Love and Language in the Workshop:
Case Studies from the Workshop Classroom

By

SUZANNE COLOMBE
B.A., University of Iowa, 1997
M.Ed., DePaul University, 2002

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2013

Chicago, Illinois

Dissertation Committee:

Yolanda Majors, Chair and Advisor
William Ayers
David Mayrowetz, Educational Policy Studies
Cynthia Shanahan, Curriculum and Instruction
Alfred Tatum, Curriculum and Instruction
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Chapter:**

Prologue.........................................................................................................................1

1. Introduction/Study Rational.........................................................................................6
   1.1 Motivation for the Study.......................................................................................8
   1.2 Overview of Chapters.........................................................................................14

2. Literature Review.......................................................................................................18
   2.1 The Social Constructivist Perspective...............................................................21
   2.2 The Cognitive Constructivist Perspective.........................................................28

3. Multiple Perspectives: Methodology for the Study.................................................33
   3.1 Introduction........................................................................................................34
   3.2 Content and Context........................................................................................35
      3.2.1 Imagining the Workshop Classroom: A Past Case Study.........................37
      3.2.2 Assumptions..............................................................................................52
      3.2.3 Goals.........................................................................................................53
   3.3 Specific Methodology.........................................................................................53
      3.3.1 Case Study Format....................................................................................56
      3.3.2 Text Selection.........................................................................................56
      3.3.3 Case Study..............................................................................................60
      3.3.4 Analyzing Data.......................................................................................69
      3.3.5 Coding....................................................................................................69
      3.3.6 Social and Cognitive Constructivism.......................................................70
3.3.7 Setting the Scene: Workshop Classroom

4. Workshop Classroom Practices: Findings From the Case Studies
   4.1 Bri
   4.2 May
   4.3 Erin
   4.4 Ann
   4.5 Tracey
   4.6 Ben

5. Love and Language in the Workshop: Implications for the Study
   5.1 Questions of Engagement
   5.2 Constructions of Authority
   5.3 Definitions of Discipline
   5.4 Study Limitations
   5.5 Responsibility

Notes
Cited Literature
Appendices
Appendix A Study Participant Interview Questions
Appendix B Classroom Observation Tool
Vita
SUMMARY

This dissertation examined student engagement within the workshop classroom. In this dissertation, student engagement was considered via a theoretical lens and historical lens. My focal point was analyzing the ways student engagement might impact the enactment of literacy skills. In this dissertation I examined the theory and history of the workshop classroom and explored the current movement of the workshop classroom through case studies.

Reflected here are two case studies. The first was an historical study that considered how workshop classroom teachers in particular have worked to encourage student engagement in the acquisition of literacy skills. The case study investigated the literacy practices and cultural and educational histories of six workshop classroom students and described the discourse mechanisms that structure their text engagement. This case study worked to identify what could student engagement in the workshop classroom look like.

The dissertation concluded by discussing the implications of the study on current practices of engagement in the workshop classroom. Teachers must focus on the processes by which we communicate with students in the workshop classroom. By focusing on student engagement issues and individual student’s ways of identifying themselves and others’ ways of indentifying them in the workshop classroom, and their perceptions of the workshop classroom, work can begin to influence teachers and students alike as they transition to the workshop classroom.
Prologue

“We have no greater responsibility than to teach our students to love reading.”
-Margie Larson, retired language arts teacher

This was it. This was the one piece of advice I took to and held, really held. I held it in my heart, my head, my soul, and every breath as I began my new endeavor. Oh sure, there was lots of advice. Treat your teachers like your students. Keep your cards close to your vest at all times. Allow people to come to your office and vent. When people need to talk to you, really be present. Remember you were once a teacher. Hire only those teachers you would trust with your children…if you had children. Okay. I kicked some of these around, even allowed them space to travel between my ears and provided them the opportunity to grace this page. Yet, they weren’t the soul shaping, heart aching, head pounding mandate. We have no greater responsibility than to teach our students to love reading. That one, that one had staying power. That’s exactly what it did. It stayed and clung to my heels, my shoulders, and even my elbows as I worked at settling into my new position.

It was a grand total of about 30 feet from cubicle to office space. As I moved each book and file, I asked myself: How do I teach students to love reading? Should I keep this book? Head tilted, eyes scrunched. Will it help me teach teachers to teach students to love reading? Should I bring the files with the lesson about teaching summarizing and main idea? Will those lessons teach students to love reading? This question had quickly become the focus in my new instructional position.

My new position as language arts divisional chairperson, a hybrid between administration and teaching, would allow me two periods of teaching (the best periods of
the day) and six periods of administrating (the almost best periods of the day). This new position would be within the department I had taught for four years. As I eagerly anticipated the close of school, everyone provided me with bits of advice to aid my transition to administrator. I’m sure they all felt their advice to be invaluable for a new administrator. However, the only piece of advice I found truly valuable was the one that included students and reading, my new charges. How simple. Figure out a way to help teachers teach students how to love reading.

Yet, after ten years of teaching “English” or language arts, this was the first time I had ever really, seriously considered this responsibility and the heft of this responsibility. My teaching and my considerations had always been about specific books, specific texts. I would ponder, how do I make the kids love to read *The Great Gatsby*? Or, why don’t they just love Hemingway like I do? But, I had never thought about just reading, plain and simple, reading. I had thought about the state standards or the standards that would appear on the ACT, but this was the first time I had ever really considered the concept of just reading. This was in stark contrast to Margie. Clearly, she had been considering this for years.

Margie had taught for over thirty years in Europe and the States. She had taught “gifted” students and “remedial” students. She had taught everything in between, over and under. In Margie’s own words she had been a part of every movement, three or four times as it cycled, recycled, revised itself, and attempted to cycle again. She spent countless years completing degrees in Fine Arts, English, Education, Gifted Education, and Theater. She sat on every committee and directed district curriculum ventures. With each new cycle, Margie would work to be fully educated on the topic and positively
promote the topic towards a successful cycle or recycle in the world of education. She was admired by her peers, students, parents, and administrators. She won awards for her teaching as nominated by peers, students, parents and administrators. So, when Margie ventured by my desk on her final departure from the department, my heart thumped a bit faster, and my head felt a bit lighter while my soul plummeted with angst. I turned and looked up at Margie. She smiled, tilted her head and offered, “We have no greater responsibility than to teach our children to love reading.” I straightened my posture, wrinkled my forehead, closed my eyes, pursed my lips and nodded. “Really, all the rest of this…” She shook her head cross-wise and walked away. She walked away from thirty-plus years of meetings, conferences, grades, professional development, degrees, committee work, chairperson work, cheerleading, test preparation, parents and students with one decree. I had to figure out a way to teach teachers to teach students to love reading.

I began to ponder what it meant to love reading. What did a love of reading look like? Feel like? How could I help students understand what it meant to love reading? In my mind, I imagined a love of reading to resemble a very specific image as described by Manguel in *The History of Reading*:

It is summer. Sunk deep in the soft bed among feather pillows, with the inconstant rumble of carts on the cobble-stone outside the window in the Rue de l’Hospice in the grey village of the Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye, an eight-year-old girl is reading Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables*. She doesn’t read many books; she rereads the same ones over and over again. She loves *Les Miserables* with what she’ll later call “a reasoning passion”; she feels she can nestle in its pages “like a dog in its kennel.” (1996)

The scene described seems almost perfect, a young girl, reading *Les Miserables* in bed. What language arts teacher hasn’t hoped for a student so motivated as to not only read and enjoy *Les Miserables* once, but twice? Okay, so it wouldn’t have to be *Les Miserable*, but anything. It could be any book. A child, so interested in the reading they
can tune out the rest of the world and focus on their reading. I fully realized Margie was not encouraging me to urge our students to read and reread *Les Miserables*, but rather to help our students find their own *Les Miserables* and nestle into their own overstuffed couch or feather bed and read, so enthralled that they too seek the safety, serenity, and solace of their own reading selection “like a dog in its kennel.” I couldn’t help but ask how? How would I work with teachers to create this image when students seemed all too quick to abandon reading in favor of video games, the internet, music, sports, friends, malls, pets, vacation, parents…It seemed an endless list of rather “dos” and “bes” as compared to reading. The students chose other things, activities or people over reading. This was obvious by the way textbooks were returned unscathed. Novels would come back to teachers with fresh bindings, no page turned or earmarked for reference. So, how to get students to choose to read? How to get students to read as opposed to other things?

Sure, I could or would easily accept the fact we didn’t teach English solely to create future English teachers. Yet, most high school teaching strategies, methods, and curricula seem to be based on the premise of creating future English teachers. Rather, it seemed to me the emphasis should be to bring life and work skills to the classroom to help students become productive members of academic, professional, personal, and pleasurable domains of life.

To begin, I supposed it would be necessary to find things students wanted to read something they would actually choose over another activity. So in the words of writer Annie Dillard, I would need to find books that would make the students, “run to their bedrooms and read in a fever.” How could I make teenagers run anywhere and do
anything in a fever? Thus, I started to consider what could student engagement in the workshop classroom look like?
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION/STUDY RATIONAL

The workshop classroom has rarely been studied. Educational researchers in the field of language arts instruction have created scores of studies of teachers in the act of responding to or evaluating student writing or reading abilities. But, they have produced surprisingly few studies of student engagement in the workshop classroom. Specifically, we know very little about how students engage in learning in the workshop classroom and how this type of learning differs from the traditional adolescent language arts classroom. What could student engagement in the workshop classroom look like? This question must be considered (Fletcher, 1996; Taylor, 2000).

“Love and Language in the Workshop: Case Studies from the Workshop Classroom” moves toward this question by following familiar scenes of the workshop classroom and challenging those scenes from the student perspective. While interviewing students from both an academic and personal lens, I bring up questions about the ways the teacher and workshop classroom affects the opinions, engagement, and confidence of the students in the workshop classroom concerning literacy skills. As a result, both lenses are centered on what student engagement in the workshop classroom might look like.

This type of research in the workshop classroom has been avoided by researchers for many years (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004). While almost being completely ignored by educational researchers, the engagement of students in the workshop classroom is an important factor in considering how students seek, read, and attach value to their own
reading and writing abilities and interests (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004). I evaluate this focus of the workshop classroom as it shapes the process of reading and writing for adolescents and the interactions between the teacher and the students in the workshop classroom. While lacking a detailed focus on the workshop classroom in general, its impact on student perceptions of their own literacy skills is a focus. Educational researchers cannot understand fully the elements of the workshop classroom that fuel the production and reception of student engagement with various texts for reading, writing, discussion, and research activities (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004; Taylor, 2000). Also, I suggest that inadequate research focus on the workshop classroom has resulted in the lack of a model for analyzing student engagement in the workshop classroom (Cambourne, 2001). In the final chapter of “Love and Language in the Workshop,” I provide findings concerning the potential inclusion of student engagement in the workshop classroom environment. It is hoped that these findings will provide considerations for inclusion of the workshop classroom in the language arts domain.

This study has a specific setting. I place the study within the current adolescent language arts classroom, a site where teachers are often represented as different from their students in terms of age, interests, educational past, and professional status. The workshop classroom then becomes the site for my exploration through the case studies in this dissertation. These case studies focus on six different students who have participated in the junior level workshop classroom for six months prior to the start of the study. They provide an opportunity to explore the student perceptions and engagement of the workshop classroom garnered from a series of interviews and classroom visits. “Love and Language in the Workshop” identifies an essential relationship between the students
and the teacher in the classroom via specific, individual images of the students in the workshop classroom (Atwell, 1998; Taylor, 2000). This methodology creates a theory of student engagement and what it might look like in the workshop classroom. It also negotiates the decisions students make in this setting. It is necessary to understand this methodology when considering the significance of this study (Taylor, 2000).

Motivation for the Study

This study stems from my own professional journey. My experiences as an adolescent language arts teacher as well as an inexperienced student of cognitive and social constructivism led me to the goals outlined above. Before starting my teaching career, I read broadly about the curricula, learning that scholars such as Nancie Atwell, Mike Rose, Donald Graves and others possess a common theory: that students need to be engaged with texts and the classroom in order to experience a classroom setting and curricula that could provide a way to enter into this specific classroom setting. These researchers and others give great attention to students’ identities - culture, race, class, gender, academic level, and how students’ writing and reading text choices impact engagement (Cambourne, 2001; Taylor, 2000). I realized that what they appear most concerned about is with tapping into these identities within the classroom to encourage engagement and practice opportunities. The students in the classroom and building relationships with the students are the focus as opposed to materials or methods. As a new teacher, this notion was troubling. There were no handbooks or how-to guides to building relationships and engaging adolescents in learning. I don’t think I fully recognized the necessity of engagement. I simply taught the way I had been taught to teach.
As a result, in that short time prior to teaching my first class of seventh graders, I shared with many other language arts teachers beliefs in the importance of following the anthology, completing the mechanical and convention assignments, and providing ample opportunities for research papers. My own procedures of being a successful student, that enabled my acceptance to a graduate program in curriculum and instruction, an administrative certification, and role as a high school principal made me a willing believer in the status quo of the adolescent language arts classroom. In actuality, I did not realize how different my seventh grade language arts students and I were. I had to consider from their perspective what this classroom and learning experience must be like. Only then, could I somehow start to understand and recognize the need to make changes in the classroom. Otherwise, I began to realize these adolescents would never have the same opportunities I had experienced in life. Times had changed. Students had changed. The world had changed. These young people were not about to do something just because the person behind the big desk told them so (Atwell, 1998; Taylor, 2000).

It was at this time that I decided I needed to go back to school. I was ill-prepared to teach or teach well. As a result, I completed a M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction at DePaul University. My research focus was the Workshop Classroom. Specifically, I was interested in considering what it meant to be a middle school student in that 7th grade workshop classroom. How did my students respond, read, and write in relation to various texts of engagement? Yet, the scope of these questions was too large for this work. I knew almost as soon I completed that degree that I wished to pursue a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, but I was terrified and painfully aware I would be the outsider. I wanted to pursue this degree to make me a better teacher (or at this point
principal). I wanted to learn what questions to ask and what perspectives to engage with to consider student learning. I had no desire to become an academic in the same sense as the very people with whom I would be working and studying. Rather, this was about learning something I could immediately and directly apply to my 2,700 adolescents for whom I am responsible to provide an optimal high school experience.

It took me some time to see the comparison between myself and my desires and those of the 2,700 young people I work with every day. I wanted to pursue learning because I had an interest in it. I wasn’t doing it for anyone else, but me. As my committee members and professors can attest to, feedback or suggestions were taken if I could see an immediate connection to me and benefit to my interests. I wasn’t interested in spending large amounts of time doing, reading, writing, or researching something for the sake of appeasing others. In that moment, I realized what should have probably been so obvious. These adolescents and I were no different. They wanted choice, support, and differentiation. They wanted the opportunity to pursue their own interests and receive timely feedback and evaluations. For that matter, I realized that we were all trying to determine what it meant to be engaged in the workshop classroom. But, it was my responsibility to help the students negotiate this setting.

Once admitted to the Ph.D. program, I enrolled in a curriculum course that asked the basic question, “What is worthwhile?” As I participated in the class, it seemed obvious the other students had done this before. They quickly responded with examples of their work and supportive detail. This question was to frame all of our work for the semester. What is worthwhile? How do you know? Who says it’s worthwhile? This was terrifying. Such a basic question, and yet I was rendered silent. However, as the
semester went on, I was also charged with becoming the new Language Arts Instructional Chairperson and the task of implementing the workshop curriculum in a high school with 2,700 students and 25 teachers. The bulk of these teachers had been trained as literary teachers. They had no desire to change the way they taught, despite the growing challenges presented by students and the struggles to see student growth. Real-life responsibilities had collided with academic responsibilities. What was worthwhile? If I asked adults, we could debate this question for a lifetime. Yet, if I asked the students, they could easily answer this question. It was about them. How do we make it about them and what might this engagement look like in the workshop classroom?

At about this time, I also enrolled in a course on literacy discourse, one of the first courses to focus on cognitive and social constructivism in the literacy classroom. Here the writers defied conventions and blurred boundaries, directly challenging the conventions valued by traditional language arts teachers as their methods for engaging students and evaluating their work. The ideas of cognitive and social constructivism urged me to think critically about the relationships within the classroom between students, students and teacher, students and texts, and how students make sense of and engage in their world with the assistance of others. Consideration should be given to how adolescents make sense of the world around them. Albert Bandura (1977) called for teachers to help students become self-directed learners. Richard Gagne (1977) noted the need for basic understanding of lower level skills, if upper level skills and independent learning could ever occur. Then, there was also the notion that once adolescents were able to construct meaning, they could begin to possibly like or even love reading. Alberto Manguel (1996) presented this notion of love and like for the practice of reading.
The scene was still vivid in my mind. It was summer vacation. Adolescent reading in bed and reading a book she had previously read. Yet, she had such a fondness for this book she had to read it again and could not consider being pulled away from the book. For Manguel, the notion of an understanding and love of text are inseparable. If the reader is to experience a love of text, understanding is essential. Many times, when an appreciation for a text exists, it enables or allows the reader to continue to explore possible meanings and textual connotations. Manguel challenged me to consider how to instill this love of reading in the adolescents, how this love might translate to engagement in the workshop classroom, and what it might look like. Consideration was given to how to help adolescents find something they were passionate about in the literacy studies, an engagement, and to grow to appreciate or love it.

I tentatively started implementing the workshop classroom with the sophomore level language arts teachers. I had great hopes for the students, but certainly expected some level of push back from the teachers. Much to my surprise, the teachers were ready to leave Atwell’s (1998) “lonesome” behind and become “immersed” in the study of literature. I had visited the traditional sophomore language arts classrooms and observed for myself the polite and bored teenagers. The texts students were offered were the very same texts I hadn’t wanted to read twenty years ago. Students were also being assigned very similar research papers. Again, the vast majority of students seemed unable to identify the purpose for completing such an assignment. The lonely atmosphere in the classroom was palpable. These classrooms were the opposite of literacy immersion. After conversations with several traditional language arts teachers, they noted that the status quo was no longer good enough. The teachers readily identified the pressures to
increase or improve student achievement. Yet, they felt they were without the resources, methods, or setting to help students make such gains. They were ready to embark on the exciting adventure of bringing the workshop classroom and potential literacy engagement to our students.

I needed to consider the importance of expectation. In *Writing and the Writer*, Frank Smith (1982) addresses events in teaching whether implicit or explicit as “demonstrations”. I had my own history of academic reading and writing events that had taught me the value of specific demonstrations; but my first interactions with Bandura, Gagne, and Manguel clearly challenged my expectations and defied what I had known as a student. As I initially questioned the concept of textual accessibility, I did so by reconsidering my own literacy history. My literacy history identified that I had completed a great deal of schooling that was clearly being rejected by adolescents today. Without my conscious awareness, I had been schooled. Now, adolescents were refusing my version of school. They were not engaged. I was a product of the system that needed serious revision.

I had been taught in school the best way to read a book, write a book report, participate in discussions, and make academic presentations, and I had succeeded. The students of my high school were rebelling against this way of learning. I had researched the why behind this refusal and how to meet their needs. However, when I attempted to write a nontraditional dissertation that I felt would best encompass this attitude and the movement in adolescent language arts instruction, I was denied by the very people who had encouraged such research. Very simply, I needed to complete this dissertation the correct way or risk failing to conclude six years of work, research, discourse, writing,
reading, and investigation. It was most ironic that this very work had to be revised to meet the same standards that some of the greatest researchers had determined needed revision. Thus, “Love and Language in the Workshop” examines what student engagement in the workshop classroom could look like.

**Overview of Chapters**

In total, five chapters are included within this dissertation. The following chapters focus attention on the students’ engagement challenges. I perceive these challenges as dynamic and complex, placed in the classroom setting and complicated, an image stemming from cognitive and social constructivism theories of learning in the workshop classroom, and the ways those theories impact learning and the potential to learn to love or like reading (Manguel, 1996; Taylor, 2000). This dissertation encourages consideration of what student engagement might look like in the workshop classroom. I focus specifically on ways students and teachers interact in the workshop classroom when connecting with student-selected and teacher-selected texts that create the discipline within the individual workshop classroom and such potential for engagement.

Each chapter in the dissertation has a common goal. Each chapter in “Love and Language in the Workshop” works to theorize student learning and potential engagement in the workshop classroom. Chapter Three, “Multiple Perspectives: Methodology for the Study,” suggests that the combination of methodologies that support the project - research analysis, historiography, and case study - allow me to study student engagement in a beneficial manner. The chapter includes the theoretical insights of Stephen North and others who fear “methodological pluralism” and encourages instead the need for a different kind of pluralism, one that generates possible theories about student engagement.
Based on cognitive and social constructivist perspectives, I define “student engagement” for the project as dynamic, site specific, and active, comparing this image to existing research findings of student engagement in the adolescent language arts classroom (Atwell, 1998; Taylor, 2000). Chapter Two includes a summary of the ways that educational research has addressed student engagement issues. Supported by discourse of cognitive and social constructivist research methodologies, I suggest that the study of six students in the workshop classroom (Chapter Four) not only supports the historical illustration of disciplinary development (Chapter Three), but also makes clear how disciplinary beliefs of the workshop classroom might be internalized by the students and impact engagement. Hence, the methods brought together point to the relationship between disciplinary and individual student and the impact on what student engagement in the workshop classroom might look like.

Yet, I continue to work to research engagement. Chapter Three includes “Imagining Workshop Classroom: A Past Case Study,” and provides common images of workshop classroom students and teacher interactions within two well-known professional books, In the Middle and The Art of Teaching Writing. I review two contributors of scholarly conversation: one about shared perceptions of the workshop classroom student’s values and academic status; a second about shared perceptions of workshop classroom students and teachers. The conversations are taken from past studies of students in the workshop classroom their vignettes illustrating the essential components of discipline and student engagement in the workshop classroom. This perspective is necessary to gaining an understanding of the current workshop classroom movement. This chapter provides numerous rich details to provide that understanding.
Chapter Four, “Workshop Classroom Practices: Findings from the Case Studies,” supported the portrait painted above by focusing on six individual students who defy such representations. Using data gathered during a series of interviews with the six students, I describe the ways that multiple aspects of the six students’ engagement potentially shape their literacy practices. The chapter poses questions about this engagement might look like as it creates meaning that will impact student literacy skill practice.

Chapter Five, “Love and Language in the Workshop: Implications for the Study,” suggests that teachers should make their ways of instruction in the workshop classroom more explicit to students, resulting in a more direct instruction approach during mini-lessons, and enhanced student learning. Furthermore, the chapter names are valuable connections to the issues of engagement for students and teacher, access to texts for students, and interactions between teacher and students in the classroom - all essential to promoting adolescent literacy success.

The understanding of how student engagement affects the acquisition of students’ literacy skills will be enriched if researchers consider what could student engagement in the workshop classroom look like. I suggest that such investigations should foreground issues of student engagement as it is construed within individual workshop classrooms and within composition’s disciplinary history. In doing so, both the individual interests of students and the collective values of the workshop classroom discipline will be highlighted. Workshop classroom teachers and researchers will be able to view the systems and components essential to shaping the workshop classroom. Most importantly, by focusing on students as they engage and practice literacy skills with a variety of texts, we are more likely to create a workshop environment conducive to learning. This
attention is essential, particularly for those who work within the context of the workshop classroom. As I argue in Chapter Three and discuss in Chapter Two, researchers have spent time identifying the components of the workshop classroom and too little time considering how to encourage greater engagement and interaction among students, peers, and teacher. Thus, what student engagement could look like in the workshop classroom is the primary focus of this research.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Every day at school I get to sit around my dining room table with readers who speak my language; many of them, like Eben, grow up to be adults who continue to speak it. For me one of the worst things about teaching literature in the old way was the loneliness. I’ll never forget what it was like to stand by myself at the front of the classroom, rephrasing a question about the selection from the literary anthology again and again for a group of bored, polite kids, and praying that someone would come up with the right answer. One of the best things about teaching reading in a workshop, where I immerse myself and my kids in literature we love, is that teaching is lonesome no more.

--Nancy Atwell, Workshop Classroom Teacher and Researcher, a consideration of the workshop classroom as discipline from the Social Constructivist perspective

We have no greater responsibility than to teach children to love to read.

--Margie Larson, former High School Language Arts Teacher, an exploration of what it means to be a student in the workshop classroom from the Cognitive Constructivist perspective

These are two essential educators and researchers in the workshop genre and these two quotations are illustrative to the different theories that inform this project. The quotations represent different threads and suggest ways that the workshop classroom teacher works with adolescents to encourage engagement and access to a variety of texts for reading, writing, discussion, and research opportunities in the high school language arts classroom. Obviously, these types of engagements impact the learning experiences of the students, from the types of literacy activities to the ways the literacy activities are evaluated. Trying to describe these aspects of the workshop classroom as they might impact adolescent engagement is complicated. There are numerous factors to attempt to consider: individual students, the classroom structure, mini-lessons, and the social dynamic of a workshop classroom that is decidedly social in nature. This work becomes even more complicated when we remember that the classroom itself is embedded within culturally specific and large school system contexts. These contexts include the
workshop classroom, the Language Arts Department, the specific high school, the specific school district, the state school system, and others. We must always consider the contexts in which the workshop classroom exists (Tusting and Barton, 2003). This consideration is essential to be able to focus attention on what adolescent engagement in the workshop classroom could look like. Engagement is vital to student success (Cambourne, 2001).

Various methods of instruction are included in the language arts classroom. For example, the workshop classroom includes whole class instruction, small group differentiation, individual student interventions, teacher and student conferences, peer conferences, self-selection of texts, mentor and anchor texts, and mini-lessons (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004). The methods implemented in teaching adolescents in the language arts classroom can benefit the examination of the engagement of students in the workshop classroom (Allington, 2005). Within this dissertation, I investigate one specific genre of teaching in particular that is molded in important ways by cognitive and social constructivism. The first time a teacher and student interacts marks the initial moment of encounter between workshop participants and the initial spark of potential engagement for the student. However, this interaction also marks the student’s introduction to the components of the workshop classroom. Prior to the workshop classroom, most students have participated in language arts classrooms in which the teacher has represented, filtered, and possibly controlled every aspect of each textual discourse in the classroom. For instance, the majority of adolescents have participated in language arts classrooms in which teachers select textbooks, plan the lessons, create the lectures or lessons, and evaluate specific forms of writing. In this type of setting, the
teacher is almost entirely responsible for determining the genre and style of students’
textual experiences. The traditional language arts classroom teacher interprets and
represents the written and spoken conventions of the language arts discipline and
frequently the school system, and in so doing they share the traditional values of the
language arts field classroom.

Yet, student engagement is important. Every individual student’s engagement is
valuable within the language arts classroom setting. An essential component of the
setting for this study is the traditional language arts curriculum. Language arts teachers
and students possess a common character within a field that has focused its energies on
the explicit communication of objectives, standards, and practices via literature
anthologies and grammar textbooks (Taylor, 2000). The original sources for this
communication have been the traditional literary anthology comprised of classical texts
and grammar textbooks focused on conventions and mechanics. These works point
toward a specific disciplinary genre. This genre creates a sense of the study of language
arts as it is communicated in multiple locations: textbooks, teacher education programs,
and language arts classrooms. This sense carries emotion, history, and curriculum.

This sense provides a wealth of material to research. The workshop classroom
research is an exciting discipline as it offers a break from the traditional language arts
discipline. For example, it is quite possible no two students will be reading the same text,
or writing within the same genre. Additionally, the small group differentiated instruction
and social dynamics included within the classes are fertile ground for research. A
cognitive and social constructivist discipline has been alluded to within the Reading and
Writing Next documents authored by Biancarosa and Snow. In the most basic
terminology, this dissertation reviews what student engagement could look like in the workshop classroom and considers different illustrations of disciplines with their own interests and needs (Graves, 1984; Taylor, 2000). To explore how such considerations might impact adolescent engagement, the study focuses on exploring what it means to be a student in the workshop, examining how students respond to, read, and write to various texts of engagement, and considering how to describe the workshop classroom as a discipline. By researching this combination, we see how individual teachers work to engage with adolescent reading, writing, and research practice, and, more systematically, the disciplinary constructions of the workshop classroom. “Love and Language in the Workshop” provides details about the disciplinary values and practices within the classroom. These details provide a qualitative understanding of the discipline.

Thus, I begin by sharing the two paradigms and perspectives in the epigraph that opened this chapter. These two paradigms and perspectives work to describe and model what student engagement in the workshop classroom could look like. Their words make me consider the ways that common disciplinary goals and values could affect adolescent reading and writing practices. Individual adolescent interests could further accentuate the text engagement. At the same time, their words are constantly helping to mold this still new discipline. This molding is constantly changing.

Consideration of the workshop classroom as discipline from the Social Constructivist Perspective

The work of Nancie Atwell is an example of the efforts in the workshop classroom to transform a traditional adolescent language arts classroom as exemplified in, In the Middle (1998). This work argues that workshop methods such as reader conferences, writing conferences, and mini-lessons are worthy of scholarly attention
when determining how to communicate the workshop classroom as a discipline, and the principles of student engagement. In her very own classroom of middle school language arts students, she describes herself as a “creationist [who] spent the first days of every school year creating, and for the next thirty-six weeks maintained the creation” (1998). This teacher as researcher works not only in challenging prevailing assumptions about “English” classes, such as that students should read work assigned by the teacher and only the teacher, but also initiates a disciplinary conversation about the nature of the workshop classroom. In retrospect, the text stands now as a representation of the person of Nancie Atwell, establishing her as an icon in the field of workshop discipline.5

I begin my own project with Atwell and her words in order to provide a frame for the paradigm and perspective focusing this study. This selection is a result of my interest in the ways that both this work and workshop teacher identity has been read by other members of the discipline, and how these may have impacted adolescent engagement in the workshop classroom. In other words, I ask what values and beliefs of the discipline seem to find expression via the representation of students by researchers like Atwell and the workshop classroom teacher. In particular, how does the discipline read these images or like images as Atwell describes her self working to engage students in the text? “Today I learn in my classroom,” she writes. “What happens there has changed, and it continues to change. I’ve become an evolutionist. The curriculum unfolds as my kids and I learn together as I teach them what I see they need to learn next” (4). What does it mean when teachers engage students in learning by learning with them?

Here, in this moment, attention is given to the teacher as both teacher and student. In terms of my project, this moment is important because it is an essential understanding
for the workshop classroom. The understanding of what happens at such moments: before students first select a text, before the teacher models a single lesson, before the first conference. Few studies exist that trace the engagement of students with reading texts in the workshop classroom. Yet, this moment, as represented by Atwell and others, has captured the disciplinary imagination of workshop teachers and researchers of children and adolescents. The teacher is represented as both teacher and student, participating in the dynamic nature of learning, waiting to meet and learn about the students prior to creating lessons (evolution v. creation) in what is often portrayed as engagement in a student-centered classroom.

This part of the image is valuable because the setting establishes a kind of institutional context. Such teachers, those “who cloud the issues with jargon” as described by Donald Graves in The Enemy is Orthodoxy (1984b), let the rules and methods get in the way of good teaching which requires student engagement. “Simple and direct” instruction is lacking and the students suffer because of it. Students become “clouded” by vocabulary they don’t understand and are stifled. Finally, it must be observed that these classrooms filled with such instruction do not allow for student engagement or collaboration. This is in stark contrast to the way Atwell portrayed herself as immersed in the learning with her students.

In addition to suggesting an image of the workshop context for teaching and encouraging student engagement with texts, Atwell’s quotation conjures images of her interaction with students. Here the mechanisms of representation are complex: Atwell’s students are positioned to learn “with” her as opposed to from her. She tells us how the “loneliness” she used to face is no longer experienced. Instead, she immerses herself
with her students and the literature they love. A common necessity within the workshop classroom involves teachers making this shift. Furthermore, Atwell is troubled by the classroom teachers still showing preference to the traditional instructional practices of the adolescent language arts classroom. The traditional language arts classroom includes teachers standing isolated at the front of the classroom, asking questions and seeking raised hand responses, peering at an audience of disengaged adolescents. Atwell does not address that training explicitly in *In the Middle*, but she does address the methods of student engagement in the workshop classroom.

Consideration of how this workshop evolves as a discipline is crucial for this project. The voices of Atwell and others included in this study represent a particular image of the workshop classroom teacher. This teacher wonders how she can best work to build relationships with her students and engage them in learning, to provide the most genuine and sincere evaluation of student reading progress. She wants others to know that adolescent readers and writers are simply beginners, learning to use a new discourse in the workshop classroom setting. At the same time, she recognizes that what was a familiar setting to students in traditional language arts classrooms is made strange again by the introduction to the workshop classroom. Still, she will work hard to transition students to this new setting. This idea that the teacher identifies a need to help students transition to the workshop classroom and familiarize themselves with the reading conferences, self-selected texts, and independent reading practices of the workshop classroom contributes to the discipline of the workshop classroom teacher as she works to build relationships and engagement with adolescents.
It should also be noted that the bulk of research previously completed in this area has been in settings very different from the research site of my study. This research occurred in a very small, private middle school setting that included students of mostly white middle-upper-class families, with little diversity. My research site is a large, public high school, inclusive of students of great diversity. These differences can be troubling in considering the overall structure of the workshop classroom and the expectation for differentiation, personal relationships, and resulting engagement to be established with all members of the workshop classroom.

Yet, this paradigm, aligned with the social constructivist theory of learning, provides a frame for considering student engagement. The Social Constructivist Theory is provided by the Soviet school of sociocultural theory or activity theory, by combining theories of development and a constructivist approach (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Wertsch, 1985a, 1985b, 1991). At the time, behaviorist understandings were popular and this was an attempt to create a new form of psychology (Wertsch, 1985a). This new type of psychology studied how the human mind grows in a setting of ongoing, meaningful, objective-filled action and engagement with other people as organized by various methods and materials, as opposed to focusing on behavior in separate stages.

The primary researcher in this area was Lev Vygotsky. While Vygotsky never received formal psychological training, he was identified as an original thinker about methods of psychological study. Conflicting philosophies and theories existed in Russia and throughout the world concerning the emerging science of psychology in the 1920s and 1930s. During these decades, well-known theorists including Piaget (constructivism), Skinner (behaviorism) and Vygotsky were engaged in an ongoing debate about the
learning process. Vygotsky shared the belief that the field of psychology could not limit itself to direct evidence only, but should take into account the unseen unconscious mind (Bodrova and Leong, 1996; Vygotsky 1978, 1986).

Vygotsky wanted to study the growth of higher cognitive development in human beings. Thus, he made developmental research the basis for his study of the mind (Wertsch, 1985b, 1991). Vygotsky determined that the growth of higher cognitive functioning in the individual, while based on biophysical processes such as the maturation of the brain, comes from social interaction. This finding was based on numerous, complicated experimental observations. Without the social relationships, higher cognitive functioning would not occur, and Vygotsky worked to locate the specific processes involved.

While Piaget’s research created a type of cognitive constructivism, Vygotsky took the social constructivist approach. As a result, engagement with other people, cultural items, not just ideas, became essential to learning. Vygotsky’s general genetic law of cultural development argued that any function in the learner’s cognitive development is required to first occur socially prior to psychologically. Vygotsky accepted that internalization of the learning process changes its nature, but also argued the specific formats and methods of intramental functions (thinking) can always be traced to intermental precursors (setting) (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, engagement in social relationships is the basis for the growth and learning of all higher cognitive functions. This premise led to an understanding of higher mental functions, such as reasoning, memory, socialization, and independent action. For example, when two people recall an event together, this interaction operates as a scaffold for each individual (Rogoff, 1998).
This scaffolding process involves learning, specifically as it is involved in Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (Bruner, 1960). The Zone of Proximal Development refers to the learner’s current level, as observed by independent problem solving, and the potential for higher level development, as identified by problem solving via supervision, or with peers (Vygotsky, 1978).

The role of materials and methods within the Zone of Proximal Development are also included in Vygotsky’s work. The learner’s interactions and engagement are based upon concepts, strategies, and technologies, including writing and other forms of communication, which negotiate the meanings created. Vygotsky and his colleagues illustrated the importance of such items in a group of experiments with children and adults suffering impairments such as Parkinson’s disease. The experiments illustrated that basic items of negotiation, like colored cards or graphic organizers, allowed learners to complete tasks they could not otherwise accomplish (Vygotsky, 1978). This work supports a sociocultural theory of learning, which views thinking as spread between the people involved in the interaction, and the thinking tools present in the learning culture (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygostky’s theory is in contrast to the ideas created by the cognitivist model (Roth and Lee, 2007). As opposed to focusing on the individual learner in creating meaning, Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory includes interaction with other people as the primary component. A sociocultural understanding of learning would suggest that to acquire literacy skills, learners must interact with others at the appropriate level for their own stage of growth, and appropriate methods and materials have an important role in the process of learning and engagement in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the workshop
classroom, this trait would be observed as learners are placed within or select scaffolded learning groups to acquire literacy skills at their specified zone of development or within an area of interest. The various scaffolded groups may use different materials, skills, and strategies to meet their individual needs as secondary students working to become engaged in the workshop classroom and acquire literacy skills.

The workshop classroom provides the context for social relationships and fosters the opportunity for and engagement in learning between learners and the teacher. The setting provides the opportunity for the learners to participate in like activities, while still allowing for individuality and differentiation explored via conversations and work as the workshop classroom discipline is explored.

**Exploring what it means to be a student in the workshop classroom from the Cognitive Constructivist Perspective**

The paradigm introduced by Margie Larson’s voice was one of the first to urge me to consider the workshop classroom, to take into account what it means to attempt to teach students to love or like anything, much less reading. Larson urged me to consider ways that students are all too often taught to hate or strongly dislike reading -- the antiquated texts so far removed from students, the assignments and meaningless assessments. Rather, Larson asked: What role(s) does the teacher play in encouraging students to love to read? What could active engagement look like and how could it foster this appreciation?

In Glenda Bissex’s book, *GNYS AT WRK: A Child Learns to Write and Read* (1980), Bissex addresses the problematic notion that how we teach is not always how students learn. The logic teachers bring to the classroom frequently escapes the very adolescents teachers are trying to reach. Bissex goes so far as to suggest that this
disconnection is what fosters or encourages student disengagement in the literacy classroom. This issue is perhaps most obvious when working with average readers and writers. Bissex’s conflict seems to suggest that even the most well meaning teachers fall prey to this issue. Instead of students feeling included in the classroom and the selected texts, they feel at even greater odds because of the perceived over-the-top efforts of the teacher. According to Bissex, when teachers practice this type of disconnection, they avoid professional growth. They refuse to bring their own identities into the classroom, and this perpetuates the dislike for literature in the adolescents. Inadvertently, students are missing their literacy role model and literacy engagement.

It is crucial for teachers to include their own passion, love, and identity as a reader in the classroom. This is particularly important if the teacher is going to attempt to encourage in students a love of reading. Bissex reminds me that it is necessary to question how a classroom, school, or community can make the practice and act of loving to read a natural occurrence and common expectation. If it is natural to love to read, then students understand and view this as the expected norm of the given community. Possibly, most significantly for this project, I am interested by Bissex’s suggestion that all too often teachers and researchers, perfectly well intended end up disenfranchising students, as opposed to reaching them and helping them advance their literacy skills. How does the workshop classroom engage the very same disenfranchised students in the acts of reading and writing?

This paradigm, aligned with the Cognitive Constructivist Theory of Learning, provides a frame for considering what it could look like to be an engaged student in the workshop classroom. In addition to considering what it could look like to be an engaged
student in the workshop, this paradigm gives attention to another layer, including what does it mean to be a student in the workshop classroom striving to find a love or at least a like of reading?

While there has been a move from viewing learning as changes in observed behavior to viewing learning as a development of internal information processing methods and models, purely cognitivist models of learning were still based on the belief that learning is a matter of finding methods to reach a set of objectified learning outcomes (Tusting and Barton, 2003). In response to the cognitive model, theorists began to develop an understanding that learners had an instrumental role not only in assimilating to knowledge, but more valuably in creating the items they were learning. Cognitivist models of learning center on learning as a creation of representational models of knowledge created by their setting, but cognitive constructivism moves the center of learning to the learner’s individual process of creating models through interaction with the setting of their learning (Tusting and Barton, 2003).

Cognitive Constructivism was made common in modern education by Jean Piaget. Piaget began his teaching career early when he, as a young man from Switzerland, relocated to Grange-aux-Belles, France, where he taught at the school for boys run by Alfred Binet, the developer of the Binet-Simon Intelligence Test. While coding instances of these intelligence tests, Piaget noticed that young children consistently gave wrong answers to certain questions. Piaget did not center his attention on the fact of the children’s answers were wrong, but rather that young children kept making the same pattern of mistakes that older children and adults did not make. This observation led Piaget to the theory that young children’s thought or cognitive processes are inherently
different from those of adults. Eventually, Piaget would propose a global theory of
developmental stages stating that individuals exhibit certain distinctive common patterns
of cognition in each period of their development (Kesselring, 1999).

Piaget’s (1970) developmental model of learning inspired many other such
models. After many long-term, detailed observations of children’s development, Piaget
contended that a child’s cognitive structure is created via specific stages. His most
important contribution was in highlighting the active role children play in their own
learning process. Piaget illustrated that children do not merely undergo the maturation
process, but that they develop via their own engagement with their settings in various
ways.

As a result of Piaget’s influence, the central objective of education for learners
became the development of the mind. This objective could be met by pursuing a variety
of forms of knowledge that should allow the learner to: explore different forms of
concept, develop relationships with the material, experience the concepts on a personal
level, and develop specific techniques or skills to fully explore the concepts.

These ideas are reflected in many cognitive constructivist theories. For instance,
this is the premise in Bruner’s (1960) spiral curriculum. Bruner’s premise is that the
basic principles of any subject matter could be understood early on in its study, if the
learner was assisted in locating the underlying cognitive organization of the subject in a
manner that inspired creativity and fit into their existing habits of thinking and processing.
From that point on, once new information was reorganized in a meaningful way, learning
could occur within the pre-existing learning formats. In this model, the role of the
educator was to present new material and experiences in a manner that encouraged the learning process. However, the learners still created their own learning (Bruner, 1960).

In the area of secondary student literacy skill acquisition, cognitive constructivist theories promoted the value of providing learners the options and individuality to effect their learning in their own unique ways, by providing them the opportunity to follow their personal interests and knowledge, and by acknowledging this process will vary for each learner (Tusting and Barton, 2003). The reading and writing workshop classroom provides students the opportunity to pursue their own interests in reading and writing skills based on personal levels of ability and need. Within the workshop environment, the teacher or literacy role model is responsible for presenting options to the learners that will meet the specific needs of the individual learners, providing scaffolding opportunities for individual learners and groups of learners as they work to grasp new information and knowledge, and differentiating for learners on a continual basis. Additionally, the teacher or literacy role model is given the further challenge of situating these components of learning within the interests of the learners. They might, for example, present this material in the format of book talks, book passes, author talks, reader and writer inventories, and learner scavenger hunts in an attempt to incorporate individual interests in meeting the needs of learners and to address the differentiation aspect of the workshop classroom.

The workshop classroom provides the context for students to work to identify the texts that are most engaging, interesting, likeable, or loveable. The setting provides the opportunity for the learners to determine their own areas of interest and engagement as they work to become familiar with the structures and systems of the workshop classroom.
CHAPTER 3
MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES:
METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

This study will suggest, the field of educational research has not given enough attention to the workshop classroom (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004). This has resulted in the under-examination of student engagement in the workshop classroom. Those interested in reviewing how students become engaged in the workshop classroom via mini-lesson, small group work, and reading and writing conferences should consider these ideas. For example, historians could return to university and college research archives to review collected journals, writing prompts, and mini-lessons of previously studied workshop classrooms with the objective of determining how the workshop classroom came to be and the social constructs that have fostered its development and student engagement (Taylor, 2000).

In addition, methods researchers could study academic journals and count the numbers of articles about workshop classrooms, student engagement, mini-lesson topics, and so on to determine the inclusion of specific workshop methods and their utilization across workshop classrooms. Maybe, ethnographers could watch, describe, interview, and define workshop classrooms of students and teachers in two different secondary classrooms: the middle school and the high school.

These efforts might yield valuable insights into what happens in the workshop classroom. These insights will be most valuable if we use them to consider the ways in which individual students and the holistic workshop classroom experience of engagement might affect workshop classroom theories, pedagogies, and histories (Graves, 1994; Harvey, 1998; Taylor, 2000). They could provide support to theories, revise pedagogies,
or add to the ongoing history of the workshop classroom. The next essential step requires
the kind of research that identifies research topics for and the need to change disciplinary
theories and methods. This movement is essential when considering researching student
engagement in the workshop classroom.

I have considered this movement from the historical perspective regarding the
disciplinary movement and the ways teachers work to engage students in reading and
writing practices in the workshop classroom. I implement a more theoretical perspective
in considering the pedagogy and the workshop classroom, the procedures and systems
that guide workshop classroom methodology and the relationship between a discipline
and individual students’ engagement (Baumlin and Baumlin, 1994; Brent, 1992; Taylor,
2000). This study addresses one essential question. What could student engagement in
the workshop classroom look like (Atwell, 1998; Graves, 1984; Taylor, 2000)?

**Introduction**

In this dissertation, I consider this question by implementing research methods,
geared toward case studies connected to student engagement in the workshop classroom.
The first case is a past survey of disciplinary images of students and their workshop
experiences. The second case includes interviews and classroom visits with six
workshop classroom students. The research methods provided perspective in my
challenge to answer the research question. These were classrooms with both receptive
teachers and less than receptive teachers. My response was to use both past and present
case studies to investigate what I identified as the essential research focus of the
workshop classroom discipline and the potential for student engagement (Durkin, 1978;
Content and Context

In this portion of the chapter I highlight two students’ academic and literacy development and engagement in the workshop classroom and point to what is included or missing in the workshop classroom. Importance is given to teacher, student, and interest issues. These issues are included along with the ways these items could impact student engagement, and student interaction with text. A variety of conferences, experiences, and student growth are included to illustrate how the workshop classroom benefits students. I investigate two portions of conversation about students in the workshop classroom as described in In the Middle and The Art of Teaching Writing. I divide analysis into two engagement topics: interests and activities, and suggestions of ways in which this study responds to and extends the conversation. For many students, it is either the interest level or topic that first draws them into the activity. Or, they are already a writer and are in need of direction concerning topics and events to write about. Within each section, I discuss engagement issues that affect the discipline broadly and workshop classroom specifically. Additionally, I analyze connections between those engagement issues and student reading and writing practices. I realize that the two topics do not split equally. This focus brings attention to two key disciplinary agendas in composition scholarship, each of which is made particularly evident within the books. At this point in education a need was being identified to help students become engaged in the literacy practices to really start working on their literacy skills. I thought I would begin my process by reviewing past successes in the workshop classroom.

These case studies also help emphasize the teacher role in the workshop classroom. First, workshop classroom professionals argue against the value of the
beginning writers and adolescent writing programs. These professionals identify their concern with issues of advocacy and definition for students and with pedagogical approaches. It was at this time that teachers and other educational professionals began to advocate for student engagement and interests as a means of identifying student need. The need to advocate for adolescent writing programs was replaced by a desire to more clearly define and theorize them as the discipline focused its attention more so toward the goal of professionalization and a legitimate discipline (Taylor, 2000). This was the initial attempt to bring the workshop classroom to the forefront as language arts premise for curriculum and methods. Second, researchers established disciplinary histories, theoretical schema, and research methodologies. The bulk of the research methodologies included case studies. This movement clearly exemplifies the increased focus on the workshop classroom and instructional methods. These two periods overlap in important ways. The move for professionalization and acts of definition persist even today. The shift in attention suggests a collective decision for educational research to focus first and foremost on disciplinary development. This movement creates confusion in the workshop movement. It is believed by many people that discipline or curriculum to include an anthology or boxed curriculum. Meanwhile the workshop curriculum classroom collects or creates the curriculum from the needs and interests of the students. There is no binder that dictates what happens each and every day in the workshop classroom (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004).
Imagining the Workshop Classroom: A Past Case Study

To best tell the past tales of the workshop classroom, I narrowed my focus to two works *In the Middle* and *The Art of Teaching Writing*. This is largely due to the following facts:

- *ITM* and *TATW* were the first and foremost professional books on the workshop classroom;
- These works published more information about student response to workshop and engagement issues in the workshop classroom than any other professional book;
- These books were the first and have since been the only texts to explore this topic from the student perspective. The majority of texts focus merely on the teacher side of the workshop classroom.

Moreover, my analysis of a collective sense of student engagement and discipline for the workshop classroom draws most from *ITM* and *TATW* and scholarship in the 1970’s, 1980’s, and early 1990’s. This focus is student based. This is a break from the traditional teacher focus.

A Consideration of the Workshop Classroom as Discipline from the Social Constructivist Perspective

As the first day of school began, Atwell asked the students to choose their desks. The students settled into the cramped setting and set-up their newfound literacy home. That was when she first met Jeff. Jeff stood out from all the other students. He was huge. He towered over the other students, in part because he was nearly sixteen years old. Almost two years older than the other students. He should have been a sophomore in high school, but found himself in middle school. His parents traveled extensively due to
their work and they typically withdrew Jeff from school to travel with them. Jeff had many large gaps in his education. This challenge was compounded by the fact Jeff did not grow up with his peers. Jeff talked to almost no one and was almost always alone. Not only were there concerns socially, but academically, Jeff’s reading and writing abilities were the lowest Atwell had ever seen.

In fact, Jeff could barely read the primary-level texts the reading specialist had provided. As the year began, he would certainly be described a non-reader. He couldn’t even distinguish some letters from others. As a sixteen year old, his skills were similar to a pre-school student. For example he confused the letters m and n or the letters b and d. He could spell his name, the names of his brothers and sisters, and probably two dozen words. That was it. He was not able to spell any other word correctly. The words were decipherable, but not correct. Atwell talked with the previous teachers and received six different versions of the same report. All the past teachers had done what they thought was best and all they felt they could do. Each teacher had provided Jeff what they thought was appropriate remedial work. Some teachers had wanted to see him retained, but then promoted him due to his size and age. His mother even told Atwell she was sure he was learning disabled and that nothing at this point could be done to help him.

At recess time, Jeff would stay inside most days. He avoided interaction or any kind of socialization with the other students. He would either talk to Atwell, or the other teacher without recess duty. This became the habit for Jeff. He would find a reason to stay inside as opposed to participating in recess. Jeff had a great deal of knowledge about a variety of topics: boats, sailing, the Southwest. He was an educated young person with vast experiences to pull from for literacy instruction and practices. It was just figuring
out how to reach those vital events. Atwell didn’t actually know these things first hand, but she knew she could read about these things in books. She readily recognized Jeff would be able to read about these things in books also. Atwell gave Jeff *Dove, Kon-Tiki, Ram, Survive the Savage Sea,* and *The Teachings of Don Juan.* These books became the texts for Jeff’s remedial reading course. The other students were forced to suffer through the brand new Scott Foresman literature anthology. Jeff was inundated with different reading experiences that would tie into his personal experiences and interests. Jeff spent that winter with the books from Atwell and also spent a great deal of time conversing about the topics and the books. He read, and he improved. He broke through each book creating meaning and teaching himself to read. He started by moving his finger and lips, tracing each word, and then finally he abandoned the pointing when it slowed him down too much and got in the way of his reading. He enjoyed reading. While Jeff was enjoying reading, Atwell denied the other students the same pleasure. However, when it came to writing, Jeff was baffling.

Atwell had brought to the eighth grade classroom, a writing curriculum she had developed in her previous teaching position with her colleagues. She spent a year perfecting this curriculum and anticipated this curriculum would be implemented with ease for all students, including Jeff. The basic tenet was that students learned to write by working systematically through a sequence of modes; from narrative to idea writing—with extensive pre-writing and post-writing activities. These modes were included to find a genre that would engage students and help them explore writing. Atwell had even helped pen an article for *English Journal* describing the methodology. This was her first professional publication and this was her program. She was confident in the program.
One of the weekly assignments involved discovering memories of personal experiences by brainstorming a list, talking about the list with a partner, selecting a memory, and writing about it. Every eighth grader worked through the prescribed prewriting procedures. They all seemed to understand and appreciate the purpose of the list. Additionally, the students benefitted from having the opportunity to socialize and discuss their ideas and their lists. Not Jeff. Jeff spent the entire class period whispering and humming as he drew a picture of a boy kneeling on a beach in front of a tent. No list was created. No attempt to socialize with others in the classroom. He kept to himself completely consumed by his drawing. When class ended, he folded up his picture and took it home. The next day, Jeff came to school with a rough draft. It was an account of his baby brother’s death on a Mexican beach. Actually, it was a finished piece. Atwell wrote questions all over it and tried to motivate Jeff to reflect and elaborate on the piece. Instead, he just copied it over. Word for word, he copied it.

This became the pattern. The pattern was completely different from the pattern the rest of the students followed. At school, Jeff drew. He drew a beautiful sailboat and a peaceful desert scene. The drawings were detailed and brought the images in his mind to life. At night, he wrote about doves, peyote, witch doctors, and Don Juan. Atwell also created her own pattern. She frequently told Jeff to stop drawing and get to work. This refrain was heard frequently throughout each and every class period. It seemed Atwell was the only person acknowledging the refrain.

The drafts that would magically appear each morning seemed at odds with Jeff’s literacy ability. There were very few misspelled words. This was the primary reason Atwell doubted Jeff’s ability to author such work. Atwell investigated their accuracy.
Jeff explained that his sister helps him when he gets stuck. Atwell determined Jeff was probably not writing in class because he felt embarrassed about seeking help in front of the other students. To her, that seemed to make sense. He didn’t know the students. He was two years older than the other students, and in their tight quarters, you would be able to easily hear the conversation. Atwell told Jeff not to worry about the spelling. She could help him with the spelling at a later time. Jeff would agree to this arrangement and then spend the entire next class drawing.

After suffering through this process for an entire semester, Jeff finally ran out of patience. At long last, the student had the courage to initiate a conversation with the teacher. One morning while spending recess with Atwell, he told her how he felt. Very simply, this was his process. This was the way he wrote. As long as he wrote and completed the assignment, he didn’t see why she should care. The lists, and the drafts, and the peer conference just didn’t work for him. Atwell backed down. She conceded and let him use whatever method that worked for him, just as long as she received the expected work. The year continued in this manner. Atwell assigned writing and Jeff completed the work in his own manner.

By the end of the year, Jeff’s writing folder was as fat as many of the other student writing folders. He had a writing assignment for each week of the year. While he still drew during his spare time, he rarely drew during the last month’s writing classes. Instead, he was writing. He had actually started to follow Atwell’s prescribed process including: lists, conferences, and revisions. Atwell was unsure whether something had changed in Jeff. Atwell never asked, and she never found out what it was, but something
had changed. As Atwell reflected upon this, she wished she had taken the opportunity to ask Jeff about this growth and the change in his writing.

Jeff moved onto high school that year. As far as Atwell knew, he was successful at the high school with his newfound confidence in reading and writing skills. Atwell was graced with a brand new group of students. With the new students, Atwell presented them the same old writing assignments and began to teach the same assignments again. Without getting to know this group of students, she plodded through the same exact writing assignments. She expected the new students to complete the same work.

For Atwell, and for most teachers of the workshop classroom, this case study is possibly most important because it certainly communicates the importance of avoiding assumption and taking the time to work with students and to help students create their own process or procedures for engaging in writing and reading. This process requires teachers getting to know their students. Conferences are one of the best ways to get to know the students. As Atwell touched upon, it was essential that she provide this student the opportunity to work at his pace, and in a process that worked for him. Initially, she fought this effort. However, when she realized that fighting this effort too much may sacrifice any student growth, Atwell quickly pulled back. Especially, since the end goal is always to help students be successful in life outside of the classroom, teachers should be flexible and help students craft these methods for them. That was what happened in this situation, much to the benefit of the student.

The case study of Jeff provides an excellent example of the sociocultural theory that suggests for students to acquire literacy skills they must interact with others at the appropriate level to experience growth via the implementation of appropriate methods
and materials. Within this workshop classroom, the teacher provided the student the opportunity to interact socially with her and explore his personal literacy skills, and goals via ongoing engagement with the teacher. In this situation, the teacher provided the student text exploration opportunities specific to their abilities and interests. These differentiated texts gave the student access to personalized skills and interaction. The teacher purposefully established time and places for the student to safely explore their areas of needed growth, while also working to establish a structure and process for their learning and practice. The texts utilized by Jeff were specific to him, and allowed him to learn.

In the situation specific to Jeff, the teacher provided the social relationship to engage in learning. He was not ready to work with other students, and reveal his personal literacy challenges. Rather, he worked with the teacher to improve his literacy skills, and also his confidence in this area. Eventually, after a great deal of time and work, his confidence did improve and he was ready to work with his classmates and participate in whole class literacy instruction.

*An Explanation of What it means to be a Student in the Workshop Classroom for the Cognitive Constructivist Perspective*

For many students the ability to reflect and assess their progress is essential. For David, as described by Lucy Calkins, as he began to reflect upon his work completed he noticed a very specific trend. His favorite pieces of writing were those pieces that were about his friends. He completed writing about other topics, but the writing about friends was most engaging and meaningful to him. While the pieces are both very different, the theme is constant. The first piece is a collection of dialogue, and interactions between the friends that best encompasses who they are and what they do together. The second
selection is a picture book he wrote about leaving his friends behind. The first piece is light hearted and fun. The second piece is a bit more serious and emotional. He retells what it looked like, sounded like, and felt like, on the last day of living in his old neighborhood. The second selection was filled with metaphors, similes and parallel structure.

For David, these two selections highlight some of the very challenges of writing at his age or grade level. Students write. They complete the expected work, but it is often surface level and always about friends or other topics they are most familiar with. In this case, David was concerned about how he would appear to his friends, and it took time to work past this. Rather, the changes are most likely indicative of the changes in the life of David, his maturity, and also his experiences with a variety of texts that would support this type of writing.

For example, in these writing samples David’s maturity and confidence certainly grow and can certainly be traced within his writing. The year David wrote the lighter piece about his friends, David seemed to want to hide behind his friends and keep his true emotions or thoughts hidden. He was hesitant to show his true thoughts or feelings, or take any type of serious risk with the writing. He did what was asked of him. It was perfectly satisfactory, but there was nothing more to it. In some instances, it can’t help be considered that he was possibly worried about what his friends might say or think, and thus wrote a piece most pleasing to his friends.

The second piece showed some definite maturity in David as a writer. He was willing to take chances and develop his ideas and emotions. He was more confident in his ability to write. This confidence allowed for a genuine and authentic piece of writing.
to emerge that marked great maturity. He also selected a genre for this piece that would have matched his maturity at the time he had to move.

Of course, the second piece of writing, the picture book was not by accident. David recalls that he made a conscious choice to really work on this story. He explained the thoughts about the story and the very motivation for the story came to him while sitting in class and recalling the time he was told he would be moving. He spent hours in front of his computer thinking, but trying not to over think the story. As panic started to set in, he settled on the fact he needed to start writing. He just started writing. He wrote and finished the draft, but noted that something was clearly missing. It was flat. Details were missing.

David describes his frustration. He had all the feelings. He knew what he wanted to write, but just couldn’t do it. Each time he attempted to put his thoughts on paper, he just couldn’t get it to sound how it had sounded in his mind when he was originally thinking about it and planning. He really thought the earlier thoughts were special, and now he couldn’t get them back. He continued to write, and work, and revise, but it wasn’t there. He even walked away from it and worked on other work. There was still nothing he felt he could add.

The next day at school, he tried not to become overly stressed about his dissatisfaction with the draft. Finally, in the middle of class, inspiration hit. He’s not sure what it was. He thought it could have been a similar setting that caused him to recall his emotions and take him back to that place he could write. David asked to go to the lab and madly wrote his draft.
For David, the most important skills as a writer was his ability to plan, write, and reflect simultaneously and in a variety of sequences. David could also coach, admonish, and advise himself as needed to create the best possible draft. This growth is significant for David as without this type of growth in the writing practice, he would not have been able to write such a strong piece. It should be noted this type of growth is not typical for all students. This type of growth and ability is not seen in all students.

The reflection component is essential for David. When David was first asked to describe how he crafted this piece of writing, he said, I just wrote. When in actuality, after he considered a variety of questions from different people, there was a lot more to his process. This was crucial to helping David identify his process and consider how he will continue to use this process to improve his writing in the future. Without taking time to consider these events, he may not grow as significantly.

For David, the biggest challenge is using his writing notebook in an engaging and meaningful manner to help capture ideas as he hates losing his good ideas. He can do his best to capture them, but if he doesn’t write them down when they happen, David has discovered they are usually gone for good. The other challenge for David is taking that idea and then finding a genre that really does the idea justice. David no longer wants to just write it down and walk away from it. Rather, he is trying to find a way to write about his big ideas or topics that will add meaning to them and make them even better. David identified that being able to do this successfully makes him proud. It gives him a way of capturing his ideas that will last for as long as he wants. This really is big for him. It’s about more than just having an important idea or realization, its’ about finding a way to make that idea last forever. David also noted that the more he writes, the easier the
writing process becomes. Thus, if writing becomes habitual, it will not be viewed as work.

For David, it should be noted he is one of the students to really embrace the writing process and use it for his benefit emotionally, socially, and academically. This ability to coach himself and edit and motivate on his own, does not happen without trust in the process and experience with the process. David had to mature. In order to do that, he had to experience writing as he had when he still just wanted to write surface level work to complete or meet the expectations of the assignment. However, once he began to write for himself, this changed everything. He became engaged in the workshop classroom.

David utilized the workshop classroom from the Cognitive Constructivist Perspective. He was given the opportunity to individually decide on his path to learning and improving his literacy skills by including his personal interests and knowledge base to embark on this journey. For David, he started at a place inclusive of his major area of focus, his friends. The friends were very important, and he used his friends as a topic to begin writing growth. Initially, David wrote about his friends and the typical experiences a young adolescent would have with their friends. The bulk of his writing included narratives that shared the details of his friends, and dialogue of his friends. These initial writings were safe pieces of writing for David. He was confident in this work, and took great pleasure in sharing his work with his friends. He was practicing his writing skills, and also able to communicate this progress with his friends. As he worked through this practice, David began to explore other genres of writing and eventually determined he could include the same topics in a genre that would provide greater opportunity for
growth. Specifically, David determined he would write in the picture book format. While the genre would note an area of growth, David also moved to a more mature theme. While still including the topic of friendship, David moved to be inclusive of the theme or idea of being left behind by friends. This is a common fear for young adolescents, yet it is rarely expressed. The lack of expression concerning this topic is typically because many adolescents lack the confidence and ability to share this fear with others. For David, his experience in the workshop classroom provided this opportunity. The teacher provided David, the one-on-one instruction needed to encourage this growth and confidence. The format of the workshop classroom, also gave David the opportunity to take a topic he loved, his friends, and implement that topic as a means to explore literacy skill growth. The inclusion of a topic loved by the student allowed for optimal differentiation and student literacy skill success.

**General Findings**

The two professional books provided the source for both of the case studies. Within each of these professional books discussed, constructions of the workshop classroom student images shifted as different types of text were utilized and teachers focused on engaging students in the practice of the workshop classroom. By noting the changing nature of students’ sense of themselves as readers and writers, I draw attention to the ways workshop classrooms, their educational setting, the student backgrounds, the structure of the classroom, may have an impact on student engagement. Even more importantly, I have connected issues of self-perception to issues of interpretation and engagement. I suggest that students’ sense of workshop classroom discipline does, in
fact, affect movements in student engagement. The student voices within the case study were used to make this point.

Thus far, in both of the examples I have discussed, the school context of the workshop classroom has been constructed as independent somehow from the teacher, especially the workshop classroom teacher. Workshop classroom teachers have not been viewed as a speaker of their curriculum. Instead, the teachers have been depicted as waiters, serving the students what they need and desire. These teachers work hard to find students the necessary activities and resources to encourage their learning in an engaging manner. Usually, workshop classroom teachers have been described as less powerful than the school districts which employ them as teachers. I suggest that lack of power, relates not only to teachers’ perceptions of their relationships to their institutions and discipline(s), but also to their students (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1984; Graves 1974; Harvey 1998; Taylor 2000). It is possible that since teachers already feel powerless in their large school system, they are not as worried to transfer the power of curricular decisions and input to the workshop students.

By the mid 1980’s, workshop classroom teachers in ITM and TATW had reacted to the notion of academic disempowerment. If teachers are to teach well, they suggested, they must have the necessary resources, monetary, student, and system wide, in order to do so. In In The Middle, Donald Graves writes:

The bottom line for the quality of any classroom is the student work. Start with student texts in Nancie’s room and you’ll soon ask, “What does she do to get the range and quality?” Instead of personal narrative writing, you’ll find memoir with a real understanding of the genre, based on students’ reading of professional memoir. A partial list of genres includes short stories, poetry, book reviews (not book reports), letters to the editor, parodies, profiles, and essays. The writing is specific and engaging. It features multiple perspectives. The student authors read a wide range of
books, magazines, and newspapers, and are able to entertain alternative opinions as they explore the complex subtleties of life. Best of all, there are many references to the work of both their classmates and the teacher. This is a literate community. (ix)

Graves describes the ideal Atwell classroom, with detail, as compared to the perfect workshop classroom that language arts teachers work for. The perception is that there is no rigor for this area that connects to student personal interests and emotional needs to help the students achieve in the literacy classroom. Graves, like Atwel and Calkins, whose images I have chronicled here, believe that institutions must do more to support the workshop classroom (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1984; Graves 1974; Harvey 1998; Taylor 2000).

These case studies serve to present clear and detailed images of student learning in the workshop classroom. The relationship between the workshop classroom teacher’s position and discipline seems most clear when we consider images of the workshop classroom. For example, teachers working with workshop classroom students represented themselves as caring and enthusiastic literacy instructors. These teachers continued to focus and help student literacy skills improve. As workshop classroom teachers become more professionalized, a type of movement begins. This better illustrates the movement and cognitive development of the workshop classroom students along with their teachers via numerous genres and a variety of theories in the workshop classroom.

The question of student engagement in the workshop classroom seems less explicitly addressed than the relationship between institutional position and discipline. The subtext of the conferences that I trace concerns questions of interest, personal history, students identified need, and emotion within the context of engagement. For example,
defining much of the workshop writing scholarship places the workshop classroom student as above average, in the ability to connect to real-life events in creating understanding in their personal lives when reflecting upon interest and need. Also, the focus on the notion of empowerment in the workshop classroom of the 1980’s assumes the workshop classroom students are capable and able for literacy practice. This setting allows for the best learning opportunities for the workshop classroom students. More work needs to be accomplished, I suggest. It is important to consider the ways that workshop classroom students imagine their goals and represent their work. Again, goal setting and self-reflection or self-assessment is crucial to helping students determine how to best represent their work and learning.

Lastly, my analysis of student workshop conferences in the classroom suggests valuable connections between student interests and their ways of valuing themselves and their work. At this time, little scholarly work was published to highlight the workshop classroom in the same manner as *ITM* or *TATW* in such a way as to support the implementation and the professional work of the teachers in the workshop classroom working to engage students. It was rare for student writing or conference, or discussion of student work to appear in professional publications. As a result this scholarship is separated from the scholarship of other language arts instructional topics. Workshop research is rarely included with the research of other curricular components of language arts, especially when considering the high school workshop classroom.

The discussion of the conferences of students in the workshop classroom and the valuation of those conferences and the student engagements with various texts is essential. While language arts teachers worked to professionalize themselves and the workshop
environment, and articulate their own beliefs concerning the workshop classroom, the field as a whole became far more interested in forwarding discipline-wide theories of student engagement. The workshop classroom can provide a possible solution to this issue. If teachers are given the opportunity to get to know their students, they can begin to distinguish the student from the work.

This belief should help foster improved instruction. I argue the next essential step, is from consideration of discipline to that of individual student engagement as both product and element of the workshop classroom discipline. Based on my investigation of these three professional reads, student engagement in the workshop classroom asks one key question: What could student engagement in the workshop classroom look like (Atwell, 1998; Graves, 1984; Taylor, 2000)?

Assumptions

As I embarked upon this research journey, I did so with the following assumptions about why my research would yield:

- I would be able to readily observe the differences between the workshop classroom and the traditional high school language arts classroom;
- Students would also be able to readily communicate examples of the differences between the workshop classroom and the traditional high school language arts classroom;
- It would be easy to document student engagement in the workshop classroom;
- The students would be ready and able to discuss the engaging aspects of the workshop classroom;
• And, the students would overwhelmingly like the workshop classroom and identify numerous ways the workshop had positively impacted their learning.

Goals

My goal for this dissertation is to present research using the contemporary workshop classroom as a research setting. In this setting, I investigate what student engagement in the workshop classroom could look like. I focus closely on one pedagogical act to identify one such example: attempting to engage adolescents in literacy practice. Yet, I do not assume a direct correlation between student engagement and student literacy achievement (Atwell, 1998; Cambourne, 2001; Taylor, 2000). This will be the focal point of research.

In consideration of this investigation, I completed a present day case study. In Chapter Four, I focus on six students as they participate in the workshop classroom and their interests, needs, and emotional well-being, what equates to, their workshop discipline, as they engage in the workshop classroom. In so doing, I demonstrate disciplinary images of students as they work to engage in the workshop classroom. The focus of scholarly attention in ITM and TATW has been based upon the need for interaction and student engagement in the workshop classroom.

Specific Methodology

I have identified my decision to include multiple methods within this study. Stephen North (1987), in The Making of Knowledge in Composition, suggests that educational research studies have utilized a variety of research methodologies without proper consideration. He is worried that the random mix of methods utilized in the field may cost researchers and scholars methodological integrity and credibility. North
launched his own study of composition’s methodological communities, or traditional English teacher professional learning communities. This study was initiated in reaction to his own notion the field was “center-less” and had “no way to frame its central problems, nor any method by which to set about trying to resolve them” (iii). North studied the work completed by educational researchers. North created the theory that the co-existence of various research methods in complex studies by numerous types of practitioners, scholars, and researchers, cannot result in solid research for educational researchers (Faigley, 1992; Graves, 1984; Taylor, 2000). This line of reasoning makes me doubt whether North would like or support my dissertation. In utilizing two discernibly different kinds of case study, as means to study student engagement issues across several scenes of workshop, I risk, in North’s opinion, confusing project and process, mismatching means and ends. North would prefer I focus on historical or present, not both.

North’s perspective is just one of many concerning paradigms of research. I am more encouraged by the cognitive constructivist arguments in favor of methodological pluralism as a necessity of making sense of learning and engagement, as made by Jean Piaget (1972), Jerome Bruner (1960), Lillian Bridwell-Bowles (1991), and others. For instance, these scholars argue that, multiple research methods might be studied, included in discourse with one another, and used to highlight one another, resulting in perspectives that are more diverse, and with more voices included, and more theories reviewed (Bruner, 1960; Piaget, 1970; Taylor, 2000). Significantly, as Bridwell-Bowles argues in “Research in Composition: Issues and Methods,” by ceasing the never-ending search for the “best” research paradigm altogether, composition studies might achieve what she
calls the “ultimate paradigm shift”: “the loss of belief in the term ‘paradigm’ as a useful metaphor for what we are seeking” (112). Essentially, multiple methodologies show us that there are numerous ways to create understanding, an essential theory of the workshop classroom. This idea aligns with the differentiation included within the workshop classroom, one of the basic premises of the discipline (Bridwell – Bowles, 1991; Piaget, 1970; Taylor, 2000).

This theory helps frame the investigation of the workshop classroom. To critically consider the workshop classroom discipline, student engagement in the workshop classroom, and the act of engagement and interaction between students and teacher in that classroom, I had to locate a method of research that would allow me to look in many directions simultaneously and see the workshop classroom as the complicated setting it is (Bruner, 1960; Calkins, 1984; Taylor, 2000). I had to allow for focus on student engagement, and student interactions. The multimodal methodology I employed comes from the detail oriented practice of case study, with its focus on context of setting, copious details, and inclusion of individual research subjects participating within their communities.

In fact, my own past case study clearly directs readers’ attention to important findings: the scholarly books (In the Middle and The Art of Teaching Writing). Thus, it shifts attention more specifically toward constructions of student engagement within those books. Some stories of student engagement involve interactions with peers and teacher, personal interests, student-selected texts, and conferences. My past case studies identify the workshop classroom discipline systems that have fostered this kind of
reception for those stories. It is essential to understand these systems to understand the workshop classroom.

**The Case Study Format**

The case study research component follows the historical component. This perspective strengthens the stories I mention above by focusing on individual students, rather than workshop classroom and the creation of student engagement in the workshop classroom. By bringing the two together, I am better suited to research, for example, the ways that previously published research, which comes with a specific type of disciplinary authority, impacts instructional methods, and how teachers resist pedagogical authority (Graves, 1984; Halasek, 1999; Taylor, 2000). I can follow the effects of chronologically documented ideologies on contemporary workshop classroom practices. I can investigate the ways that disciplinary beliefs influence student actions and, quite possibly, interfere with literacy skill transference. Or, the combination of case study methods provides me the opportunity to investigate more closely how students determine their engagement in the workshop classroom within a particular school, and location, and what this could look like. This consideration can enlighten the contemporary workshop classroom teacher and their efforts to provide instruction and support to the students in the modern workshop classroom. Additionally, it will be valuable to determine similarities or differences as a result of time or culture change. Time and culture change may very well impact what student engagement could look like in the workshop classroom.

**Text Selection**

It was important to narrow down the text utilized for the past case study. I considered several other options before moving to a more focused, study of students in

**In the Middle and The Art of Teaching Writing**

While the books included numerous topics of importance to the workshop classroom, my increasing interest to really focus on student engagement, interests, and values in the workshop classroom caused me to focus on student research included within the texts of *TATW* and *TATW*. Both are highly influential and prestigious works within the field of workshop studies. All are intended for workshop classroom teachers as the primary audience. *ITM* is geared most specifically to secondary teachers working to implement all aspects of the workshop classroom inclusive of reading, writing, conferences, mini-lessons, student-selected texts. As such, *ITM* tends to be focused on overcoming classroom issues as identified by practicing classroom teachers. The writing in *TATW* is often more explicitly focused on the teaching of writing, though it is common for the text to include or reference the use of anchor texts. Utilization of such anchor texts is common for the instruction of writing as opposed to reading comprehension or strategy instruction. Thus, it is difficult to completely isolate acts of reading and writing within the workshop classroom.
Reading and writing are essential skills practiced within the workshop classroom. Quite simply, the scholarship published in all the books informs disciplinary theories and practices in the workshop classroom in both explicit and implicit ways for reading and writing instruction. These works are taught often in teacher preparation programs, undergraduate, and graduate programs alike. All of these books represent the life work of Nancie Atwell, Lucy McCormick Calkins, and Stephanie Harvey who have continued to research, lecture, publish, and encourage adolescent language arts teachers to pursue the workshop classroom as a means of providing high quality instruction and engaging learning opportunities for students. Explicitly, then, these works influence the teaching of new and experienced teachers alike. In addition, these works have been produced by the leading scholars in this field. Arguably, there are no bigger names in the workshop classroom discipline. Thus, they continue to promote the workshop classroom, influence curriculum in large and small school systems on a national level and theorize and historicize the workshop classroom. While not without weakness, no other works have been as influential.

**Text Analysis**

To begin to critically analyze texts, it is necessary to locate a lens to view the work. As such, there were several texts that appeared in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, including James Berlin’s (1985) *Rhetoric and Reality*, Stephen North’s (1987) *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, Lev Vygotsky’s (1986) *Thought and Language*, and Susan Miller’s (1991) *Textual Carnivals*, which gave me the most frequently utilized ways of detailing language arts professionals and their classroom work: in theory (Berlin), methods (North), and cognitively (Vygotsky and Miller). Then, I utilized these
three categories as frames for my own investigation of the ways that workshop classroom
teachers engage their students. To conclude each case study, I identified the category in
which the case study might be placed.

There were numerous categories that could have been utilized. As a result, I
centered my analysis in three ways, moving from the broad to the most specific
categories. First, I read the works in their entirety to make basic notes about historical
and cultural placement. I also examined the specific components of the workshop
classroom included in the descriptions. Second, I investigated the discourse within the
books and the nature of student engagement and the discipline of the workshop classroom.
For instance, Editors’ Notes, Forwards, and Personal Perspectives or Memoirs in ITM
were particularly useful (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1984; Taylor, 2000). Also, forward
comments in TATW as well as other works that reference Nancie Atwell, were insightful
in numerous manners. The points in which the books introduced students and provided
insight into the lives of the students in the workshop classroom revealed the most. I
carefully chronicled these moments as well and included great detail to craft a narrative
consistent with what would have been observed in the classroom. Third, I completed
close readings of student vignettes from the books that featured students from the
workshop classrooms of Atwell and Calkins as they shared their input, opinions,
experiences, perspectives, feedback, and self-assessment of their growth in the workshop
classroom. Again, I paid close attention to the notion of what student engagement within
the workshop classroom could look like as determined by the student. These components
were brought together to craft the story of the students.
Case Study

Without the past case study, the case study would have lacked essential grounding needed to address question: What could student engagement in the workshop classroom look like (Brent, 1992; Faigley, 1992; Taylor, 2000)? It is difficult to identify a theory including: reader response theories, traditional rhetorical theories, nor student authorship theories that can account for that specific rhetorical situation that occurs every time a student writer or reader engages with a text in the workshop classroom and seeks feedback. A lot of attention has been placed on teachers in the act of teaching in the workshop classroom. However, little is known about how students actually mediate the workshop classroom and determine if or how to engage and what this might look like. It seems the challenges of researching adolescents in such a large environment may have deterred such research.

Yet, it is this very setting that provides optimal opportunity to utilize case study research methods. I employ the case study here because I did engage in long-term observation of the students in the workshop classroom, and I have emphasized several aspects of case study inquiry in the project. My research stance was that of an observer in the workshop classroom, and the dissertation is the product of a long-term inquiry process (two years, including data collection and writing). I began with the belief that it would be possible to describe what student engagement in the workshop classroom could look like. I participated in a research process that was specifically created to investigate that theory.

As such, it was also important to consider my role as participant and observer in the study. Often, the researcher is researching a culture to which they do not belong.
Obviously, I was already a member of the school culture as Associate Principal at the
time. As such, my case study does not address questions of acceptance in the culture. In
“Still Life: Representations and Silences,” an essay that appears in the often cited
collection *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Research* (1997), Brenda
Brueggemann notes that she has used the term “ethno-oriented case studies” to detail the
kinds of case studies that focus on individuals, rather than communities, but draw upon
“ethnographic techniques” for data collection (35). This term seems to encompass my
work also (Sebroski, 1989; Sullivan, 1994; Taylor, 2000). Certainly, I was employing
case study strategies for research, although my position within this context could be
debated.

Interviews were one of the primary case study strategies utilized in my study. My
case study was based on a series of three interviews each, with six workshop classroom
students, all of whom knew me as the Associate Principal and were invited to participate
in my study. Each subject was informed I would interview them three times, ask them
the same questions each time; questions would ask participants to consider their
engagement in the classroom; and furthering questions might be asked dependent on
participant response. Briefly, the first interviews elicited the shortest responses from
participant as I determined they were just becoming familiar with the process and
building trust in the process and the questions I was asking. The second set of interviews
gathered more information as I suspect participants were growing familiar with me and
the process, and the third set of interviews included the most detailed responses and
allowed for the most free thought responses from the participants. Participants were
asked to consider what they knew about the Junior workshop classroom, how the teacher
communicates with the students in the workshop classroom, challenges in the workshop classroom, motivating factors in the workshop, connections or applications of work completed in the workshop, details about their independent reading, writing, journaling habits, and thoughts about transferring these skills to other areas of their lives. I videotaped each interview session, and took notes during workshop classroom visits, providing me the opportunity to add description and reflect upon the visits and interviews. After each session, I also reviewed the interviews and notes to identify any essential information.

While it can be challenging to receive approval to interview adolescents, the Institutional Review Board decided my project appropriate to proceed before I began interviewing subjects. The approval notification form copies are available upon request. I use pseudonyms throughout the dissertation to name the student participants, the teacher, and the high school described or included in the research. The study took place at College Green High School, a large high school situated in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. The workshop classroom consisted of 35 junior level students, assigned for one 50 minute class period to a third year teacher. Students participating in the junior level workshop classroom have all successfully passed the freshman, and sophomore level workshop classroom. The junior level workshop classroom is the third class. Students are required to take four years of English as part of their high school graduation requirement. The workshop classroom fulfills this requirement. The language arts curriculum within the district has recently been revised to focus on the tenets of the workshop classroom. This is the second year this course has been offered at the junior level. At the time of the study, I had previously taught for four years in the high school
language arts department, and was now an administrator in the building, having been an Instructional Chairperson, Associate Principal, and now Principal. A detailed description of the workshop classroom and its pedagogy appears in Chapter Four. Within Chapter Four numerous detailed accounts of workshop classroom activities are included.

*Describing the Workshop Classroom*

As I have already noted, another case study research strategy included classroom observations. I introduced my project to the classroom teacher in fall, and I provided her with copies of my dissertation abstract. I knew I wanted to interview workshop classroom students as the research participants, but I also knew I wanted to visit the workshop classroom and observe the events and learning opportunities of the classroom. Having access to one classroom that would include all the research participants was essential. The teacher readily accepted the invitation and identified she felt it would be beneficial for all of us involved. My next task was to identify potential students as research participants with her help. I asked for a list of ten-twelve students who represented both sexes, our largest ethnic/cultural groups in the school, and seemed to represent a variety of literacy abilities. I met with ten students. Eight originally agreed to participate, but eventually only six returned the required documentation and completed the study. The teacher also submitted the necessary documents. The teacher agreement was more to satisfy teacher union concerns than concerns on my part or behalf of the teacher included within the study. No issues of concern were noted during the study.

To gain a full understanding of the workshop classroom, numerous visits were needed. I visited the workshop classroom a total of nine times from January - April. When I entered the classroom initially, only the teacher and the research participants
knew why I was there. I have a habit of visiting all classrooms on a frequent basis for approximately ten-fifteen minutes at a time. Thus, the other students did not think much of it. However, after several consecutive visits, for the entire class period, the other students began to ask. I did inform them that I was completing a research project for my Ph.D. The other students asked very few questions about my project, but the overall response was that they enjoyed seeing me complete my own “homework” and thought it was really interesting that it actually involved what I did for a living. While visiting the classroom I took notes. After leaving the classroom, I spent time reviewing my notes and identifying essential information.

Scheduling the visits proved somewhat challenging given my schedule as an administrator was constantly changing with little communication. The dates of visits were selected randomly, based upon the school calendar, and my calendar. Some weeks, I visited the classroom only once, while other weeks I managed to visit the classroom twice. This did become more challenging as many of the students would tell me “stop by class and see this…” or “really missed having you there today”. Of course, I began to wonder how my non-obtrusive presence was intruding on the workshop environment and my research. Ideally, I would have enjoyed spending more time in the classroom. However, I still had to contend with my daily responsibilities as an administrator and that proved to be one of the largest challenges in visiting the classroom regularly. There were days I planned to attend the workshop classroom, but was unable to do so due to events or incidents with students, parents, other teachers, the community or the building. Emergencies did not respect my research calendar. Thus, while the classroom visits were not regularly scheduled, the participant interviews were regularly scheduled and occurred
in February, mid-March and the end of April. Only one participant did not complete the third interview, due to missing the end of the school year with mono. This is noted in the case study.

**Subject Selection**

I gave great consideration to the process for subject selection. I invited eight students from the same workshop classroom, to originally be part of the research project, and six of the students agreed and returned all the required permission letters. Eight students were invited who would represent the largest cultural/ethnic groups in the high school and also a fairly even split between the sexes. In total, six students started and completed the study including: Bri, a white middle class female student; May, an Hispanic middle class female student; Erin, an African American middle class female student; Ann, a Pakistani economically disadvantaged female student; Tracey, a white economically disadvantaged female student; Ben, a white middle class male student. The two students who declined participation were both males. One student was African American and the other student was Hispanic. This selection is representative of the overall student body at College Green High School.

As much time was set aside to select the ideal classroom for the study. The classroom had been selected based on teacher willingness and overall implementation of the workshop classroom. I wished to work with students who had been part of a workshop classroom in which the teacher had worked to her fullest ability to implement the pedagogy. I wanted to produce a study that might help direct and guide teacher preparation in this discipline. At the same time, a caution was that my relationship with the students and teacher as an administrator clearly affect my renderings of their
engagement in the workshop classroom. I was struggling with my own concern about urging my students and teacher, all of who trusted me and offered me honest, genuine, and sincere information about their engagement practices, to share too much as they participated in the workshop classroom.

**Interviewing Adolescents**

Student interviews were utilized to provide a full picture of the individual student engagement in the workshop. At first, I wanted to compare the ways students responded differently to various attempts to the teacher to engage them in a variety of workshop classroom activities. However, I focused on what could student engagement in the workshop classroom look like? I did transcribe and examine the videotaped interviews based on the previously described questions and the classroom observations. Not all of this data appears in this dissertation. The project became increasingly less about the act of me completing a predetermined task, but me actually taking a page out of the workshop classroom and responding to the student needs and interests. Yet, it appears valuable to explain why I decided to only include a portion of this data as compared to all of it and the resulting impact on the study. Additionally, I would like to note this study is my first entry into the conversation about the workshop discipline. I had to focus my efforts, as I could not simply include all the potential data from what could become life work.

Great consideration was given to question selection for the interviews. First, I selected a set of questions I thought would get the students to reveal information about their perceptions and thoughts about the workshop classroom; this way, I was confident I would get to hear honest opinions and revelations with great details and insight. This was to the best of my naïve intentions. I spent weeks crafting questions, revising, questions,
changing questions, only to discover they were good places to start, but certainly not an
ending point or conclusion for me and my initial attempts to interview adolescents
concerning their learning experiences. As I interviewed the student research participants
and visited the workshop classroom, I began to realize that the student’s actions in the
classroom along with the dialogue during the workshop classroom sessions, and some of
the interviews provided the details I was seeking. But most of the valuable data really
came from the classroom visits. This data paired with the interview responses provide a
more complete image of student engagement in the workshop classroom could look like.

I also gave great thought to the interview process. In the first interview session,
each subject responded to all the questions included in Interview Protocol for Interviews
1 and 2 (Appendix A), which I read aloud to each participant and waited for their
responses. Prior to the interview, I explained the types of questions the participants were
to expect. The questions were designed to seek student perspective and opinion about the
workshop classroom. Each interview lasted between ten-twenty minutes depending on
the participant. These interviews were conducted in early February.

Interview Two took place in mid-March. Again, each participant responded to all
the questions included in Interview Protocol for Interviews 1 and 2 (Appendix A). The
questions for interview two were the same as the first interview. This decision to include
exactly the same questions was to be able to determine if student participant opinions or
perspectives changed depending on the events in the classroom. In theory, if the
questions were the same, the responses should have been very similar. After this
interview, I began to see two common themes emerge from the students. They felt the
class was potentially more engaging primarily due to their opportunity to create their own
meaning and understanding and also the opportunity to create meaning via socializing and interacting with peers and the teacher: cognitive and social constructivism. Each student participant was able to provide ample examples of each of these.

In late April, I interviewed the students for a third time. During this time, they responded to a third set of questions. Some of these questions were similar to the questions included in the first and second interview sessions. However, there were new questions as well, geared to identify or urge students to share some final thoughts about the workshop classroom.

After concluding the third interview session, I began to organize the data. To begin, I organized all data by research participant. At this time, I noted that I did not have a third interview for Ben. Ben was ill with mono at the end of the year, and did not finish the year. He was very sick for the last six weeks of the year. Thus, I only have his first two interviews. To begin, I watched the interviews repeatedly just to familiarize myself with participant responses and also make careful notes of places I could not completely hear or understand the student responses. Also, I simply started to note the questions that seemed to garner the most detailed responses. My initial thoughts were that if there was something in these questions that would encourage detailed responses from the participants, this would be something to consider in the larger scope of the research and later when analyzing the data. Much to my surprise, these questions seemed to vary from participant to participant. Perhaps my questions did a better job of encouraging student differentiation, similar to the workshop classroom, than I thought.
Analyzing the Data

The first two interviews were transcribed in May, and I began to identify some themes in the transcriptions. Over the course of the next several months, I transcribed the third interview. After finishing transcriptions and careful reading of the transcripts, I developed the following categories for the next phase of the study:

1) Identifying the benefits of social interaction with peers and teacher in the workshop classroom
2) Identifying the benefits of the opportunity to create understanding and meaning of their world
3) Identifying specific components of the classroom that seem interesting, pleasant, and motivating
4) Ways of categorizing and explaining personal connections to text
5) Ways of identifying different types of texts that were read

I selected three main areas of focus from this list: 1) description of the social constructivist processes within the workshop classroom identified as engaging by the student participants; 2) description of the cognitive constructivist process within the workshop classroom identified as engaging by the student participants; 3) ways student participants grouped texts by purpose. The result of this process is the case study in Chapter Four that suggests multiple ways in which a workshop classroom engages students in literacy practices (Bruner, 1960; Piaget, 1970; Taylor, 2000).

Coding

The data included in this chapter includes vignettes of study participants and descriptions of the class periods visited. I determined I would focus on student
interactions and making connections to the social context of engagement or details that students reveal which describe how engagement impacts learning. Below is the code for interview identifiers:

CC – Cognitive Constructivism: The participant identifies how their thinking and actions have caused them to be engaged in the classroom and create new ideas, learn new skills, or gain realizations about themselves or others.

SC – Social Constructivism: The participant identifies how their interactions with the other students or teacher work to help them create new ideas, learn new skills, or gain realizations about themselves or others and be engaged in the classroom.

**Social and Cognitive Constructivism**

While completing the study, it became obvious social and cognitive constructivism had large roles in the workshop classroom. As such, “Love and Language in the Workshop” is also intended to be a social and cognitive constructivist project, both in subject and in method. In *Beyond Methodology*, Fonow and Cook suggest these tenets of research: “reflexivity; an action orientation; attention to the affective components of the research; and use of the situation-at-hand” (Fonow and Cook 2). “Love and Language in the Workshop” includes these tenets. First, my project stems from my own self-reflection about the discipline challenges I had as a language arts teacher and now as principal to engage adolescents in literacy skill practices. I refer often to those personal experiences as a teacher and administrator and use them as a starting point from which to consider this study. By making explicit how my research methods and subject(s) stem from personal exploration of my own professional character, “Love and Language in the Workshop” provides a model of constructivist inquiry that is personal and professional.
Chapter One grounds my project as one that stems from personal experience and a need to consider what engagement in the workshop classroom could look like in a specific manner.

Second, the project is an example of action research as it attempts to understand what engaging students in the workshop classroom could look like. I share a method to potentially engage students in the workshop classroom through student communication of interest and need. I also support the consideration of specific methods to encourage student engagement with a variety of self-selected and teacher-selected anchor texts.

Third, I highlight the affective components of research by speaking honestly of my relationship to my interview research subjects (see Chapter Four) and by representing these subjects in a detailed manner (Atwell, 1998; Brent, 1992; Taylor, 2000). Or, my objective in identifying subjects for this portion of the study was to model what it might look like when excellent teachers of the workshop classroom might engage their students.

Finally, the project obviously utilized the convenience of my workplace by using a junior level workshop classroom at College Green High School as the primary site for research. As the issue of how students could be engaged in the writing workshop impacts student ability to practice a variety of literacy skills in a variety of locations, I had access to the workshop classroom at College Green High School. My experiences there have been instrumental to my career as an educator. Those experiences have allowed me to see my academic work as well connected to the field of the workshop classroom, and that perspective allowed me to situate the study in a cognitive and social context. The workshop classroom gives all students opportunity to construct meaning independently and/or as a group.
Personally, I do not think it is possible to separate the social and cognitive aspects of the workshop classroom from the engagement focus. I feel my study is certainly about the social and cognitive construction of learning and meaning making. I perceive the study as enacting these theories of research, such as those included previously in this chapter and ethical principals of research, such as those described by Lucy McCormick Calkins, Jerome Bruner, Lev Vygostky, Jean Piaget, and others. In “Making Meaning on the Page and in Our Lives,” the first chapter in *The Art of Teaching Writing*, Lucy McCormick Calkins identifies the essential thoughts about “teaching writing in a way meaningful to the students” (Calkins 3). Here Calkins explains:

> For me, it is essential that children are deeply involved in writing, that they share their texts with others, and that they perceive themselves as authors. I believe these three things are interconnected. A sense of authorship comes from the struggle to put something big and vital into print, and from seeing one’s own printed words reach the hearts and minds of readers.

Calkins provides a summary of this type of connection. The language of social and cognitive theory provides a useful term for thinking about student engagement in practicing literacy skills in a workshop classroom setting. This complex discipline is complicated, with implications extending not only into the workshop classroom but also into the language arts classroom disciplinary history. In combining methodologies as I do in this dissertation, my viewpoint becomes rich with data. The merger of methods allows me to complete analyses to see the problem of the discipline’s lack of attention to preparing teachers to consider student engagement in the workshop classroom by empowering students to identify their own interests, needs, objectives, and assist students in becoming independent learners of literacy. The case studies work to identify the differences between the traditional language arts classroom and the workshop classroom.
These differences are largely attributed to teaching methods and teacher effort to engage students.

*Setting the Scene: Workshop Classroom*

The writing workshop is an incredibly collaborative, intensive writing and reading program staffed by language arts teachers that focus on the following genres: folklore, rhetoric and composition, literary studies, communication studies, creative writing. The teacher is a full time teacher who teaches a group of Junior level students that can be ever-changing. The teacher of the workshop classroom works to provide all students with the opportunity to explore a variety of genres via reading and writing. This opportunity is given through book talks, mini-lessons, assistance organizing the writing, and reading notebooks to include ongoing lists or territories of exploration.

The workshop classroom works hard to both theorize its curriculum and hold theory accountable to the rigors of the classroom. The course is part of a four year sequence that works to prepare all students for college-level work upon graduating from high school. The students read and write on a regular ongoing basis in a setting that includes a great deal of conferencing, small group work, and partner work. The teacher does participate in curriculum development professionalization activities, research, and long-term and short-term planning for the workshop. The atmosphere is lively, marked by critical conversation and a general air of good will and humor. The students appear to welcome the non-traditional setting as an opportunity to focus on their own interests and needs while exploring texts for reading and writing, basic conventions for writing, and discussion of texts.
This setting is the opposite of other representations of junior English programs that I described in Chapter Two, particularly the lower-level collection of students as described by Alfred Tatum in “Breaking Down Barriers That Disenfranchise African American Adolescents in Low-Level Reading Tracks.” The teaching and learning space the workshop classroom has created exists for several reasons, including the fact that most staff members define themselves as teacher-scholars rather than as scholars who happen to teach. In addition, the Workshop’s physical space allows for students to move freely throughout the room to be able to work collaboratively with the teacher and their peers. The workshop functions like a center for interdisciplinary study: inclusive of student interests that encourage students to individualize the course for their need and enhanced engagement. The program works to support student interests and needs. Workshop teachers perceive themselves as vital members of the school community as a whole; working to support the adolescent literacy development. This sense of connection to the rest of the school system helps workshop teachers feel closely connected to the students. This is a topic mentioned by Stephen O’Connor in “Will My Name Be Shouted Out?” However, within the specific context of this high school, a paradigm shift is currently underway. Eventually, all teachers will transition to the workshop classroom structure. Thus, support should increase for all teachers involved in the workshop classroom. If there is any lack of support perceived, the workshop classroom transition will not be successful.

The workshop classroom spends a great deal of time helping students construct an understanding of literacy skill and events independently. Thus, when considering the case studies of student learners, it is essential to consider how students participate in the
workshop, and construct their own understanding cognitively and socially of their work and achievement. The case studies do attempt to present an image of the student with academic, social, and emotional descriptions to allow for a fuller picture of the adolescent to emerge.
CHAPTER 4

WORKSHOP CLASSROOM PRACTICES:
FINDINGS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

At this point, the current case study will be introduced in consideration of what student engagement in the workshop classroom could look like. This chapter gives my project details that support the historical perspectives presented in previous chapters. Details have been included about how educational research has conceptualized issues of engagement and reviewed those constructions from a strong Cognitivist lens. Previous chapters studied both the field of composition and the workshop classroom’s focus on engagement as they have been constructed within ITM and TATW, two highly influential professional books. From these lenses, I have studied in general terms a discipline within the workshop classroom, and several images of workshop classrooms, workshop classroom students, and the procedures described in ITM and TATW. Numerous student conferences and works were included to provide illustrations of various works in the workshop classroom. These students and their voices served to bring the workshop classroom to life.

The case study helped define the objective for this chapter. I have one main objective in Chapter Four. I look to illustrate how students engagement in the workshop classroom might look like. To attain this goal, I use case studies to look specifically at the ways students negotiate their engagement as they interact with texts in the workshop classroom. The setting for the analysis is College Green High School. The case studies include students at this site. In the study, I concentrate on the engagement of the students in the classroom, educational history of the students, and cultural locations, as these factors are informed by their sense of workshop discipline. Via details about the students
and their interactions with the teacher and their peers in the workshop classroom, their stories are revealed. These stories tell the tale of the student engagement and their perception of learning in the workshop classroom.

Previous examples of this engagement have already been included in this project. In Chapter Two, I suggested many scholarly discussions about the ways that students might become engaged in literacy in the workshop classroom focus upon the act of responding to or interacting with various texts. These studies require students’ text selections to be evaluated or treat them as opportunities to see specific moments of students’ learning processes in the workshop classroom. These studies are influential on the field’s thinking about the processes of engagement and practice in the workshop classroom. This study does not deny the importance of thinking about student connection to texts in these manners. However, it suggests a different manner of thinking about student engagement; as a site of literacy skill practice, a key location from which students and teacher interact and from which pedagogies emerge and might be revised (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1984; Cambourne, 2001; Harvey, 1998; Taylor, 2000).

These considerations help give the study a focus, as this study takes a different approach not only to explore the act of reading but also to ways of defining what student engagement with a variety of reading practices and texts could look like. Now, I look to three books that address the ways teachers interact with students and their texts rather explicitly in order to illustrate the nature of this difference. First, Erika Lindemann’s *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* (2001) provides summary of numerous theories of reading and helps teachers in realizing that responding to student writing is not a single method of criticism for the student. Lindemann suggests in her preface to the book, “Be assured
that you already know a great deal about teaching composition. That knowledge-born-of-experience will serve you well. But other kinds of knowing can be just as important” (xii). As Lindemann’s book does assume that the majority of teachers have experience responding to student writing, she notes there is always something else to learn and make better. The text gives the opportunity to explore how various writers bring specific learning histories and interests to improve their reading skills. It should be noted, that this very consideration is valuable when responding to student writing in the workshop classroom.

Additionally, some methods might be more beneficial to engaging students in text discourse in the workshop classroom. Lindemann considers the implications of suggestions by education specialists that trace the relationships of teachers’ theoretical orientations toward literary texts to their ways of responding to those texts and student written texts. For example, Lindemann notes the importance of discussing context, purpose and audience with each of her students during and after the writing process. She identifies the value for her and the students to consider how these items are essential to the entire process, including her role as responder to student texts.

The teacher work as an initiator of student discourse in the workshop classroom should also be considered. Lad Tobin’s, *Writing Relationships, What Really Happens in the Composition Class* (1993), provides a healthy, theoretically charged discussion about the roles of the teacher and students in the writing classroom. The writing and reading processes in the classroom are the focus in this work. Tobin offers the following descriptor as a clue to what it really is like in the writing classroom:

I’m tired and ready to go home; of course, I thought I was tired and ready to go home this morning, after teaching two sections of Freshman
Given those details, the need for differentiation and the ability to identify specific student need on an ongoing and regular basis while teaching writing in the workshop classroom, are obvious. While there is research to include information about how teachers read and interact with student text, there is very little research about how adolescent peers read the work of their counterparts and respond (Atwell, 1998; O'Connor, 1996; Taylor, 2000).

The workshop classroom can be a fertile area to consider these interactions. This setting is especially fertile as the teacher is constantly providing differentiated responses to each student in the workshop classroom. These very interactions help determine what student engagement in the workshop classroom could look like.

*Bri*

I’m early. As I enter the classroom, almost five minutes still remain to the passing period. Only a few students have made their way to class, but Bri is one of them. If she doesn’t stand out from her bright, red hair, she stands out because she is in class two minutes early, seated with notebook, pen, and independent reading book out, open on her desk. No other student, and there are 35 in the class, resembles this image. Actually, the book isn’t only open she is flipping through the book adding notes to her writer’s notebook. After another minute, the room begins to fill with social juniors just relieved to make it to class on time. Many students are anxiously attempting to locate notebooks, pens or pencils, and independent reading books. However, Bri is ready for class to begin,
at least by all appearances she doesn’t acknowledge or greet any other students. She seems focused or centered on the novel on her desk. She doesn’t even look up from the book. She stays focused on the book and seems intent to read.

Class begins with approximately ten minutes of independent reading time. Bri read the entire time. I try not to stare at Bri too intently, as I don’t want to make her too nervous. Although we have met, and she is aware of my visits, I don’t want to add to her anxiety. Thus, I also observe other participants before settling my gaze on Bri again.

Students enter the classroom at various rates, some loudly, others without saying a word.

I can easily see three to four other students and their journals. Most of the pages seem to be filled with a free-flow of thought that in some journals has covered pages from margin to margin. A few pages seem to hold shorter responses, and there is also the occasional quote splashed among the pages.

Shortly into the class period, the teacher identifies for the students the following standards to be included in the class: identification of themes in literature, ability to read various genres of writing, ability to summarize main ideas, and ability to infer main ideas from literature. The first fifteen minutes of class provides an opportunity for students to finish work from the previous day. Students were to have read a nonfiction selection that described the characteristics of American Romanticism. After reading the selection, students worked at identifying the main ideas from the piece and creating inferences to describe expectations of the various samples of American Romanticism to be explored over the next week. As students completed the work, the teacher moved throughout the room conferencing with students concerning the main ideas and inferences they were
creating. As students completed their work, they read independently or wrote independently.

After approximately fifteen minutes, students shared the main ideas and inferences they had identified from the reading selection. After a few minutes of sharing ideas, the teacher modeled how to read a sample of American Gothic literature via a think aloud. The teacher placed several common themes from American Gothic literature on the overhead. Themes included: everything in the world is a reflection of your soul, the physical facts of the work are a doorway to your spiritual world, people should acknowledge their own intuition to gain insight into their world, and intuition can be superior to intellectualism. The teacher stopped reading after each paragraph and identified the main idea of the paragraph and also identified any clues to suggest the theme being communicated by the writer. The teacher continued this structure for approximately ten minutes.

When identifying the main idea, the teacher would not only say it aloud, but point to, highlight, and identify paragraph specifics to indicate the main idea. She would also circle the clues and explain how she thought they conveyed the theme. This type of modeling is a think-aloud and represents or shows “aloud” types of questions students should consider silently as they read.

Next, students were given a chance to work in small groups and complete a similar exercise. Students had the remaining twenty minutes of class to complete the work. As students worked, the teacher moved from group to group to answer questions and redirect students as needed. As groups completed the work, the teacher collected and quickly reviewed the work. If needed, she identified what should be revised and returned
to students to complete prior to the end of the class. Some groups needed additional time to complete the work. The teacher explained students would once again have time to complete the work at the start of the next class period.

This was a typical class period according to Bri. As a junior in the 11th grade English course, Bri describes herself as one of the “goody goodies”, always doing what is asked of her, always volunteering to participate, and always completing her homework…well probably 90% of the time. But, as Bri readily points out, “That’s pretty good for a junior in high school.” She plans to graduate early, after first semester of her senior year to work for a semester prior to heading off to college. Bri plans to attend a state school. For the past two years, Bri has been part of the workshop model English course and suggested, “I can easily give you some ideas and feedback about the class and what is happening.” What about when the camera starts recording? Bri has some specific questions to respond to about the English course. Bri identifies that she is confident she will be able to provide feedback.

Bri on Cognitive Constructivism

Throughout the course of the three interviews, Bri readily acknowledged and spoke about how the course “at least helped” encourage or improve her literacy skills. “It is important to learn about literacy and the reading and writing and speaking, because it will help enhance my ability to read and speak and I know that, that those skills I will need for um college and work and my future.” Initially, Bri struggles to identify how what she is learning or practicing in the workshop classroom would impact or transfer to other areas of life. During the first interview, Bri stated, “I’m not sure I know how to apply this class to other areas of my life.” However, as the course went on, and Bri had
the opportunity to respond to this question again, she stated, “I think I can see how these skills are a basis for everything because, like the communication factor of life.” Bri followed this up by saying, “Like, my vocabulary has really improved. There are a lot of words I now know that I didn’t before, and I know that will help in other areas also.”

Of course, I must also consider whether Bri readily identified the growth in her vocabulary independently, or whether she became focused on this as a result of the questions included in the interview. Bri did not specify examples of activities or exercises that would cause her to believe this. Nor, did Bri volunteer specific vocabulary words as examples of her growth.

Outside of school is perhaps where Bri identified the greatest growth. “Before coming to this school and being in the English classes, I hated reading. I really didn’t like to read. I never went to the library. I never read on my own. Now, being encouraged to read what I want to read and knowing that what I want to read is here, in the library or the classroom, and being told it’s okay to read that stuff, I now love reading. I read all the time on my own. Reading is one of my favorite things to do alone.” Bri did not discuss the possibilities of continuing to read independently or foster the love of reading once leaving the workshop classroom.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Bri</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> What motivates you to apply yourself in this course?</td>
<td>2. Well, I think it is interesting to learn, just to learn for learning and I can see how it does apply to myself and like life outside of school because I do read and write, and I do like to read and write and I want to read and write. So yea.</td>
<td>CC – identifying her own interests and motivations for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Is it important to know your strengths or weakness in reading and writing? Why or why not?</td>
<td>4. Yea. So, like I can try to read maybe by choice areas that I need more practice in. So if I struggle with understanding nonfiction, maybe I would decide to read more nonfiction like blogs, or newspapers, or magazines, or I guess even books. Or, if I know that I struggle with fiction, then I could read more fiction. Maybe more difficult or harder fiction, like college level fiction.</td>
<td>CC- evaluating her own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and how to respond to strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, Bri also discussed the importance of understanding and identifying her weaknesses in literacy, so she can address them and make them better. “It's definitely important to know where I struggle, so I can make them better for college and I guess first on the ACT. If I know where I need to improve, I can hopefully work on that and improve. But if not, then no. It won't get better.” Overall, Bri felt her reading ability improved during the course. “I can’t like point to a test score, but I know I’ve improved. I can read faster and tougher stuff and I know a lot more words. Like, the words that we don’t really use a lot today, but are still used. I know what they mean, or I can figure out what they mean. I feel good about it.” Bri identifies vocabulary as a specific area of growth.

Again, it should be noted Bri was not able to provide specific examples of specific vocabulary words that would illustrate this growth. However, her confidence seems to be positively impacted. Consideration should be given to the impact or correlation between the increased confidence level and literacy and learning outcomes. We should give consideration to this suggestion as described by Bri as a topic of further research outside of this study.

_Bri and Her Stages of Learning_

During an early visit to the class, students were completing the self-evaluation exercise. The students had started the work the previous day. However, students needed additional time to complete the work. As a result, students spent 15 – 20 minutes completing the evaluation. While students highlighted and identified the standards and strands for their personal growth, the teacher continued to move around the room and talk about the standards with the students. As students finished, students either read...
independently or wrote in their journals. The classroom atmosphere was quiet. The students had a clear understanding of what needed to be accomplished during the period. Additionally, based on the on-task work of the students and lack of extraneous talking or other activities, it was clear the students were familiar with this type of activity. After the teacher spoke with the individual students, students placed the evaluation in the front of their classroom binder. Through the rest of the classroom visits, the teacher would refer to or identify specific standards included within the mini-lessons.

In January, Bri, with the rest of the students in her Jr. English workshop classroom completed this self-evaluation. On that evaluation, Bri responded to questions about reading. Specifically, Bri responded to several specific components of reading skills including the following: ability to identify a clear main idea or purpose of straightforward paragraphs in uncomplicated literary narratives, ability to locate simple details at the sentence and paragraph level in uncomplicated passages, ability to recognize a clear function of a part of an uncomplicated passage, ability to identify relationships between main characters in uncomplicated literary narratives, ability to recognize clear cause-effect relationships within a single paragraph in uncomplicated literary narratives, ability to use context to understand basic figurative language, and ability to draw simple generalizations and conclusions about people, ideas, and so on in uncomplicated passages. Bri reviewed samples of these skills and determined that she felt she could complete these skills accurately approximately half the time she was presented with these tasks. She was not confident she could complete this work on a more regular basis.
Approximately four months later, at the end of April Bri completed the same self-evaluation and identified personal growth concerning the reading skills. Bri specifically identified growth in the following areas: ability to infer the main idea or purpose of straightforward paragraphs in uncomplicated literary narratives, ability to understand the overall approach taken by an author or narrator in uncomplicated passages, ability to locate important details in uncomplicated passages, ability to make simple inferences about how details are used in passages, ability to identify the order or simple sequences of events in uncomplicated literary narratives, the ability to identify clear relationships between people, ideas, and so on in uncomplicated passages, ability to identify clear cause-effect relationships in uncomplicated passages, use context to determine the appropriate meaning of some figurative and nonfigurative words, phrases, and statements in uncomplicated passages, ability to draw generalizations and conclusion about people, ideas, and so on in uncomplicated passages, and the ability to draw simple generalizations and conclusions using details that support the main points of more challenging passages. According to this evaluation, Bri is able to confidently and successfully incorporate and utilize more complex reading skills. Bri identifies examples of this success when she considers some of the challenging nonfiction articles she reads in US History class and Biology.

It is also valuable to understand this survey is based solely on qualitative student opinion as shared with the teachers and other students via literacy conferences. Participants and all students completed this survey and evaluated their own growth. While these perceptions could be slanted or skewed by participants, it is unclear what participants or students would gain from a dishonest response.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Bri</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> Do you know what the purpose of the Jr. English class is? If yes, what is the purpose? If not, what do you think the purposes might be?</td>
<td><strong>6.</strong> I think a bit part of it is to help me get ready for college and for my future. So, for me, I know that reading is really important. So, I think I am supposed to work on my reading so I can read well and do well in college.</td>
<td><strong>CC – identifying her own purpose for focusing on learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> Is it important to learn about reading and literacy skills, like how people communicate and why they communicate that way?</td>
<td><strong>8.</strong> Yes. I mean isn’t that the point or the basis for language? To like communicate? So, I should know.</td>
<td><strong>CC - identifying her own purpose for focusing on learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong> How do you expect to apply what you learn in the class to other areas of your life? How do you think you will evaluate your progress in the class?</td>
<td><strong>10.</strong> I think I will start to think more about my thinking and my reading and writing. Not sure about if it will change how I communicate with others, but it will make me think about my learning. Really, my vocabulary. I am really trying to use better vocabulary.</td>
<td><strong>CC – she is able to differentiate between acts of thinking for academic purposes and acts of thinking for social reasons.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The major area of growth as identified by Bri via the self-evaluation focuses mostly on the skill of inference. In reading skills for college and work place preparation, inference becomes a major skill and requires the reader to determine meaning when details are not made explicit by the author in the text or passage. Specifically, Bri demonstrated ability to infer main ideas, and ascertain relevance of detail and description. Additionally, the level of the passages in which Bri is able to demonstrate these skills is more complicated and challenging. Finally, it should also be noted that at this level, Bri is confident she would be successful at reading a variety of challenging texts. Bri selected skills and a confidence level that would indicate her success in freshman level college social studies courses.

**Bri on Social Constructivism**

“The teacher was always working with us. She was always moving around the room and working with us alone, or when we worked in groups. We did a lot in groups. In fact, we did everything first in groups, or at least as uh a whole class and then alone, but she was always there to help.” Bri followed with, “I think this helped, because you could always talk to someone else, even the teacher. It wasn’t like hard to talk to her.”

I identified similar events or activities during several classroom visits. The teacher was indeed regularly moving throughout the room working with students. As I watched the involvement of all the research participants, I noted the interaction between teacher, participants, and participant groups.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Bri</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. While in class, what kinds of things did you work on with the teacher?</td>
<td><strong>12.</strong> Well, we would always have a chance or time to work with the teacher, even when being with our small groups. For example, when discussing the order of ideas for like persuasive writing, she is always available to talk and help us think through or talk through things. 13. Yea. I mean we were always working with other people. Not a lot of working alone, so it seemed to work. For me it worked. I think I’ve learned a lot and been or are being successful. I feel good about it. 15. Do you think or can you remember how much time was spent listening to instruction or practicing literacy skills like reading and writing? 16. I think it was probably like half and half, but even when the teacher was talking or telling us or showing us how to do something it wasn’t just her. Like she wanted or asked us to interact. So, we were always talking with her and others about the learning and reading and writing. It wasn’t a lot of just sitting. Listening.</td>
<td>SC – identifying examples of social interaction with other students and teacher SC – identifying working with others frequently throughout the class SC – identifying that even during instruction, still a social component</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the learning within the workshop classroom had a definite social atmosphere, according to Bri, the students do not talk about literacy outside of the classroom. When Bri was asked, “Do you talk with anyone outside of school about what you’re doing in English class?” Bri responded, “No. I don’t talk to anyone about what is going on in class. We don’t, me and my friends because, we’re like all doing the same thing. So, because we’re all going through it, it’s like no reason to talk about it. We know it. It just is it.” While the students seem to be comfortable with conversations about literacy within the literacy workshop, they do not communicate in this manner outside of the classroom.

A point to note is that while there is definitely increased social literacy interaction in the classroom, it does not appear to be moving into the social aspect of adolescent lives. Additional research or thought should possibly be given to consider this phenomenon. It could also be pondered about the value adolescents place on this item or the concerns of this topic. Bri did not offer up suggestions as to how teachers might encourage additional types of conversation about literacy outside of the classroom. Nor, did she readily acknowledge if she thought this type of conversation would be beneficial to the students in the class.

**Bri’s Final Thoughts**

“Towards April, the one thing about the class was that the focus really changed for test prep. I mean the class format didn’t change, but it was clear we were preparing for the ACT. All the mini-lessons were for the ACT. The teacher told us so. But, they weren’t just like worksheets and like sample tests. They were actual like learning activities and we worked together. So, the good thing was when we, like I took the test,
and I got to a question, I was like okay, I know how to do this. We did this. Or, I could like think back to a specific thing, or time, or event in class and recall like exactly what to do. It really helped.” Bri felt that being able to remember the context of the instruction helped her identify how to complete a variety of tasks outside of the workshop classroom.

**May**

Approximately 20% of the high school population is comprised of Hispanic students. Of this 20%, approximately half of the students have exited the bilingual/English Language Learner program. However, exited can be the result of one of two events: students successfully test out of the program reaching assessment standards, or they spent the total amount of allowed time in the program (eight years) and were exited by the school district. 25% of the remaining students refused placement while the other 25% were never identified for services. Thus, there are a lot of students in need of support for learning the English language and the school is underserved in services offered to these students.

May is one of the students who refused placement. She and her parents wanted her to be able to attend her home schools, and none of her home schools had the bilingual or ELL program. Thus, May would have qualified for services, but refused services. As a result, May has had very little opportunity for tutoring, extended social services, or workshops to assist with the English Language acquisition challenges.

This decision can be further compounded when it is realized no assistance at all was provided by the schools attended. These schools do not receive any additional funding and thus provide no additional support services for students refusing ELL placements. May had been an independent learner as she worked to become fluent in
English. Additionally, much of the time, she was unaware of any staff within the school able to assist her. Independent learning might also have been interpreted as lonely.

As I wait in the classroom while students stream in and the volume of chatter, laughter, and rustling increases, it becomes evident May is not present. After approximately two minutes, May enters the room. As she walks in, there is no indication she feels rushed. Rather, she calmly enters the classroom, smiling at the students across the room. She slides into her seat, places her bag on her lap, and takes out the same materials as the rest of the class: writing notebook (slathered with photos), independent reading book with various colored post-its fringing the tops of pages, and a hot pink pencil. While I am yet to hear the teacher request these items be placed on desks, by observing May and her peers, it seems this is standard for the classroom. May begins flipping through her notebook. She seems to be looking over entries as she finds a clean page for the class period.

Similar to Bri, May felt she would have a lot to offer me, the interviewer, concerning the 11th grade English course. Specifically, since English is her second language and, “I’m still learning it and perfecting it,” May thought her perspective might be a little bit different than some of the other students. “You know, because like it’s harder. So much of what I do I go English to Spanish and back to English, but lately that’s been becoming better. Just English. Not the back and forth.” May felt it would be important to share her insights into the importance of the course and the skills for her as an English Language Learner. As a mature adolescent, May suggested or was hopeful that her input might help other students who are in her place, in the future.
May’s Take on Cognitive Constructivism

As I interviewed May and we spent more time together, a trend in May’s responses concerning the development of her literacy skills became obvious. “I think the whole purpose of this course is to help us communicate with other people in school and out of school. I know I need to communicate with people, especially at work. I am not going to school. I am going to work. I might not have more chances to improve my reading and writing and speaking and I need this course to pay attention to get better.” During all three interviews, May identified the specific area of vocabulary as an area of focus for her and an area of growth. According to May, “Vocabulary is really getting better. I have had to focus on vocabulary. Like because there are so many words, words, words, I just didn’t know and like everybody else did seem to know. I have to pay really, really close attention to my reading and the words and like all the stuff to figure out the words.” May concluded, “I know my uh, vocabulary is better because, I am able to read more and read faster, and get it. I think that has everything to do with all the reading we practice and now all the reading I do.” May suggests that the practice has assisted her in gaining a process for determining word meaning and overall awareness of vocabulary.

May is the second research participant to touch on this aspect of vocabulary acquisition. I am curious if this has been stressed in the classroom, by the teacher. I did not readily observe this focus in the classroom sessions I visited. This would be yet another topic to continue for additional research in a continuation of the study.

May also believes others recognize her growth concerning literacy and language. “Like I know things have really gotten better, but like my family and friends have also noticed. They say all the time to me I am too proper. I don’t care though because, I
know it’s, it’s uh important for work. Because, I have to talk to people all the time and if I don’t sound like I know what I’m talking about or sound uh smart, they don’t want to work with me, or they like doubt me and then they talk to my manager. So, it is really important. My manager has also said how much I have gotten better. So, I think it because of the class.”

In this exchange, May makes a connection between a classroom literacy skill and her life outside of the classroom. May is able to identify the positive association between school and work life. The positive association could potentially inspire May to continue to work even harder to achieve in school and the professional setting.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>May</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What motivates you to apply yourself in this course?</td>
<td>2. To learn more and to learn things I don’t know that I want to know ‘cuz then I will become better, you know, and more successful in school and then out of school.</td>
<td>CC – identifying her own interests and motivations for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is it important to know your strengths or weakness in reading and writing? Why or why not?</td>
<td>4. Yes. If I know my strengths and weaknesses, then I can focus and get better at my reading.</td>
<td>CC- evaluating her own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and how to respond to strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is it important for you to know how teachers evaluate your work?</td>
<td>6. Oh yes. Because they don’t just grade you, they grade your work and sometimes how you do your work and then if I pay attention to that feedback and um, ask uh questions and talk to the teacher, I learn.</td>
<td>CC- identifying how she learns via interaction with the teacher and feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lastly, May identified the value in knowing and understanding her strengths and weaknesses in literacy as determined by her teacher and standardized tests. “If you don’t know what you are good at and not good at, how can you expect to ever get better, to grow? I think both are places to improve. The strengths are places where you know, okay, I do this pretty good, but if I just do this a little bit more, I could be really good. The weaknesses, those are where you really need to work on this, because this is what will keep me from doing what I want to do.” When asked about the role the teacher plays in determining strengths and weaknesses, May offered, “The teacher is the person to tell you what has to be improved or not. If the teacher never tells you these things, even if it is a test like PSAE, I might not really know what it means. It is the teacher who helps me figure that out.”

During the fourth classroom visit, I was able to see a glimpse of this type of interaction. As the teacher spoke with students, she would ask them to share strengths, and a goal area to improve. The teacher and student then discussed ways to approach that area and work toward improvement. Repeatedly, practice was the most frequent suggestion for improvement.

To begin the class period, the teacher again identified the standard that would be addressed during the class period. For the class period, the teacher explained students would practice locating main ideas within reading selections. The teacher modeled the process to be used by the students. The modeling included the following four steps: read the excerpt, attempt to summarize the passage in one sentence (if unable to do so, underline repeated words, phrases, and/or ideas), and finally write the main ideas of the paragraph in one sentence.
Then, the class completed the same process together. The class completed the work together for two additional reading excerpts. Students then completed two more excerpts independently and exit slip prior to concluding the class period. The exit slip asked students to work with another student. Students were to locate excerpts from their independent reading and complete the same process. As students completed the exit slip, the teacher moved between the pairs of students in the classroom. As she worked with partners, she discussed the process and answered questions or worked to explain the process to students.

The majority of the questions by students seemed to deal more with process and modeling the work. Once the teacher took a bit more time and worked with the groups, groups were able to readily complete the work. On occasion, groups would note they were struggling to write only one sentence. They wanted to be able to write several sentences to convey the theme or main idea. The teacher would remind the students the goal was to be able to simplify.

In this revelation, May identifies the need to receive teacher feedback and direction when determining strengths and challenges for further literacy development. However, I did not witness these types of interactions while visiting the classroom. Rather, I witnessed the teacher engage May in conversations about her learning to encourage May to determine and elaborate on her strengths and weaknesses. I did not witness the teacher identify those items for May.


May’s Learning Stages

During the third classroom visit, the students revisited their self-evaluation from January. Students were given time to start class to review the evaluation. This time, students were also asked to identify the following: number of books read this year, level of difficulty of the books read, number of books abandoned, genres read, favorite genres, favorite books, favorite authors, next books to read, and identification of goals for the second semester of the year.

Again, as students completed this evaluation, the teacher walked around the room and conferenced with individual students about their responses. Throughout the course of the fifty minute period, the teacher was able to speak with every student. Time spent with each student varied dependent upon student questions or responses shared. The evaluation was returned to the front of the binder. As students finished the evaluation, students read or wrote independently. The students were quiet as they completed this work. On occasion, students shared their evaluations with one another or whispered their ideas to a student sitting near them.

As did Bri, May completed a self-evaluation in January. May identified many items in need of improvement. May selected the items she felt least confident about as seen in the following skills: ability to recognize a clear intent of an author or narrator in uncomplicated literary narratives, ability to locate basic facts clearly stated in a passage, determine when or if an event occurred in uncomplicated passages, recognize clear cause-effect relationships described within a single sentence in a passage, understand the implication of a familiar word or phrase and of simple descriptive language, and draw
simple generalizations and conclusions about the main character in uncomplicated literary narratives.

In late April, May completed the same self-evaluation. Over a three month span, May identified even more items in need of improvement. This increase in items identified as areas of focus by May, could indicate growth in May’s understanding of her learning and learning needs. Or, it could mean a loss in confidence concerning these skills. It is not clear why the increase in skills in need of improvement.

I did not follow-up with May concerning this shift. My opinion or perception of May is that she is a very hard working student who frequently views herself harshly in terms of her academic achievement and literacy growth. May is definitely her strongest critic.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> Do you know what the purpose of the Jr. English class is? If yes, what is the purpose? If not, what do you think the purposes might be?</td>
<td><strong>8.</strong> Oh yes. Kids need to learn good English. I know I need to learn good English because that is the key to everything for me for work.</td>
<td><strong>CC – identifying her own purpose for focusing on learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong> Is it important to learn about reading and literacy skills, like how people communicate and why they communicate that way?</td>
<td><strong>10.</strong> Yes. It is English and proper English and to communicate with some people I need to learn, but like know and use proper English, or people will you know think I’m a certain way.</td>
<td><strong>CC- identifying her own purpose for focusing on learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.</strong> How do you expect to apply what you learn in the class to other areas of your life? How do you think you will evaluate your progress in the class?</td>
<td><strong>12.</strong> How I communicate with people in school and in my job. Like the proper English, if I read a word I don’t understand I will read it again and then ask someone. Then, I try to use it speak to other people, because that is how I really learn best. When I can talk about it.</td>
<td><strong>CC – she is able to differentiate between acts of thinking for academic purposes and acts of thinking for social reasons.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of course, the question becomes what happened? During conversations with May, she felt confident her literacy skills had improved. She provided specific and explicit detail and supportive evidence as to how she knew she had improved, “I am able to read so much more and so much faster and understand so much more. I have been reading like a lot more nonfiction and am better. I am better. I can tell.” While May felt her performance in class has improved, it did not match her self-evaluation results. So then, the next question becomes, does it matter?

**May and Social Constructivism**

“We spent probably like half of the time in the class working in small groups. I really liked working in the groups and I know I always paid attention when we were in the groups. Because, like if you didn’t know something and instead of being like oh forget it, I don’t know how to do it or what to do, there was or like is always someone there or uh can do it and that makes a difference. Especially, because like the class is 8th period so, when you can talk to others and like socialize, that is always good.” May also indicated that if there wasn’t someone in the small groups who could help, the teacher was available to assist. “The teacher is or was always walking around and able to help. She was constantly there to answer questions or show us what to do, so that really helped.”

As already noted, my classroom observations would confirm these same events. When I visited the classroom, it was a rarity to see students sitting isolated in desks. Typically, students were working with partners or small groups. My observation notes a great amount of interaction between students on-task as they worked to practice a variety of literacy skills. As specified by May, the teacher was readily available to answer
questions. As students and participants seemed to consistently respond to teacher directive, I would infer this is typical for this classroom.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>May</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. While you were in class, what kinds of things did you work on with the teacher?</td>
<td>14. I spent a lot of time working with the teacher on writing essays. Me, I had a hard time like including the counter arguments and so we spent a lot of time talking about that. Also, like with small groups whenever we got stuck, the teacher totally helped by talking to us and explaining.</td>
<td>SC – identifying examples of social interaction with other students and teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Do you feel this format or type of structure of the classroom was effective?</td>
<td>16. Uh-huh. I think it helped me or us to understand. The talking and not being so quiet all the time.</td>
<td>SC – identifying working with others frequently throughout the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Do you feel the majority of time was spent listening to instruction or practicing literacy skills like reading and writing?</td>
<td>18. Both. Still both, but it seemed like not a lot of listening and quiet, but more learning. I don’t think it even seemed like learning. Like at the time I didn’t think, I’m learning. It seemed just like normal stuff.</td>
<td>SC – identifying that even during instruction, still a social component</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
May also remarked that while the students in the classroom readily discussed the learning topic for the day, “reading and writing” that she and her friends also talked about what they were reading outside of class. “Oh yea, we talk about it a lot. I mean when you spend so much time doing this stuff, the reading and all the writing, you do talk about it outside of class. Especially, when you do so much reading and read what you want and you find stuff you like. You talk about it and then your friends also want to read it.” May identifies that the discussion of literacy outside of the classroom does include conversation about literature and reading choices. This is a contrast to the suggestion of Bri that it is not discussed outside of the classroom.

**May Concludes**

“We spent a lot of time preparing for the ACT like later in the spring. The teacher really explained to us why it is so important and why even if we are going to work and not college, like me, it still helps for work and I really believe that. I see how it has helped and my manager see how it has helped and my friends noticed it and so have like my parents, just because I help them so much because they know no English and I have to help them. I can help them more. So that is good.” May clearly identifies her real-life connection to improving her literacy skills.

This explanation brings up two contrasting points and the tensions of being good enough. As I work with teachers to encourage the love of reading in the students, the pressure to perform on the ACT is also there. When listening not only to May, but also Bri, it is a very real tension for the students. What is good enough? A love of reading, or a stellar ACT score? Or, yet another consideration. What about the real-life skills enhanced or introduced by the workshop classroom?
Erin

Erin entered the classroom in a rush, almost a speed walk or a jog. Made me think she was frequently late. She wasn’t talking with other students as she entered the classroom. Actually, I did not see Erin speak to anyone throughout the entire first class period I visited. Nor did she seek out eye contact with the teacher or students in her immediate area in the classroom. However, she readily took out her writing notebook, independent reading book and pen. As the teacher started the class period with a mini-lesson, Erin took notes and interacted with the necessary classroom documents. Yet, she still seemed to avoid contact with others in the classroom.

During this classroom visit, the teacher provided students with a Main Idea Exercise Review Document. Students were asked to take the class period and complete the work independently. The activity is a mirror of the activity during the previous visit. However, students are now completing this work entirely alone. While students work, the teacher again moves throughout the classroom to work with each student. Throughout the class period, the teacher is able to visit with each student individually. The teacher begins by working with students who identified the need for assistance by raising their hands. After working with each of those students, the teacher checked for understanding with students seated in the immediate area. The entire fifty minute class period was allocated for this activity.

While working with the individual students, the teacher spent the bulk of the time modeling the same think-aloud activity from the previous class period. She would also take the students step-by-step through each paragraph to identify main idea and clue
words. For many groups, or students, they really seemed to benefit from the extended work time and one-on-one work.

This includes Erin. Erin is a contrast to the two previous study participants. She is quiet, almost shy. In an effort to break her nervousness, she giggles when uncomfortable or unsure of herself. Unlike the other two, she wanted to participate in the study for her own reasons. As opposed to the other participants who felt they had something to offer the study, Erin felt she stood to gain something from the study. “It should make me think, right? It should make me think about my own skills and so yea, that would be good.”

As I get to know Erin and spend time with her, I note she is more likely to respond with gestures or nods as opposed to the spoken word. Erin will nod, shrug her shoulders, and wave off responses. I learn early I will need to work hardest to get details from Erin’s responses.

**Cognitive Constructivism and Erin**

Three interviews and during the first two interviews, Erin was adamant that the 11th grade English course had really had no impact on her life outside of school. “No, I don’t read or write more or like any differently than I always have. I just don’t. I read and write and do what I am supposed to do in class, but it really doesn’t change anything else.” However, by the third interview, approximately two months after the first interview, Erin voiced a different response. “Actually, I do read more outside of school than I used to. I read nonfiction. We read have read a lot of nonfiction in class and I like it. So, I have been reading like nonfiction on my own.” Erin further described the types of nonfiction she enjoys reading. “I like reading about real-life relationships between..."
During visit six, I was able to see instruction that supported Erin’s interest. The teacher placed the standard of inferring author’s intent on the board. She identified this standard to students as the class period began. The teacher explained the importance of asking questions as a reader to determine main idea or intent of a piece of writing. On the overhead, the teacher listed: who, what, when, where, why. The teacher read the opening pages of Glass Castle and modeled the types of questions she considered while reading the page. The questions included: Why so many details about the setting? Why is the homeless person important? Why is the character describing her appearance so closely? Is this to contrast the homeless person? Does the main character know the homeless person? Is the homeless person going to have a larger role in the book?

After reading this page, the teacher and the students worked at crafting inferences about the reading selection and what the author’s intent was for the opening of the book. Students were then asked to complete the same for a page of reading from their independent reading books. Students were given approximately fifteen minutes to read a page and list the questions they considered while reading. Students then shared their questions with a partner. After another five minutes, students quickly book talked their independent reading selections and then shared aloud their questions and inferences about author’s intent. This activity concluded the class period.

Writing was another area that Erin was hesitant to discuss. For the first two interviews, Erin noted that she writes in class because, she has to write. She does what is assigned, but that is it. However, by the third interview, Erin stated, “Actually, I think I
kind of like writing and that I'm pretty good at it, especially, when I can choose my topic. When I get to pick my topic, I think I do well. I still have trouble writing introductions. I can still use help with that, but I kind of like it. I know that it is something I will need to do when I go to college next year. Erin has plans to attend the local community college after graduation.

Erin is always alone in her desire to focus on writing. As I get to know Erin, this isn’t totally surprising. I think she is more comfortable writing her thoughts as compared to speaking aloud. This opportunity for students to explore specific areas of interest can be one of the strengths of the workshop model classroom.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Erin</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> What would motivate you to apply yourself in this course?</td>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Writing. The writing motivates me. The assignments that let me write. I look forward to it.</td>
<td><strong>CC – identifying her own interests and motivations for learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Is it important to know your strengths or weakness in reading and writing? Why or why not?</td>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Knowing my strengths and weaknesses will let me improve. So, it is good to know.</td>
<td><strong>CC- evaluating her own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and how to respond to strengths and weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> Is it important for you to know how teachers evaluate your work?</td>
<td><strong>6.</strong> Yes. They are the ones teaching you. Then, they teach you how to do it better next time. Then you learn, and you learn the how.</td>
<td><strong>CC- identifying how she learns via interaction with the teacher and feedback.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> Has reading or writing instruction had an impact on your life outside of school? If yes, how so? If no, why not?</td>
<td><strong>8.</strong> Not writing. I have always been writing outside of school, but the reading. Only was reading fiction and now I read other stuff more outside of school, more.</td>
<td><strong>CC- evaluating her own strengths and weaknesses as a learner</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To conclude, Erin also identified a specific area she felt she had improved in with her reading. Erin identified her ability to summarize main ideas as the place she had grown the most within her reading comprehension. Erin even specified one reading strategy, the GIST strategy, as what she implements on a regular basis including within school and outside of school for personal reading to assist with determining the main idea. “I use the GIST strategy all the time, like in History class and even when I’m just reading for me, because if like I read something and don’t get it or I’m not focused I go back and try to identify 10 words that could summarize the topic. If I can’t, I go back and read again and try again. If I still can’t do it, the 10 words become words I don’t maybe know or think could be important. Then, I talk to the teacher or someone else and I can figure it out. So, yea, the GIST strategy.”

Erin is the first participant to identify a specific literacy strategy to implement to improve reading comprehension. This strategy and variations of the strategy were observed being practiced by the students. As a result, I can confirm the utilization within the workshop classroom.

*Learning Stages and Erin*

Erin also completed the self-evaluation in January. Erin also selected a plentitude of items for focus. Erin selected the following skills as focus skills: recognize a clear intent of an author or narrator in uncomplicated literary narratives, locate basic facts clearly stated in a passage, determine when or if an event occurred in uncomplicated passages, recognize clear cause-effect relationships described within a single sentence in a passage, understand the implication of a familiar word or phrase and of simple
descriptive language, and draw simple generalizations and conclusions about the main character in uncomplicated literary narratives.

In April, Erin still selected the same items as focus items. These selections would indicate Erin felt she maintained her reading abilities as determined by the self-evaluation. While there may have been subtle differences within the specific areas: main idea and author’s approach, supporting details, sequential, comparative, and cause-effect, meanings of words, and generalizations and conclusions, there was not enough fluctuation to indicate progress or regress according to Erin.

Again, I did not follow up with Erin concerning these responses. Although, I would suspect that without teacher input, Erin would not indicate changes in self-evaluation of skills. Even if Erin felt she had improved in some of these areas, she would seek either test scores, grades, or teacher input to confirm her opinion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Erin</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you know what the purpose of the Jr. English class is? If yes, what is the purpose? If not, what do you think the purposes might be?</td>
<td>No. I guess I would say to help in English and like to write papers or like essays and to improve my reading.</td>
<td>CC – struggle identifying her own purpose for focusing on learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Is it important to learn about reading and literacy skills, how people communicate and why they communicate that way?</td>
<td>Yes. Definitely.</td>
<td>CC- no specifics identifying her own purpose for focusing on learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How do you expect to apply what you learn in the class to other areas of your life? How do you think you will evaluate your progress in the class?</td>
<td>I don’t. We do English stuff. Take tests. Write papers. Read. Don’t do that in my other classes.</td>
<td>CC – she is not able to communicate overlap between acts of thinking for academic purposes in English class, other courses, or in her social life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. What had your teacher told you about the importance of literacy like reading, writing, and communicating?</td>
<td>Nothing. She didn’t say.</td>
<td>CC- no specifics identifying the purpose for learning based upon teacher communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Constructivism and Erin

Erin continues her role of contrasting to the prior study participants. As the other participants have indicated a preference to the social aspect of the course, Erin noted no preference. “We spent probably like half the time working along and working with others. Alone, we did a lot of worksheets. With the groups, we did projects, and timelines, and more difficult stuff.” When asked if Erin had a preference for one or the other, she shook her head side-to-side. Then, she explained, “It don’t matter. Work is work.”

This insight illustrates the flexibility of the workshop classroom to meet the needs and interests of many different students. Another point of interest not to ignore is the commentary about independent work and worksheets. I did not observe this type of learning activity during the classes I observed. However, Erin identified it. This response causes me to wonder if the worksheets are more common than previously thought and the fidelity of implementation of the workshop classroom. I would need additional follow-up with the other students and teacher. This is the only mention of worksheets identified in participant discourse.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Erin</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>17.</strong> While you were in class, what kinds of things did you work on with the teacher?</td>
<td><strong>18.</strong> Small stuff. Like I think I spent a lot of time practicing reading, uh summarizing strategies, going over the GIST strategy with her. Over and over, and more.</td>
<td><strong>SC – identifying examples of social interaction with the teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19.</strong> Do you feel this format or type of structure of the classroom was effective?</td>
<td><strong>20.</strong> Yes. For me.</td>
<td><strong>SC – affirmative but lacking details</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21.</strong> Do you feel the majority of time was spent listing to instruction or practicing literacy skills like reading and writing?</td>
<td><strong>22.</strong> It was fifty – fifty. Half listening. Half learning.</td>
<td><strong>SC – identifying two instructional components</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>23.</strong> Were you always engaged in the classroom instruction and activities?</td>
<td><strong>24.</strong> When I had to work with a group, yes. Alone. No. Like in the group, they can help when you have a question and explain and also I don’t want to let them down by not doing stuff. By myself, it doesn’t matter if I don’t do it or pay attention.</td>
<td><strong>SC – identifying example of the impact of social interaction on learning</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further, Erin emphatically stated that she did not talk about any of her literacy skills including: reading, writing, speaking, and interaction with text, with any of her friends or family members. “That’s school stuff. We don’t talk about school stuff. They know what I do. I know what they do. We don’t have to talk about it. That would just be weird.” These skills had not yet transferred outside of the classroom, and further Erin was unsure if that would ever happen.

**Erin Provides Advice**

“I was burnt out by the end of the year. We did so much stuff and all the strategies and all the writing and all the work, I was so over it. I was exhausted. It was all we did for like I don’t know forever. Finally, I just didn’t want to do it anymore.” Erin continued with advice, “You need to practice and study, but maybe do like two or three days a week maybe all year or this is just too much.” Erin noted she felt the workshop classroom was most beneficial when students were given more time to pursue the needs they identified.

Erin denotes a sense of burnout due to work load. She suggests the amount of work was too much and to lessen the work. However, she does not offer a suggestion for alternative activities or learning events. Nor, did she elaborate on whether she felt the work was too time consuming, or too difficult. Just, that it was too much.

**Ann**

As Ann makes her way into the classroom, she giggles with another young lady, she later identifies as her best friend. She is a small young lady, no more than five feet tall in her platform sandals and well under 100 pounds. She has strikingly long, black hair that cascades over a backpack filled with books. She is precariously balanced on her
platform sandals while sporting that massive back pack that seems to be three times her width. During our three months together Ann always wears her hair down and is never without her backpack. Her backpack is far too large for her small frame, and seems to hold all of her most valuable items, or essentials for school.

Ann moved to the United States as a fifth grader, from her native country of Pakistan. Now, as a junior, she struggles with her second language, English. “School is really the only place I speak English. I don’t ever speak to my parents in English. My brother is in college and we’re not very close. I only speak to him when he is home from school, and of course, we don’t speak English. I speak English with my sisters, but really only about our school work. School is really the only place I speak English.” Ann plans to go to college and major in education. Her goal is to become a middle school math teacher. However, Ann realizes the challenges involved in reaching this goal. “Well first of all, I need to go to college. In order to do that, I have to take the ACT and do well. If I don’t do well, I can’t go to college and I can’t get a job. This is tough, because I know how to talk and like communicate with others in English. Then there is school and of course that test. That is different. It just isn’t the same. The time makes it tough.” This self-actualization and candid revelation make Ann a great participant in this study. Ann also notes the time issue can be challenging in all areas of her school work. Many times, she has a lot of reading to complete at night, and she can’t always complete all the work.

Ann provides detailed reflective analysis of her learning. Ann repeatedly identified the need to learn and “do well” in school as a way of getting to college. Ann shares and emphasizes this need independently. For Ann, she recognizes her parents want her to do well in school and she feels pressure to do well for them.
Ann and Cognitive Constructivism

Within every interview, Ann commented on the value of reading. She also noted how the amount of reading she completes has increased. She believes all this reading has to create a positive impact on the ACT. “Well, I know the more I do something, the better I get. All the reading. Just practicing reading. Reading to read what I want to read. I think I have to have improved. I can read faster. That’s important. I can read more difficult things. Also, I want to read more difficult things. I used to not want to do that. Now I do. Now I know.” Ann credited the act of repetition and practice numerous times as being the most important factors in improving her achievement. “I know for me, I have to just do it over and over and over, on a daily basis. Like, I may think, ‘Okay, that’s enough. I have it. I really don’t. It takes a whole lot more.’ I think that’s how it is for most students. I don’t think I’m the only one even though we don’t talk about it.”

Ann also made a connection between her reading and writing. Again, in each of the three interviews, Ann noted that she thought there was a connection between her reading and writing. “We like always do a lot of reading and then writing. We always read samples or examples of uh, uh, what, what we are supposed to write. The teacher will even show us her writing and what she thinks about the like reading and how it goes to or with uh the writing. I think my writing is a lot better. I can write not only fast, but better. I had to uh really, really practice this.” Ann also stated that she does not practice writing outside of school. She posts things to facebook and will text friends, but noted it is not the “kind of writing” expected by teachers.

Good thing for Ann that the classroom provides ample opportunity to practice reading and writing. During classroom visit seven, students were given the entire class
period to read and write independently. The teacher explained to the students that many had requested time to read or write as many of the recent class periods had not allowed for as much independent reading or writing. As a result, the teacher provided the students with fifty minutes for independent reading and writing. While students worked, the teacher conferred with every student. She asked students about their work and generally made herself available if the students had questions concerning their reading and writing and their progress in relation to their self-selected goals for the quarter.

As the teacher talked with the students, she asked variations of the following questions: Tell me about what you are reading or writing. What are you most pleased with about your work? What would you like assistance with? How can I support you? Is there anything that seems confusing? What are you going to read or write next?

Ann provided her own internalization and explanation of how reading and writing work together to strengthen her literacy skills. A point of interest is that Ann does not consider her personal or informal forms of writing to be writing. She allows school or teachers to determine or establish what constitutes the title of formal writing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ann</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. What would motivate you to apply yourself in this course?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC – identifying her own interests and motivations for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Is it important to know your strengths or weakness in reading and writing? Why or why not?</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. Doing stuff over and over repeatedly is motivating because I know I get to practice and I don’t have to worry about making mistakes and getting a bad grade or losing a lot of points. That uh the fact the stuff is ongoing and I get to keep doing it and get it into my mind so it won’t go away.</strong></td>
<td><strong>CC- evaluating her own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and how to respond to strengths and weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Is it important for you to know how teachers evaluate your work?</strong></td>
<td><strong>4. Yes, so I can improve even more on what I’m not good at and with my strengths to continue to build. I need to build and keep going.</strong></td>
<td><strong>CC- identifying her own interests and motivations for learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>6. Yes. If I know the expectations and I can be sure to meet or really try to meet the expectations. I want to know how hard the grading is. I want to go to college and I need to know this to do well.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Along with the increased reading and writing abilities, Ann specified an increase in vocabulary ability as the one single factor that has helped the most in both of those areas. “Well, we learned how we are supposed to read other words around the word we don’t know to try to determine meaning. That helped. We also learned about the uh root words, suffixes and prefixes. If I know part of a word or I guess the parts of the word, I can totally figure out the word. Sometimes, that doesn’t work, or I get really confused. I can’t always figure out the root, or prefix and stuff. Then, if I am just like on my own, I stop and look up the word.” I asked Ann why she takes the time to look up the word. Ann explained, “Well, if I have the time, why not. Usually, if I take the time to look up the word, there aren’t as many now, I will totally remember the word and that is good. Then, when I read it again, or I put it in my writing, I know it. That’s good.”

Ann also identified the value in working with vocabulary and root words. Ann is also able to specify how she knows she has improved with the need to look up fewer words. She doesn’t attach a number, but is confident in this response.

_Ann’s Stages of Learning_

With the rest of her junior class, Ann completed the self-evaluation in January. Ann selected a variety of reading skills to focus on to improve her reading ability. Ann selected the following skills as areas to focus her improvement: recognize a clear intent of an author or narrator in uncomplicated literary narratives, locate basic facts clearly stated in a passage, determine when or if an event occurred in uncomplicated passages, recognize clear cause-effect relationships described within a single sentence in a passage, understand the implication of a familiar word or phrase and of simple descriptive language, and draw simple generalizations and conclusions about the main character in
uncomplicated literary narratives. Overall, Ann seems to lack confidence in her reading ability.

Three months later, in April, Ann completed the self-evaluation again. Ann noted increased confidence in her ability to do the following: recognize a clear intent of an author or narrator in uncomplicated literary narratives, locate basic facts clearly stated in a passage, determine when or if an event occurred in uncomplicated passages, recognize clear cause-effect relationships described within a single sentence in a passage, understand the implication of a familiar word or phrase and of simple descriptive language, and draw simple generalizations and conclusions about the main character in uncomplicated literary narratives.

It is unclear exactly what the increased confidence would look like in these areas. However, I suspect that if students can be more positive about the task at hand, it makes them more likely to be successful with the work to be completed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ann</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you know what the purpose of the Jr. English class is? If yes, what is the purpose? If not, what do you think the purposes might be?</td>
<td>8. To learn all the skills. Reading and writing and put it together into uh essays and like formal reading and writing.</td>
<td>CC – identifies her own purpose for focusing on learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is it important to learn about reading and literacy skills, how people communicate, and why they communicate that way?</td>
<td>10. Yes. To be able to get a good job and good life. You need it more than math to get along.</td>
<td>CC- identifies her own purpose for focusing on learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How do you expect to apply what you learn in the class to other areas of your life? How do you think you will evaluate your progress in the class?</td>
<td>12. I use it everywhere. I have really progressed. Definitely. More in reading and writing this year. I have the format of the class down and am using it to get better and better. Then yes, when I need help I communicate to my friends and ask them if I’m not at school, because I don’t uh have anyone else to ask.</td>
<td>CC – she is able to communicate overlap between acts of thinking for academic purposes in English class, other courses, or in her social life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The largest difference in confidence for the student is the level of frequency they can complete a task and the consistency in completing the task well. Thus, Ann still feels she struggles with consistency within various areas in the workshop classroom. However, she feels she has made enough progress to begin to demonstrate very basic level mastery of these skills on an increasingly regular basis as determined by her own evaluation. This feedback is based upon her self-evaluation completed in April.

*Ann on Social Constructivism*

During the interviews, Ann shared many different thoughts on the overall structure of the classroom as determined by the teacher. “I think it was good that the teacher spent only about ten – fifteen minutes talking or I guess instructing. We had more time to talk with partners or groups to complete the work. However, sometimes we are off topic about our job or work or project or assignment or paper. Sometimes, we talk about other things. She isn’t always in every group. She move around and when she is with your group or you and your partner that is good. But it can be hard. Like, I always want to work. Though, I don’t know or I guess am not comfortable telling my group or partner to stop talking about something or doing something and do the work. That can be tough, but overall I feel it is good.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ann</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>13.</strong> While you were in class, what kinds of things did you work on with the teacher?</td>
<td><strong>14.</strong> Writing essays. A lot. Introductions specifically and then revisions, a lot of revisions. Over and over.</td>
<td><strong>SC – identifying examples of social interaction with the teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15.</strong> Do you feel this format or type of structure of the classroom was effective?</td>
<td><strong>16.</strong> Yes. But sometimes when working with my classmates I think we moved off-topic, yea with the classmates. I needed more one-on-one teacher time with me the student. More time. I would like more individualized homework and then uh, looking over my work by the teacher.</td>
<td><strong>SC – affirmative and providing additional suggestions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17.</strong> Do you feel the majority of time was spent listening to instruction or practicing literacy skills like reading and writing?</td>
<td><strong>18.</strong> Uh, I uh say may ten minutes was teacher stuff or teaching and the rest of the class was time to work.</td>
<td><strong>SC – identifying two instructional components</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19.</strong> Were you always engaged in the classroom instruction and activities?</td>
<td><strong>20.</strong> Yes.</td>
<td><strong>SC – affirmative response to the classroom environment</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ann also provided a valuable suggestion about how the teacher should view or perceive each student. “I know it is hard and we uh, have a lot of students in one, the same class, but it would be like really good if the teacher could give us all time alone with her. I think this would be really good especially when or with uh writing and reading. Because we are all different and what works for um one of us or so it doesn’t mean it works for all of us. If I got to or could make the class different, I would say more time alone with the teacher and more individual homework assignments. We all get a different assignment.” Ann felt this would be best for all students because it gives them the best opportunity for the most improvement.

**Ann’s Final Thoughts**

Going along with Ann’s prior thoughts about practice, Ann had a similar viewpoint about the overall format of the class. “I think all the practice was good. Practice, practice, practice. More practice. The more practice the better. I would just say even more.” Ann did not provide suggestions as to how the workshop classroom might include greater opportunity for practice.

Ann is the only participant to note the positives of practice and a desire for even more opportunity to practice. While she notes or mentions practice, assessment or measurement is absent. She clearly understands the value in the exercise itself, and is not purely driven by a grade, score, or teacher approval. She would practice for the sake of practicing. It is unclear whether Ann would practice outside of school or where she would practice.
Tracey

Tracey is Ann’s best friend. They spend much of their free time together, including passing periods and their lunch period. For each class period I visited, the young ladies entered the classroom together often times clutching arms, hands, or purses and frequently whispering and laughing. The young ladies do not sit near each other in class. They sit along the same wall of the classroom, but are separated by a dozen or more students. Once class begins, I never see them make any attempt to socialize with one another. Tracey does seem to be most focused on the class itself, and does not make an attempt to socialize with any of the other students.

Tracey is well-spoken and confident. She makes direct eye contact and often pauses for several seconds prior to responding to questions or comments. She is thoughtful and composed. Tracey provided direct responses with supportive detail to all the questions asked. Her major area of focus seemed to be the reading skills acquired during the class. “If I had to say one large area I improved on, I would say reading. If I had to specify any area of reading, I would say just that. Realizing there are different types of reading. I read differently for class, for pleasure, for the ACT, for other classes.” Tracey identifies that knowing how to read different types of text, and when to read differently is a benefit to her learning.

Tracey’s Cognitive Constructivism

“I would say now I realize how I read things in different areas differently. For example, when I am reading for me, I just read. I don’t necessarily think about it. I just do it. That’s okay because I am reading for me. However, if I am reading for a class, like an essay or a textbook, now I want to know what my focus is. What should I be
reading for? If I am not getting it, why not and how should I change my focus? Then of course, there is reading for the ACT. That is totally different. That is all about time and specific types of questions.” Tracey offered a variety of thoughts about how she may even physically change her demeanor when reading various texts.

Tracey’s notice of varying texts and text purposes would suggest a maturity in her literacy development. Many students approach every text the same, regardless of setting. Tracey’s ability to distinguish between texts would indicate growth and understanding of reading for purpose.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Tracey</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> What would motivate you to apply yourself in this course?</td>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Myself. I want to do the best or my best uh I know I can do and do everything I can to do that.</td>
<td><strong>CC – identifying her own interests and motivations for learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Is it important to know your strengths or weakness in reading and writing? Why or why not?</td>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Yes. To improve on weaknesses I need to know them and uh I think it’s good to fully understand my strengths and know what that means in learning and uh school.</td>
<td><strong>CC- evaluating her own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and how to respond to strengths and weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> Is it important for you to know how teachers evaluate your work?</td>
<td><strong>6.</strong> Yes, and if they don’t tell me I will ask to make sure I know so I know what I need to work on, so yes.</td>
<td><strong>CC- identifying her own interests and motivations for learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> How have you been challenged in this course, or have you been challenged in this course?</td>
<td><strong>8.</strong> Yes. I was challenged to read the 20 books each semester and to write all the papers and projects. It’s been tough, but good.</td>
<td><strong>CC- evaluating her own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and how to respond to strengths and weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, Tracey noted one specific strategy as a commonality within all of her reading. “I am always using the GIST strategy. I read a paragraph and if I don’t write it down, I still think about what is the main idea or focus in that paragraph. When I started, I had to write it down. Now, it is become automatic. I don’t even think about it in my personal reading anymore. I still think about it in my other reading, but definitely less. That’s good.”

Tracey also noted the GIST strategy as a strategy that has been helpful in improving her reading comprehension. Again, Tracey specifies the difference between her reading for pleasure and reading for academia.

**Tracey’s Stages of Learning**

Tracey also completed the self-evaluation in January. Tracey selected the following skills to focus on for growth in reading ability: recognize a clear intent of an author or narrator in uncomplicated literary narratives, locate basic facts clearly stated in a passage, determine when or if an event occurred in uncomplicated passages, recognize clear cause-effect relationships described within a single sentence in a passage, understand the implication of a familiar word or phrase and of simple descriptive language, and draw simple generalizations and conclusions about the main character in uncomplicated literary narratives.

In April, Tracey completed the self-evaluation again and noted tremendous growth and confidence concerning her reading ability. Tracey was confident she had increased her ability to demonstrate the following skills: identify a clear main idea or purpose of straightforward paragraphs in uncomplicated literary narratives, locate simple details at the sentence and paragraph level in uncomplicated passages, recognize a clear
function of a part of an uncomplicated passage, identify relationships between main
characters in uncomplicated literary narratives, recognize clear cause-effect relationships
within a single paragraph in uncomplicated literary narratives, use context to understand
basic figurative language, and draw simple generalizations and conclusions about people,
ideas, and so on in uncomplicated passages.

While Tracey felt more confident in her ability to complete these tasks, it is
unclear what has caused that boost in confidence. Is it extensive practice and meaningful
feedback? Is it access to the skills? Is it appropriately challenging materials? Again,
further follow-up with the participant could have added additional insight into these
topics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Tracey</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you know what the purpose of the Jr. English class is? If yes, what is the purpose? If not, what do you think the purposes might be?</td>
<td>10. To get more involved in uh reading and like the writing and build upon the skills I already have and probably to emphasize certain learning things, like activities that are going to be really important.</td>
<td>CC – identifies her own purpose for focusing on learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Is it important to learn about reading and literacy skills, how people communicate and why they communicate that way?</td>
<td>12. Yes, because it will impact you or has impacted you or is impacting you on a daily basis. The communication is huge.</td>
<td>CC - identifies her own purpose for focusing on learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How do you expect to apply what you learn in the class to other areas of your life? How do you think you will evaluate your progress in the class?</td>
<td>14. I think with the different styles of reading and writing and knowing them will make me better prepared for college, and what the teacher said it will help me move ahead because I will not only uh know the expectations, but be able to meet the expectations and probably do a lot better than a lot of people and get better grades.</td>
<td>CC – she is able to communicate overlap between acts of thinking for academic purposes in English class, other courses, or in her social life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This kind of growth in confidence from January to April is very sizeable. This growth provides Tracey a considerable boost in self-esteem and self-evaluation. This means Tracey is able to correspond with excerpts from essays, short stories, and novels that tend to use simple language and structure, have a clear purpose and familiar style, present straightforward interactions between characters, and employ only a limited number of literary devices such as metaphor, simile or hyperbole.

Students completed this final reflection during my last classroom visit. This was the same assessment as observed earlier in January. Students were given the entire period to complete the evaluation. As students completed it, they were able to read or write independently. The teacher also met with each student individually during this period to discuss their responses.

When the teacher spoke with the students, she asked students to consider their growth from the start of the year to the current point in the school year. Students were also asked to consider what they would focus on next year and to describe their reading and writing plans for the summer. Not all students were readily able to respond to the questions or topics of consideration. Sometimes, the teacher would tell the student to think about it and she would return to talk more about it.

**Tracey and Social Constructivism**

Tracey felt very strongly that the overall format of the classroom was appropriate and beneficial to the students. “I think it was good. The teacher talked just enough and instructed the right amount. We had a good mix of working one-on-one with the teacher and working with partner or small groups. I don’t think I would change that at all.”
Tracey’s commentary focused on the social aspects of the learning in the
classroom and suggests the combination of instructional methods was beneficial. She
does not include opinion to note her personal preference, but supports the overall
structure.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Tracey</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>15.</strong> While you were in class, what kinds of things did you work on with the teacher?</td>
<td><strong>16.</strong> Essays. Writing, but really writing essay and the teaching proofing and me fixing and back-and-forth, over again.</td>
<td><strong>SC – identifying examples of social interaction with the teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17.</strong> Do you feel this format or type of structure of the classroom was effective?</td>
<td><strong>18.</strong> Yes. Everyday it was the same uh, uh arrangement or um schedule, with little teacher uh instruction and mostly practice. That was good. It allowed a lot of practice which is good.</td>
<td><strong>SC – affirmative and providing additional suggestions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19.</strong> Do you feel the majority of time was spent listening to instruction or practicing literacy skills like reading and writing?</td>
<td><strong>20.</strong> Uh, it was okay. Practicing most of the time is good.</td>
<td><strong>SC – identifying an instructional component</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21.</strong> Were you always engaged in the classroom instruction and activities?</td>
<td><strong>22.</strong> I always did it, whatever it was we were doing. Maybe I didn’t though like always give it my full attention. I could have probably done more.</td>
<td><strong>SC – affirmative response to the classroom environment and identified own area of improvement</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tracey also noted that she and friends had a tendency to talk more about the class when it was really an interesting topic, or when they learned how to do something they thought others should know about it. “I guess this was a little different. Usually, I don’t talk to my friends about my classes. When we did something really interesting, we talked about it and we were interested in it and wanted to know more about it. When I learned how to do something that I thought would help my friends. I told them, or even showed them how to do it.”

**Tracey’s Final Thoughts**

“Overall, I think the class helped me to improve my literacy skills. I feel like my reading and writing skills have gotten better. I do think we practiced too much some of the stuff. There are other things out there. I know what we’re supposed to do and I guess I see how they relate to everything. Or, I do see how they relate to everything. I just sometimes didn’t want to have to think like that. Less practice.”

Tracey is the second participant to suggest less practice. She suggests there are other things out there. I am left to assume these other things could be additional texts, writing opportunities or skills, and standards.

**Ben**

Ben typically arrived in class with the sounding of the one minute bell. In contrast to the young ladies participating in the study, Ben does not take out any of the materials seen on the desks of his classmates. Not a single book, notebook or writing utensil makes its way on to his desk unless prompted. This is a regular event for Ben. It is just Ben.
Ben will tell you he is probably one of the brightest students in the junior class, at least based on test scores or natural ability. Ben is a member of the math/science and engineering academy. Ben had to apply to be a member of the academy during 8th grade. Placement was determined by standardized test scores, grades, teacher recommendations, interviews, essays, and an application process. As a member of the academy, Ben takes more math and science courses than the typical high school student. Additionally, the math and science courses are more rigorous and are comprised mostly of advanced placement courses. The purpose is to prepare students for a math, science, or engineering major/degree program at a four-year university. The students are still required to complete the other high school degree requirements. While Ben is a member of this academy, he does not necessarily meet the stereotype established by these students. Ben’s grades are not the same high-standard as some of the other grades earned by academy students. While the majority of the students earn grades that are more heavily weighted and thus equate to a higher GPA, Ben does not have the same desire as the rest of the students concerning “a really top of the class GPA”. In Ben’s own words, “Grades are important. I should have probably been more worried or focused on my grades during my freshman and sophomore year, but I wasn’t. So, I don’t have a 4.0 + GPA. I have like a 3.0. That’s okay, but it isn’t anything great. I could have done it, but I didn’t put in the effort.”

Ben is the only participant to identify himself according to grades and grade point average. He also offers personal commentary on his own ability and effort level in classrooms. He offers honest analysis as he works to associate himself with different groups of students and the images attached to those students.
**Ben on Cognitive Constructivism**

Ben describes himself as a reader. He will tell you that he always enjoyed reading. The English class itself did not change how he felt about reading, although it caused him to think more about reading. “I have like always liked to read. For example, I would rather read than watch TV. There aren’t a lot of guys my age who would probably say that, but I have always liked to read. If I have a book I really like, I would much rather read that than watch TV. The class hasn’t changed that, but it does make me think more actively about what I am reading. I think about the author’s reason for writing the book and how it relates to other things.” I didn’t used to think like this outside of school when I was reading on my own. Only in school, when I would have to think about this.”

Ben also acknowledged how the course made him begin to think about reading in relation to other aspects of school and life. “I know I need to read all the time, and that it is important to think about what I read at probably several different levels. Especially, this is probably true for all the stuff I read and will need to read for the academy and engineering. There is some stuff that is really basic, but then there is other stuff that I need to read several times and think about it and think about how it relates to other things or builds or comes before stuff. I also have to realize that that is different than like just my reading for fun. Yea, it is important.”

Ben is another participant able to identify differences in reading for pleasure as compared to academic reading. Ben also provided specific differences in his physicality of reading, the number of times he reads a specific text passage, and the cognitivity of reading, what he thinks about while reading.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Ben</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> What would motivate you to apply yourself in this course?</td>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Well, I really like reading. So, I’m already motivated to do well not just in this class, but in all my classes.</td>
<td><strong>CC – identifying his own interests and motivations for learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Is it important to know your strengths or weakness in reading and writing? Why or why not?</td>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Yes. Of course. In reading it is important because there is so much reading in everything. A lot of reading not only in school, but just in everything all the time. I would say not really as important in writing, because I think you can get a job where you don’t or really never have to write.</td>
<td><strong>CC- evaluating his own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and how to respond to strengths and weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> Is it important for you to know how teachers evaluate your work?</td>
<td><strong>6.</strong> Yes it is.</td>
<td><strong>CC- identifying his own motivation for learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> How have you been challenged in this course, or have you been challenged in this course?</td>
<td><strong>8.</strong> Yes. I have been challenged when we have to read stuff written a long time ago, the old stuff and that vocabulary. It was tough because it wasn’t interesting.</td>
<td><strong>CC- evaluating his own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and how to respond to strengths and weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lastly, Ben also identified that to continue to learn and develop as a reader, he would need to continue to be challenged and find other texts that would push him and encourage him to continue to develop and begin to read more challenging texts. “I guess I don’t want to like not read anything more difficult ever, than what I am reading now, because that would suck. To like never read anything more difficult or challenging than what I read right now as a junior in high school. I think it’s important to pay attention to class and what the teacher is talking about so, I can be exposed to more difficult things.”

One of these types of activities came during the eighth classroom visit. The teacher communicated to students the class period would focus on the logical order of ideas in reading passages. On the overhead, the teacher listed the following information for students: focus on the use of transitions, identify compound/complex sentences, isolate the first and last sentence of a paragraph or page of reading, and identify the introductory and concluding paragraphs of a selection. The teacher explained to students that transitions are typically used by a writer to introduce important ideas, details, or facts. The teacher also suggested compound and complex sentences are not only used for variation, but to communicate large ideas and connective thoughts. Finally, the teacher illustrated to students the need to carefully focus on introductory/concluding sentences and paragraphs when identifying main ideas. The teacher placed a nonfiction reading excerpt on the overhead and modeled for the students how to work through the excerpt. To begin, the teacher and students identified transition words and phrases in search of important information. The inclusion of compound/complex sentences and the introductory and concluding sentences and paragraphs were also discussed.
Finally, students were asked to complete the same exercise with their independent reading. Once finished, students shared their findings with a partner. Then, students shared their finding with the entire class.

Ben makes the connection that challenging texts will push him to develop more as a reader. Another significant point is his opinion of the value in always continuing to improve, like he doesn’t want to or is afraid of topping out in the eleventh grade. He wants to know there is always something more and work toward that end.

**Ben and His Stages of Learning**

Ben completed the self-evaluation in January. Ben was most confident about his reading skills as compared to any other study participants. Ben indicated he was able to do the following: infer the main idea or purpose of more challenging passages or their paragraphs, summarize events and ideas in virtually any passage, understand the overall approach taken by an author or narrator in virtually any passage, locate and interpret minor subtly stated details in more challenging passages, use details from different sections of some complex informational passages to support a specific point or argument, order sequences of events in more challenging passages, understand the dynamics between people, ideas, and so on in more challenging passages, understand implied or subtly stated cause-effect relationships in more challenging passages, determine the appropriate meaning of words, phrases, or statements from figurative or somewhat technical contexts, and use information from one or more sections of a more challenging passage to draw generalizations and conclusions about people, ideas, and so on.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ben</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you know what the purpose of the Jr. English class is? If yes, what is the purpose? If not, what do you think the purposes might be?</td>
<td>10. Uh yea, to help me read and write better</td>
<td>CC – identifies his own purpose for focusing on learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Is it important to learn about reading and literacy skills, how people communicate and why they communicate that way?</td>
<td>12. Yes.</td>
<td>CC- - affirmative but lacks details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How do you expect to apply what you learn in the class to other areas of your life? How do you think you will evaluate your progress in the class?</td>
<td>14. I know I am always going to have to read and write. I plan to have to read and write things like essays, and resumes. I know it won’t always be in a classroom. It will progress beyond just assignments and grades. Do I talk to others about it and how I am doing in it? No, but I guess uh I could say probably if it was something I was really interested in.</td>
<td>CC- identifies his own purpose for focusing on learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Has reading and writing instruction had an impact on your life outside of school.</td>
<td>16. Yes. I would just say my life is better because I read and write and can do it well.</td>
<td>CC – he is able to communicate overlap between acts of thinking for academic purposes in English class, other courses, or in his social life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ben did not complete the self-evaluation with the rest of his classmates at the end of April. Ben had mono and was out of school for four weeks. At this point, the school year was almost finished and he did not complete this activity. He was forced to take a medical for the fourth quarter and complete only the essential work via a tutor to complete the semester. Unfortunately, I do not have the self-evaluation to compare for Ben.

**Ben on Social Constructivism**

“I didn’t really think about the teacher and talking with the teacher about what was going on in class and, or what we were supposed to think about or do. I don’t know. I think what probably happens most of the time is that the teacher starts talking about one thing or things and I start thinking about it and how it relates to me. Then, I don’t even know if I know how it relates to me, because I just start thinking and doing. That might not be so good.”

There is a lot to unpack in this statement. While thinking about thinking, he just starts to do and act. Then, he occasionally realizes he has moved past or on to something new without continuing to think. Ben is unsure of this importance or significance.

Still, Ben did acknowledge that he did talk to his friends more about what was or is going on than he probably had previously talked about literature. “I would say we definitely talk more about what we read. I don’t know if it’s because we’re supposed to read more, so we talk about it because, we try to help each other find books to read and in some of my other classes, like AP US History, we have to find articles that relate to different topics. We talk about it to help each other out.”
**Ben’s Final Thoughts**

“I think what I realize now is that it is more important to know how my progress is measured and how it varies from group to group. For example, if I need specific skills because that ability to do those things will determine where I can go to school and the programs I can get into, then it is important to know that is how I will be measured and what I can do about it. However, it is also important to understand that there are many ways of doing something or measuring something. I still need to learn or I guess understand there are other ways of measuring my success.”

Ben is motivated by scores and grades. He does note this understanding of evaluation and values it. Otherwise, Ben seems to fear he could risk missing out on opportunities due to failure to meet certain guidelines or benchmarks necessary to receive such opportunities as college, job offers, recognition, scholarship, and other awards.
CHAPTER 5
LOVE AND LANGUAGE IN THE WORKSHOP:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY

The potential for student engagement begins as soon as the student enters the workshop classroom. The moment when a language arts teacher reads a student’s text and engages the student in the workshop classroom is filled with the potential for misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and misapprehension. It is also filled with potential for revising traditional models of teaching and learning the classroom conventions, and reimagining the relationship between teachers and students in literacy classrooms.

Whatever teachers and students communicate about the act of engaging in reading and writing practices, we must realize two ideas. First, the process of engagement is complicated. Second, the process of engagement is impacted by students’ personal and academic identities. Educational researchers should construct models for engaging students in literacy practices that acknowledge the challenges within that process (Atwell, 1998; Cambourne, 2001; Taylor, 2000). This is not an easy process, and there lacks a how to manual. This reason alone is why consideration should be given to what student engagement in the workshop classroom could look like.

It is important to recognize that some teachers will refuse to participate in the workshop classroom. I have suggested in this dissertation that student engagement, which includes teachers’ ways of identifying themselves personally and academically as well as the ways they are thought of by colleagues, may impact their efforts to engage students. Identifying these issues takes us one step closer to a more fully realized theory of student engagement habits in the workshop classroom. It is important to give
consideration as to how students identify their literacy practices. While this activity may seem basic enough, it does impact student ability and willingness to practice these skills personally and academically. Student case studies locate this intrinsic in the workshop classroom. Fuller articulation of the complexity of classroom learning situations must go beyond issues of students’ personal and academic engagement challenges (Lindemann, 2001; Poyla, 1986; Taylor, 2000). Also, the ability to build relationships does impact the engagement process for students and teacher.

The relationship component is essential to encouraging engagement with texts. This was observed in both the past and present day case studies. Of course, this is more challenging for the teacher and students included within the present day case studies. The 1:35 teacher student ratio does not support these efforts nearly as well as the ratios within the classrooms of Atwell and Calkins. It is also essential to creating a supportive environment for conferencing and responding to student writing in the workshop classroom in an engaging manner. This makes the topic for consideration even more complicated. I suggest that teachers may frequently read students’ texts as reflections of themselves. We may look to students’ texts to find evidence that the work accomplished in the workshop classroom has mattered. Also, as Lad Tobin suggests, we may attach value to students’ texts based on what we know about the student as a person. I want to take Tobin’s argument to another level. I suggest we also value students’ texts based on our perceptions of the images of ourselves that those texts invoke (Berke, 1950; Berke, 1966; Faigley, 1986; Taylor, 2000; Tobin, 1993). Thus, the more engaged and the better the relationship with students, the better the teacher will be to address this concern.
Additionally, it should be noted that many teachers continue to struggle to see similarities between themselves and their students, even teachers in the workshop classroom struggle with this idea. My study of workshop classroom practices suggested that students expected teacher guidance and accepted that direction solely on the fact it came from the teacher and must be trusted (Hairston, 1992; Kelly, 1968; Taylor, 2000). My own study of the students in the workshop classroom and the practices of the workshop classroom, suggested that student texts and interaction with them were based on their interests. This finding was very similar to the past case studies. Yet, in this situation, with a large public high school and many more students it might be more difficult for the teacher to identify there is a relationship between students’ identities and their ways of reading their own texts, a variety of selected texts, and the texts selected by their peers. Additionally, students’ communication about themselves reflects their personal and academic identities. These identities are encouraged by current and relevant discourses in the workshop classrooms. This articulation may include topics of race, gender, classroom interests, and so on. Many of these topics could provide opportunities for engaging students within the workshop classroom and assisting the teacher in the development of such relationships.

Another challenge faced by the workshop classroom includes the expectations placed upon them by teachers in other curricula. Instructors across academic disciplines expect their students to master the reading, writing, and speaking conventions of their curricula, and many expect literacy teachers to help students achieve that mastery by supporting their literacy skills. This responsibility is sizeable as the workshop classroom teachers must teach skill development and support the other curricula. The stress between
teacher’s perceptions of themselves as both valued and devalued affects their pedagogical actions and the ability to engage students in these activities. The teacher perception of self does impact the student perceptions of the workshop classroom. What the teacher determines to bring into the classroom as anchor texts, or mini-lesson topics, will influence adolescents. It is difficult for adolescents not to be influenced by the models established by the teacher in the classroom. The implications for my study concern not just an assessment of students and engagement and perception of their mastery of literacy skills, but also the discipline’s ways of thinking about the other participants in the literacy acts; the type of power those students have; and the characteristics of the texts that are read in the workshop classroom (Lindemann, 2001; Taylor, 2000; Tobin, 1993). Thus, it is important to consider the assessment of workshop students and how they are assessed by teachers in timely and accurate means attempting to provide this level of instruction to 35 different students.

**Questions of Engagement**

Engagement has not been sufficiently studied in language arts classrooms. To begin, my project argues that attention has not been adequately placed upon student engagement, specifically in high school workshop classes, while a great deal of focus has been placed upon the curriculum. An important implication for my study then, is that the field must shift critical focus to bring an emphasis to both student and teacher engagement and the relationship between the two. The challenge includes a different view of identity and engagement in the workshop classroom. This different perspective is necessary to avoid perceiving students as unimportant within our scholarship and to keep the teacher and student identities and engagement in balance (O’Connor, 1996;
Tatum, 2009; Taylor, 2000). Educational researchers should consider how to clearly communicate how their own identities affect student engagement in the workshop classroom.

Second, both past and present case studies argue that when the field considered engagement in its scholarship, it had done so in specific ways, paying attention to issues of disciplinary or professional identity rather than student engagement. The objective of the past case studies is to show the past work that had been completed to date. For instance, by placing the bulk of our discussions of disciplinary engagement around the workshop classroom, we have worked to affirm the belief that the research is in a dynamic position, rather than static. The current workshop classroom indicates that more research is needed when considering how students engage and how teachers may foster such engagement (Tatum, 2009; Taylor, 2000; Tobin, 1993).

Some of these practices can be concerning for teachers. I do not suggest avoiding the inequalities facing the workshop classroom discipline. I do not think we should look the other way and imagine that the work will be easy. I think all new teachers to the workshop classroom should read a variety of professional books concerning various pedagogical and theoretical premises for teaching. This will help provide an even better grounding for the workshop classroom and the complexities of student engagement in the workshop classroom. Still, I do think that these are only some of the possible ways that may introduce teachers to the workshop classroom. I am always in search of better teacher professional development options (Tatum, 2009; Taylor, 2000; Tobin, 1993). Quality professional development is essential to promoting and supporting the workshop classroom.
Teachers hoping to participate in the workshop classroom should explore professional development possibilities. For instance, teachers new to the workshop classroom might participate in conversations of educational professionals working in numerous school systems. They might be included in professional learning communities, or in mentoring programs, which feature conversations about teaching in the workshop classroom (Atwell, 1998; Biancarosa and Snow, 2004; O’Connor, 1996; Taylor, 2000). They might be asked to consider the teaching of writing, reading instruction, additional discourses within the classrooms, and the impact of these items on student engagement in a variety of sites. Most significantly, new workshop teachers must be supported to see themselves as supportive of the school system as a whole. New workshop teachers should consider opportunities as well as limits when thinking about student engagement. It cannot be assumed that students will engage in the workshop classroom. This is identified in the past and present day case studies (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1984; Harvey, 1998).

Also, students are determining their identities and how they relate to their engagement practices in the workshop classroom. This dissertation illustrates that multiple aspects of identity and engagement can affect all of our pedagogical practices in complicated manners. The student case studies, for instance, are impacted in ways that challenged traditional theories of engagement. The students offered a variety of opinions and supportive evidence concerning their work in the workshop classroom. As the students revealed information about themselves, they identified the desire for engagement based on their interest level and need. Those aspects of the student identities did impact
their readings, but they did not determine them. Identity is not the sole factor for text selection.

**Constructions of Authority**

Teacher and student negotiation of authority in the workshop classroom requires important consideration. Themes from my study of the past workshop classroom and collective identities, point to questions of pedagogical power. Teachers of workshop classrooms, for instance, have been figured as literacy activists. They are writing zealots and devoted followers of reading. They are gatekeepers of knowledge, anti-economists, good listeners, empathetic readers, visionaries; cognitive scientists, marginalized educators, survivors, and even isolated. Based upon my belief that there are distinct relationships between pedagogical and engagement practices in this field, a vital implication for this study is that when teachers doubt their power, they make the types of pedagogical choices that support that doubt. The opposite is also true, for teacher and students. For example, in Chapter Two, I talked about the merits of Nancie Atwell’s work with students in the workshop classroom and found that students perceived the support of teachers as valuable as they worked to explore or improve their literacy skills in the specific areas they identified. Hence most of the students included within the past case studies could identify their own areas of growth as a result of the explorations of the workshop classroom. These opinions, as Stephen O’Connor argues in “Will My Name Be Shouted Out,” support the need for school system revision to include the workshop classroom. Change is not easy and requires a great amount of work. This is one of the reasons teachers avoid transitioning to the workshop classroom.
For many workshop classroom teachers, they realize their responsibility to further student literacy skills within the classroom and outside of the classroom. By considering themselves as transitional tools between home and academic discourses, or as missionaries of education, many workshop teachers have strengthened their concept of themselves as separated from or in service of their students. The identification of students’ school settings may suggest they deny their own acceptance by continuing to delineate a separation between themselves and school, or make them feel as though they are not permitted to engage in it. For instance, it is important to think about common claims made to support various types of formal evaluation in literacy classroom. Teachers are frequently heard complaining about grading, letter grades, and the overall grading system. I do not encourage abandoning systems of formal evaluation and grading. Workshop classroom teachers need to accept their responsibility and determine what kinds of evaluations are appropriate for the workshop classroom context and engagement. Evaluation seems to be one of the major reasons students decide to disengage in the workshop process.

While we consider teacher authority, it is also necessary to consider student authority in the workshop classroom. Possibly, most significantly, my dissertation suggests implications for students’ creation of authority in the workshop classroom. As my examination of engagement practices in both case studies suggests, students’ opportunities for creating autonomy when they respond to texts are related to their teachers’ pedagogical practices in the workshop classroom. Whenever a teacher interacts with a student’s text, they should consider numerous interpretive perspectives, including the workshop classroom’s most commonly held beliefs about student text connections,
their own objectives, and their understanding of the conventions of the workshop classroom. Those perspectives inform their reading of every student’s text in a number of ways and could impact student engagement in the workshop classroom. Response to student writing should not be underestimated.

The classroom discourse is important for improving student writing. Teachers and students should engage in communication concerning writing in order to create an understanding of various lenses in order to make room for student contributions in the workshop classroom. This study is essential in the workshop classroom as we need to consider how discourse in the workshop classroom encourages learning for all students. I encourage us to do so with the realization that such contributions are possible. Can we utilize studies of student engagement in the workshop classroom to affect teacher training efforts in order to better prepare new teachers for the workshop classroom to be literacy leaders in the workshop classroom? These teachers should be able to determine what is best for students independently, without a curriculum guide.

**Definitions of Discipline**

One area that is crucial to the workshop classroom is the student selection of texts. The least researched aspect of my study is the student texts selections for reading. “Love and Language in the Workshop” should encourage questions about the correlation between students-selected texts and teacher-selected texts in the workshop classroom. This relationship is determined by topics of cultural, institutional, and disciplinary identity and engagement.

The self-selection component is essential to the workshop classroom discipline. Student-selected texts and the work students engage in with them comprise a large
portion of the workshop discipline. Additionally, students write poems, and stories, and reports, and essays. In the case of all the students included in the past case studies, we consider their writing and reading selections. In the case of the present day case studies, we do not have this same privilege. Moreover, students in the present day case studies combine traditional text forms to create new and different text genres. Students suggest in their vignettes and in their interviews the value of the social interaction in the workshop classroom. They work in email, text messages, and facebook, producing new genres on a regular and ongoing basis. Also, students have the opportunity to respond to the recurring classroom situation of being asked to demonstrate what they know, or explain how they came to know something. Students might respond to the recurring discipline situation of having to write as though they care about something they really don’t care about. They could also respond to the recurring discipline situation of having to write about something they really care about as though they do not care at all (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1984; Taylor, 2000). These are just some of the ways the workshop classroom discipline can push students to challenge their literacy development.

Student writing is another large component of the workshop classroom discipline. The discipline of the workshop classroom suggests that students are giving something of themselves to the workshop environment, experience, knowledge, talents, authority-in order to illustrate that they are particular kinds of people-observant, creative, competent, objective, and so on. Then, teachers evaluate students due to their success communicating information and creating selves in the workshop classroom. These texts ask teachers to read them as symbols of students’ personal lives (Kelly, 1968; O’Connor, 1996; Taylor, 2000). The issue facing teachers is how to respond to and evaluate such
texts within this kind of system that engages students in the literacy process. This consideration will impact student engagement and learning in the workshop classroom.

First and foremost, teachers must engage students in this practice and process. An important implication for my study, in terms of engagement, involves the opportunity of a continued disconnect with this concept. What happens when a teacher seems to be working within a different set of values and morals than a student? What if the teacher struggles to find engaging topics and genres for the students? What will help the teacher as he or she seeks to encourage this type of engagement? The act of engaging students in writing is one way in which teachers help students explore particular kinds of texts, discussions, and literacy skills. It is important to consider these concepts. The understanding of the breadth and depth of the workshop discipline is essential to the effort of engaging students in the act of writing. Student success in the workshop classroom can be threatened when teachers struggle with this concept.

Helping students experience success in the workshop classroom might be dependent upon the teacher helping the student engage in the procedures. Teachers consider student text engagement with specific expectations, concerning the ways in which they wish students to act with language and teachers rely on what they know about these texts and students to walk students through the process. These efforts come from the teachers’ collections of titles and texts they have encountered and internalized from their personal and academic experiences. By reconsidering engagement for the classroom context, we might begin to ask new questions: What types of texts are most valued, by whom, and in what contexts? What is at stake when we ask students to provide input about these texts? How can teachers structure those selections? How
might these efforts impact what engagement could look like in the workshop classroom? If we were to chart how student understanding of genre and texts have been altered in scholarship over time and consider the impact of those changes on students’ engagement in the workshop classroom, students might gain a better understanding of the workshop classroom that seem so ingrained and open them up to new opportunities for learning. This opportunity would further student achievement in the workshop classroom.

**Study Limitations**

I can identify several limitations for my study. To begin, my decision to study only *ITM* and *TATW* in the past case study limits the kind of representations of workshop classrooms to which I focus readers’ attention. Both books, as I mention, are thought to be well-respected by others in the field of education, specifically the workshop classroom scholars. The authors of these texts continue to study and publish today. My study would be enriched by consideration of other journals, including, for example, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, a book that addresses a large audience of researchers who define themselves first and foremost as teachers of English Language Learners in the workshop classroom, rather than scholars. This would also provide the multicultural aspect to the case study component of the workshop classroom and the student within it. Additionally, the study would benefit from careful consideration of resources and material included in the workshop classroom geared toward engaging the English Language Learners in the workshop classroom.

The study is limited to a set time period for the workshop discipline. The study could also be expanded by including a larger selection of educational research. I provide in this dissertation a limited investigation of educational research’s recent disciplinary
history with a focus on the workshop classroom. I focused on the past thirty years of research within the workshop classroom. My reading included the historical moments crucial to the broad implementation of the workshop classroom and shortly thereafter provided the basis for the study. Yet, the educational research field would grow from a longer study of what the workshop discipline has been for literacy classrooms and a longer view of what constitutes the workshop classroom. A study that would consider how the workshop classroom benefits the literacy skill acquisition of students is also necessary. To respond to these components it would be necessary to visit several workshop classrooms, as opposed to only one classroom. Additionally, it could be beneficial to consider how the differences and similarities in what these workshop classrooms could look like.

My position within the research site may have also been viewed as limited. My study was both made complex and interesting because I had a collegial relationship with the teacher and the students. My appreciation for the teacher’s work and my love for our students and the workshop classroom methods parallel my examination of their practices in the workshop classroom. Some people might suggest this is a liability for the study. I decide to stress my original objective: to create a study of workshop classroom students at work that might help identify how students engage in the workshop classroom.

**Responsibility**

I conclude by considering the work of Donald Graves, who encourages teachers to consider the implications of their pedagogical decisions within specific sites. This quotation from Graves serves as topic to ponder:

> It is entirely possible to read about children, review research and textbooks about writing, “teach” them, yet still be completely unaware of their
processes of learning and writing. Unless we actually structure our environments to free ourselves for effective observation and participation in all phases of the writing process, we are doomed to repeat the same teaching mistakes again and again.

Graves argues that teachers should add to the research discussion by considering how students learn and the dominant ideologies in the classroom, and the direction of attention to the interplay of identity and engagement in the classroom. Graves is concerned about how the attitudes and actions of teachers and students about learning may actually replicate the literacy practices that uphold current learning trends as opposed to working to enhance student engagement and learning. Graves notes the necessity to think about thinking. Students should identify a genuine objective and purpose for learning. How does the workshop classroom work to help all students become engaged learners? What could student engagement in the workshop classroom look like? As an administrator, how do I support that effort?

This topic is incredibly important to the workshop classroom. Graves’ work encourages us to pay careful attention to the works that connect individual teachers, their ideas of engagement, their beliefs about students and their literacy practices in the workshop classroom, their instructional decisions, and so on. When we investigate the numerous influences of a given teacher’s identity in any classroom, the impact is overwhelming. In the workshop classroom, as Graves suggests, the stakes are particularly high to meet this need. I believe the stakes are high in all classrooms due to the current state of education.

I agree with the students in Chapter Five and their appreciative sense for the teacher and workshop classroom willingness to work with the areas of student interests and needs. Each time a student reads a self-selected text, or writes a text, they accentuate
the beliefs and action of the workshop classroom and the practices of the workshop.
When they model practicing various skills in the workshop classroom and applying the
practices to a variety of other areas, the students are identifying growth as they make
meaning for themselves and connect to the literature. The students were also able to give
eamples of how they have taken the practice literacy skills and applied them to a variety
of real-life literacy skills such as: helping explain letters or bills to parents, preparing for
college entrance exams, becoming a better communicator at work, and writing skills in
other classrooms. The majority of students also identified how they are now actively
thinking about their reading and writing. Prior to the class, they just did it. They did not
consider the purpose, the audience, or the text. This had made the students realize that
different modes can be used to accomplish a variety of tasks. These might be tasks
within the workshop classroom, or outside of the classroom.

Additionally, I recognize that many of the students did request or ask for a break
from the workshop setting. Many of the students stated that it seems to be the same thing
repeatedly. While research has noted this can be a positive for adolescents, some of the
adolescents on occasion seem to request the need for something different. However, the
students were not able to communicate or provide suggestions as to what that would look
like. Some of the students also recognized and voiced the need for more explicit
instruction or connection as to how the practices within the workshop classroom might or
would connect to their other classes. Some students seemed to be considering how they
could take assignments or activities from other classes and directly approach them within
the workshop classroom.
Just as the student opinions and input are not exclusive, I am able to place this
dissertation as both critical and hopeful for the future of the workshop classroom. The
dissertation can function as a vehicle for reconsidering disciplinary approaches to
engagement related issues in the workshop classroom. Chapter Three, with the past case
study, is an overview of existing ways of representing workshop classroom teachers and
their pedagogical practices and an example of the depth and challenges that underlies that
work. Chapter Four, the present case study, is an illustration of the ways that teachers
work to engage students in the workshop classroom and what this may look like.

Teachers should focus on the processes by which we communicate with students
in the workshop classroom. In this dissertation, I have investigated the act of engaging
students in the workshop classroom and what this could look like. In so doing, I have
focused on the ways engagement may guide our ways of reading and valuing students’
texts and also mediates the text options made available to students in the first place. By
focusing on student engagement issues in the workshop classroom and what this may
look like, work can begin to influence teachers and student alike as they consider
transition to the workshop classroom.
NOTES

1 See Biancarosa and Snow *Reading Next* (2004).

2 See Patricia Bizzell’s collection, *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness* (1992), which follows her often ambivalent feelings about the ways that acquiring academic discourse is posited as the desired end of composition pedagogy.

3 For further explanation of the theory of Good Enough as it relates to education and educational research, see “Good Enough: Methods for Ethnographic Research” by Wendy Luttrell in *Harvard Educational Review* (2000).

4 See Biancarosa and Snow *Reading Next* (2004). Great details are included within the text that illustrate the various methods of instruction, resources, and assessments to be included within the workshop classroom.

5 See Nancie Atwell’s works *In the Middle* (1998). Also see Richard Allington’s article *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research-Based Interventions* (2001); see also Allington’s “Ideology is Still Trumping Evidence” in *Phi Delta Kappan* (2005). Other articles that represent Atwell from the workshop perspective include Dana Alvermann’s “Effective Literacy Instruction for Adolescents” an Executive Summary and Paper Commissioned by the National Reading Conference (2001) and Catherine Snow’s and Gianna Biancarosa’s “Adolescent Literacy and the Achievement Gap: What Do We Know and Where Do We Go From Here?” A Carnegie Corporation of New York Adolescent Literacy Funders Meeting Report (2003).

6 See Janet Allen’s *It’s Never Too Late: Leading Adolescents to Lifelong Literacy* (1995); Maureen Barbieri’s *Sounds from the Heart* (1995); Glenda Bissex’s *GNYS AT WRK: A Child Learns to Write and Read* (1980); and Lucy Calkins McCormick *Lessons From a Child* (1983). These books engage questions of teachers’ disciplinary and workshop values as they affect the engagement of students with texts.

7 For a fuller discussion of the Workshop Classroom environment, see Chapter Five.

8 It seems important to note here that at this point, I was starting to realize that while some of the questions seemed to illicit great detailed responses from the students, many of the others lacked this ability. Thus, I noted that in a second research project, I would review the drafting and crafting of student participant interview questions and create more provocative questions. However, at this point, I thought I would begin by noting those questions which seemed to be more successful.
CITED LITERATURE


Alvermann, Dana. *Effective Literacy Instruction for Adolescents.* Executive Summary and Paper Commissioned by the National Reading Conference. 2001.


APPENDIX A
Study Participant Interview Questions

Interview Protocol for Interviews 1, 2

1. Do you know what is the purpose of the junior language arts class? If yes, what is the purpose? If no, what do you think the purpose might be?

Participant Response
Reflective Notes

2. Is it important to learn about literacy? Why or why not?

Participant Response
Reflective Notes

3. What had your English teacher told you about the importance of literacy (reading, writing, and communicating)?

Participant Response
Reflective Notes

4. Do you think you will be challenged in this course? If yes, how? If not, why not?

Participant Response
Reflective Notes

5. What would motivate you to apply yourself in this course? How do you expect to apply what you learn in the class to other areas of your life? How do you think you will evaluate your progress in the class? Do you think you will communicate what you learn in this class with other people? If yes, how? If no, why not?

Participant Response
Reflective Notes

6. Do you expect what you learn in the classroom will be used outside of the classroom? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

Participant Response
Reflective Notes

7. Do you do any of the following in other classes: reading (nonfiction, fiction, tradebooks) writing, (journals, research papers, reaction papers, narratives, persuasive essays)? What kind of reading and writing do you do outside of school?

Participant Response
Reflective Notes

8. Has reading or writing instruction had an impact on your life outside of school? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

Participant Response
Reflective Notes

9. Is it important to know your strengths and weaknesses in reading and writing? Why or why not?

Participant Response
Reflective Notes

10. Is it important for you to know how teachers evaluate your work?

Participant Response
Reflective Notes
Interview Protocol for Interview 3

1. What have you enjoyed most about the language arts classroom?
   Participant Response
   Reflective Notes

2. While you are in class, what kinds of things did you work on with the teacher?
   Participant Response
   Reflective Notes

3. While you are in class, what kinds of things did you work on with other students?
   Participant Response
   Reflective Notes

4. Do you feel the majority of the class period was spent listening to instruction or practicing literacy skills or strategies?
   Participant Response
   Reflective Notes

5. Do you feel the format of the classroom was effective?
   Participant Response
   Reflective Notes

6. Do you feel your literacy skills improved? If so, how?
   Participant Response
   Reflective Notes

7. Do you expect to use skills or strategies taught during class outside of the classroom?
   Participant Response
   Reflective Notes

8. Will you or have you told other people about those skills or strategies?
   Participant Response
   Reflective Notes

9. What skill or strategy has been most helpful to improving your literacy skills?
   Participant Response
   Reflective Notes

10. Can you explain how?
    Participant Response
    Reflective Notes

11. Were you always engaged in the classroom instruction and activities?
    Participant Response
    Reflective Notes

12. Were there any skills or strategies you have used in other classes?
    Participant Response
    Reflective Notes

13. Can you explain how?
    Participant Response
    Reflective Notes

14. Was there a particular classroom library book that you really enjoyed? If so, what was the book and the topic?
    Participant Response
    Reflective Notes

15. How important is reading and writing to you?
    Participant Response
    Reflective Notes
16. Do you think reading and writing is important to other juniors? What about the teachers?

Participant Response

Reflective Notes
## APPENDIX B

### Classroom Observation Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIBITIVE NOTES</th>
<th>REFLECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>participants</td>
<td>thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dialogue</td>
<td>speculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>setting</td>
<td>feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
<td>problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT standards</td>
<td>idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>impressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prejudices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Observation Information

- **Time**
- **Place**
- **Date**
- **Setting**
VITA

Name: Suzanne Colombe

Education: B.A., Education, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 1997

M.Ed., Curriculum and Instruction, Depaul University, Chicago, Illinois, 2002

Teaching: Middle School Language Arts Teacher, Canton Middle School, Streamwood, Illinois, 1997 - 2003


Associate Principal, Bartlett High School, Bartlett, Illinois, 2009-2011

Principal, Bartlett High School, Bartlett, Illinois, 2011 - Present

Honors: New Leader In Education, Hanover Township, 2011

Professional Membership: Illinois Principal Association

Scholastic Administration