.00
	41-50	6	4.6667	1.96638	.80277	2.6031	6.7303	1.00	6.00
	51-60	4	5.2500	.95743	.47871	3.7265	6.7735	4.00	6.00
	61-older	1	6.0000	.	.	.	.	6.00	6.00
	Total	16	4.9375	1.69189	.42297	4.0360	5.8390	1.00	6.00
Read newspapers	18-25	1	1.0000	.	.	.	.	1.00	1.00
	26-30	1	6.0000	.	.	.	.	6.00	6.00
	31-40	3	2.3333	2.30940	1.33333	-3.4035	8.0702	1.00	5.00
	41-50	6	3.8333	2.31661	.94575	1.4022	6.2645	1.00	6.00
	51-60	5	3.4000	2.50998	1.12250	.2834	6.5166	1.00	6.00
	61-older	1	1.0000	.	.	.	.	1.00	1.00
	Total	17	3.2353	2.30568	.55921	2.0498	4.4208	1.00	6.00

Frequency Of Literacy Tool Use By Gender

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
Read books	male	3	4.0000	1.00000	.57735	1.5159	6.4841	3.00	5.00
	female	4	3.1429	1.74784	.46713	2.1337	4.1520	.00	6.00
	Total	7	3.2941	1.64942	.40004	2.4461	4.1422	.00	6.00
Read newspapers	male	3	4.3333	1.52753	.88192	.5388	8.1279	3.00	6.00
	female	4	3.1429	1.29241	.34541	2.3966	3.8891	1.00	5.00
	Total	7	3.3529	1.36662	.33145	2.6503	4.0556	1.00	6.00

Influence of Teacher Years at Level(s) / Type of Level(s) on Literacy Tools

Significant associations were found between teachers' frequencies of reading newspapers at home and their number of years at the level(s) at which they taught. Results revealed that 88% of teachers at

the elementary and middle level combined who have worked between 1-3 years at their current level had the highest mean scores for reading newspapers at least once per day (see Table 6). Teachers at other levels reported lower frequencies for readings newspapers during the day, week, or month. These results corroborate the findings above that newer

teachers indeed engaged in various literacies, more so than teachers with more years in the field. Using a one-way ANOVA, literacy tool use was disaggregated by teachers and type of level(s). The results determined what influence these teacher factors had on literacy tools and their frequency of use. Significant associations were found for one literacy tool, newspapers, and the level(s) at which teachers taught, $p = .005$ (see Table 6). The finding showed that teachers at the middle school and high school and at multiple levels read at home more often than those in the elementary level. Moreover, the middle grades teachers reported the highest mean scores for reading frequencies for books and newspapers (5.0 and 5.50, respectively) as compared to the other levels analyzed (see Table 6). These results raise questions across levels about the kind of reading teachers do independently for leisure or for work purposes, and the results raise questions about higher grade level teachers and the reasons they more often read books and newspapers for personal and professional purposes.

Influence of Literacy Tools on Classroom Activities (Frequencies)

The research question concerning literacy tools and those used in a teacher’s teaching/work-related activities showed that teachers’ use of literacy tools may be a critical component in examining the impact of their home-to-school literacy practices. The survey question was: (1) How often do you use these personal E-devices in your teaching/work-related activities? The specific E-devices of concern and which are discussed in this section include the

following: cell or smart phones, personal computers, Nook/Kindles, I-Pads, and I-Pods.

Applying earlier results from Table 2 in comparison to Table 8, we found an interesting disconnect over the number of teachers reporting electronic devices used at home as compared to those same devices used at school for teaching activities. The vast majority of teachers (94.1%) reported using their cell or smart phones and personal computers at least once to several times per day outside of school, and nearly three-fourths (70.6%) indicated using a Nook/Kindle at least once per day. But these device frequencies decrease when related to teaching activities. In fact, teachers who frequently use electronic devices at home use them at a much lower frequency at school. The majority of teachers (76.5%) reported *not* using their cell or smart phones at school for teaching activities (see Table 7). This suggests an antithetical positioning between teachers’ understanding and that of practice about multiliteracies used in the classroom (Graham, 2008; Kellinger, 2012). Moreover, the majority (70.6%) of teachers reported *never* using a Nook/Kindle or other electronic reading device for teaching or in school-related activities. In addition, at least half of the teachers (56.3 and 47.1, respectively) reported that they never use I-pads or I-pods (or other multi-use personal devices), nor do they use MP3 players (or other personal music players) in their teaching or work-related activities. These findings raise questions about why teachers rarely use digital literacy devices for teaching or work-related activities, and why more up-to-date or innovative technologies are not being used for these same purposes.

Table 6

Influence of Teacher Years at Level(s) / Type of Level(s) on Literacy Tools

Frequency Of Literacy Tool Use By Years At Level									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
	1-3	2	5.0000	1.41421	1.00000	-7.7062	17.7062	4.00	6.00
	4-5	4	3.0000	1.82574	.91287	.0948	5.9052	1.00	5.00
Read newspapers	11-15	3	2.6667	1.15470	.66667	-.2018	5.5351	2.00	4.00
	>15	8	3.3750	1.06066	.37500	2.4883	4.2617	2.00	5.00
	Total	17	3.3529	1.36662	.33145	2.6503	4.0556	1.00	6.00

Oneway ANOVA For Literacy Tools By Level(s)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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	Between Groups	20.549	4	5.137	6.605	.005
Read newspapers	Within Groups	9.333	12	.778		
	Total	29.882	16			

Frequency Of Literacy Tool Use By Type Of Level

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Read books	Elem.	6	2.6667	.51640	.21082	2.1247	3.2086	2.00	3.00
	Upper elem.	4	3.7500	1.50000	.75000	1.3632	6.1368	3.00	6.00
	Middle grades	2	5.0000	1.41421	1.00000	7.7062	17.7062	4.00	6.00
	High school	1	.0000	.	.	.	.	.00	.00
	multiple levels	4	3.7500	2.06155	1.03078	.4696	7.0304	2.00	6.00
	Total	17	3.2941	1.64942	.40004	2.4461	4.1422	.00	6.00
Read newspapers	Elem.	6	2.6667	1.21106	.49441	1.3957	3.9376	1.00	4.00
	Upper elem.	4	2.2500	.50000	.25000	1.4544	3.0456	2.00	3.00
	Middle grades	2	5.5000	.70711	.50000	-.8531	11.8531	5.00	6.00
	High school	1	4.0000	.	.	.	.	4.00	4.00
	multiple levels	4	4.2500	.50000	.25000	3.4544	5.0456	4.00	5.00
	Total	17	3.3529	1.36662	.33145	2.6503	4.0556	1.00	6.00

There was one exception to the findings regarding a lack of use of electronic literacy tools for teaching or other work-related activities at school. The majority of teachers (88.2%) indicated they used their personal computers at work several times per day. This finding suggests that computers are still a mainstay for teachers, in terms of their daily teaching

or work-related activities or with “getting on” at work (Graham, 2008). While teachers’ use of more versatile electronic devices at school is limited (Table 7), the findings raise questions about whether and why teachers are implementing more traditional approaches with regard to literacy teaching and learning in lieu of using digital tools.

Table 7

Influence of Literacy Tools on Classroom Activities

Cell Phone or Smart Phone	Frequency	Percent
none	13	76.5

several times per day	2	11.8
several times per week	1	5.9
once per month	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Personal Computer or Laptop	Frequency	Percent
none	1	5.9
several times per day	15	88.2
once per month	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Nook or Kindle	Frequency	Percent
none	12	70.6
several times per day	1	5.9
several times per week	2	11.8
once per month	2	11.8
Total	17	100.0

I-pad or Other Personal Use Device	Frequency	Percent
none	9	52.9
several times per day	4	23.5
several times per week	1	5.9
once per month	2	11.8
Total	16	94.1
Missing	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

I-pod, MP3, or Other Personal Music Player	Frequency	Percent
none	8	47.1
once per day	1	5.9
several times per day	1	5.9
once per week	2	11.8
once per month	5	29.4
Total	17	100.0

Conclusions

The data from this study yield three very important conclusions. First, we can conclude that the rural teachers in our study preferred reading and using print sources at home and at school more than any other literacy tool. Although, the participants in

this study reported using various literacy tools quite frequently at home, they still, by and large, preferred engaging with books and newspapers more often than engaging with other literacy tools. Similarly, teachers within the 26-30 year-old age range especially preferred using magazines and newspapers for teaching over those in other age categories. This print

source tendency increased as the grade level(s) taught also increased. Our survey questions did not pose questions related to why these preferences were made. Therefore, it is difficult to provide a conclusive rationale behind these preferences. However, it is probable that these teachers (based on their age) that may have made these choices based on comfort levels since they reported having access to a variety of different literacy tools and devices, both at home and at school. Perhaps, if these teachers spent more time engaging with traditional texts than many of the other literacy tools, as a result, these preferences would continue throughout their adult years.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from this is that having access to computers and other electronic devices does not directly influence teachers' integration of technology into their literacy teaching, learning, and assessment practices. While the participants in this study had access to computers in nearly all of their classrooms, they tended to use computers primarily for non-instructional functions. This finding directly contrasts with scholarship on digital literacies in classrooms in two ways. First, it refutes the idea that rural schools do not have access to the tools of digital literacies, and second, it contests the notion that teachers who have access to digital literacy tools will automatically integrate this technology into their classroom practices. Research has established that there is a gap in teachers' understandings about how to make effective use of digital literacies, especially the social aspects of media use in learning (Kellinger, 2012). If teachers do not understand how using electronic devices will fit into the existing literacy curriculum as it is implemented in their classrooms, and if they are unwilling to or are uninformed about how to shift to a more social approach to learning, they may resist bringing in new tools for teaching and learning into classroom literacy activities (Kervin, Verenikina, Jones & Beath, 2013). Further study is called for

investigating these and other teachers' reluctance toward using computers and other digital literacy tools in their classrooms beyond basic functions and purposes.

The final conclusion that can be drawn from the data from this study relates 21st century technologies. While a significant number of the rural educators in the study reported using 21st century technologies, such as smart phones, computers, and Nooks/Kindles, on a regular basis outside of the classroom, they did not utilize this technology on a regular basis inside of the classroom. The survey questions did not probe why these teachers made such choices. However, it is probable the lack of professional development in this area is one rational behind this choice. Further study into the connections between teachers in and out of school literacies and the decisions they make for literacy instruction is warranted.

While this investigation resulted in significant findings regarding the participants' home and school literacy practices, the study had three significant limitations. First, this study involved only one rural school district. Future research on this topic might involve a more comprehensive study of teachers across school districts in a particular region, nationally or even internationally to provide greater insight into how different rural contexts shape the participants' responses. Second, this study involved single-survey data. Future research on this topic might involve qualitative methods such as interviews and observations to provide a richer and deeper understanding how various literacy tools are being used in and out of the classroom. Finally, this study examined a snapshot of teachers' literacy practices at one particular moment in time. A follow-up study on this topic might examine teachers' literacy practices over a period of several years. This would provide valuable insight into how home and school literacy practices might or might not change over time, along with insight into possible factors that might shape these practices.

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