A CASE STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORAL LANGUAGE AND DIGITAL
WRITING IN AN 8th GRADE CLASSROOM

by

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April 28th, 2014

A dissertation submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of
the University at Buffalo, State University of New York
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

Doctoral of Philosophy

Department of Learning and Instruction

UMI Number: 3640788

UMI

Dissertation Publishing

UMI 3640788

ProQuest®

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Erin Kearney and Dr. David Bruce for their support and guidance throughout this process. I would also like to thank my advisor, Dr. Maureen Boyd for continually pushing my thinking forward and working with me tirelessly to ensure my dissertation was of the highest quality. I am incredibly appreciative for the feedback, support and guidance Dr. Maureen Boyd provided me throughout the entirety of my doctoral program.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family for their endless support. I want to thank my husband Phil whose constant encouragement and love gave me the strength to continue. I also want to thank my son Liam, who blessed me with a healthy pregnancy and was patient in being born a mere four days after my final dissertation defense.

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to my father who taught me the true definition of perseverance, dedication and hard work. Thank you for teaching me to believe in myself and that anything is possible in this world, for that, I am forever grateful.

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Abstract

This yearlong study in an 8th grade classroom explores a blogging literacy event that illustrates how reading, digital writing and oracy work together to better support student learning, reasoning and dialogue. While many studies separately confirm the role of talk and writing in promoting learning, few studies address how writing informs talk practices, and no known studies examine how purposeful, individual blogging about literature promotes productive classroom dialogue.

Students within this eighth grade classroom are expected to write and participate in a blog with their classmates about literature they select and read independently. Students then discuss the literature and their blogs in small group conversations with their classroom teacher, leading to rich, meaningful discussions. Focal data consists of student blogs, video recorded small group conversations, audio recorded student and teacher interviews, written student reflections, observation field notes and photographs of student artifacts.

This study explicates the potential of writing acting as a springboard to further student reasoning through conversation. It documents the flexibility of teacher talk to take student contributions and align them in meaningful ways with educational language and purposes. Even within the confines of regimented curriculum agendas, the study illustrates how teachers can play a variety of roles in which they employ a repertoire of skills and strategies, making decisions in the moment to build on what students bring to the classroom and engender a classroom environment of risk-taking, meaning-making and learning.

Chapter One: Rationale

In present day education, pressures of standardized tests weigh heavily on both teachers and students. The mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) have been a source of contention, propelling the United States into a culture of accountability, insisting standardized tests provide answers to on-going educational qualms. More recently, teacher evaluation plans such as New York State's Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR) and the Common Core Standards (2011) have placed teachers under increased scrutiny, tying evaluation to student achievement on high stakes standardized testing. As a result, many educators are fearful, and left with the grave responsibility of navigating the perilous world of high stakes teaching. For many educators, scripted curriculum has become the dominant form of instruction (Dresser, 2012; MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen & Palma, 2004; cf Boyd & Smytnek-Gworak, 2012) leaving little space for teacher choice and autonomy. Under these circumstances, many classrooms depend on teacher centered talk structures, allocating little time to authentic student discourse. To be sure, there are educators fighting this trend, engaging students in authentic conversations and creating space for choice, meaning and creativity (Aukerman, 2007; Boyd & Galda, 2011; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008; Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser & Long, 2003). The tension between standardized test preparation and meaningful, responsive classroom discourse remains unresolved. Teachers must prepare relevant and purposeful lessons that align student contributions with educational purposes and in the enactment of those lessons, teachers must contingently build on what students know. For, in the midst of pressures set forth by teacher evaluation plans and the Common Core Standards (2011), teachers have the ability to be decision makers, and create meaningful learning experiences for their students (Hibbert & Iannacci, 2005; Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan & Heintz, 2013). But, this is not easy, and not without risk. Teachers who adopt a dialogic stance (Boyd & Markarian, 2011) build on student intentionality

and are therefore listening and contingent, fostering a community of risk taking. The act of listening to, building upon, and furthering student intentions and contributions can be harnessed through technology for educational purposes. Teachers who employ an instructional repertoire that includes New Literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011) must be empowered to take risks in their teaching, infusing multimodal and dialogic practices, and thereby, assume responsibility for the evolving needs of 21st century learners. For example, blogging requires a sense of empowerment and willingness to take risks in that teachers cannot script what students share within an exchange. Implementation of multimodal, dialogic practices such as blogging should be practiced in classrooms without fear of failure, in an effort to enrich current educational methods.

Focus of Study

As educators, to further understand how teachers implement multimodal, dialogic practices in their classroom, we need to examine classrooms where this is happening. Specifically, to better understand how talk and writing work together, and what ways, if any, the speaking-writing connections of blogging inform class discussions and impact student learning and achievement, this study focuses on one purposefully selected 8th grade classroom community. This teacher, Matt, took ownership of his classroom practices and employed a reading and writing workshop model (Calkins, 1986, 2000) to teach content and strategies aligned with the Common Core State Standards (2011) and other school wide curriculum and technology initiatives.

Research Questions

I made the decision to study this particular teacher (Matt) because I had conducted observations on student book clubs in his sixth grade classroom the year prior. Further, having spent time in his eighth grade classroom during the month of September, I was intrigued by not only his implementation of meaningful instructional practices, but also his ability to self-reflect, and take risks, regardless of pressures set forth by standardized tests and other curriculum mandates. Matt found a way to take ownership of his classroom by infusing student choice and autonomy through digital writing, talk and reading experiences, while also implementing the Common Core State Standards (2011). In addition to these observed qualities, I felt compelled to research the relationship between speaking and writing in this classroom, specifically in conjunction with multimodal compositions such as blogging. The overarching research inquiry sought to unpack and examine teacher and student practices that make up this literacy-oracy event. Specifically this study examines:

1. What is the scope of the content of student blogs across four teaching cycles across the school year?
2. What types of teacher talk moves are employed within and across four teaching cycles of the literacy event?
   a. How does this teacher demonstrate awareness and intentionality in teaching practices throughout the course of the school year?
3. How do students' reading, writing and talk practices build the focal literacy event both as an individual iteration and over the course of the school year?
   a. How does the content of the digital writing experiences vary from the content of the talking event?

This study contributes to the existing field of research in dialogic teaching, further exploring the potential benefits of non-scripted, authentic talk in the classroom (Boyd & Markarian, 2011;

Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan & Heintz, 2013; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2004; Wells, 2006). Additionally, it extends current studies within the field of blogging pertaining to student talk and collaboration (Thein, Oldakowski & Sloan, 2010; Zawlinski, 2009; Davis & McGrail, 2009). Furthermore, this study will address the gap in research pertaining to the speaking-writing connection (Belcher & Hirvela, 2008, Mason, 2001, Rivard & Straw, 2000).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Talk supports students' personal understanding and their ability to co-construct knowledge and arrive at new understandings together (Bakhtin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, language and learning are both inherently dialogic. Dialogic teaching has grown in importance over past years and studies on dialogic teaching have sparked conversations pertaining to the pedagogical role of classroom discourse in a student's literacy development (Boyd & Markarian, 2011; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2004; Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, & Prendergast, 1997; Wells, 2006). Building on the theory of Vygotsky (1986) and Bakhtin (1981) and past research (for example, see seminal works by Aukerman, 2012; Cazden, 2001; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008; Wells, 1999) has supported this. In classroom talk, "when students interact with others in a group, something collective is produced that is more than the result of the abilities and dispositions of the individuals who comprise the group" (Soter, Wilkinson, Murphy, Rudge, Reninger & Edwards, 2008, p.377). The blogging- talk literacy event embraces a sense of dialogic teaching- and the collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful (Alexander, 2006) qualities of the varied classroom talk practices that support and sustains it. Literacy and oracy practices are viewed in concert as they are in service of one another, guiding and pushing student understanding forward.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Theorists put forward by Bakhtin (1981), Rosenblatt (1978, 1994) and Vygotsky (1978) inform understandings of the potential of classroom talk and literacy events such as blogging in mediate classroom teaching and learning. Researchers such as Wells (2001), Rubin (1990), Mercer, Wegerif & Dawes (1999) and Alexander (2006) build on these theories in understanding the relationship between writing and talk within a pedagogical realm. In the following sections, I

discuss the theoretical underpinnings for this study: sociocultural theory, Vygotsky's interpersonal and intrapersonal stance, Bakhitn's dialogic space, and Rosenblatt's readers' response theory. Following, I move into an explanation of the pedagogical applications: literacy events, dialogic instruction, teacher awareness and intentionality, student talk, new literacies/multimodality (blogging specifically), and the speaking-writing connection.

Sociocultural theory. Sociocultural theory originates from the work of Vygotsky (1986) and later theorists such as Wertsch (1991, 1998) and Mercer (2004). Sociocultural theory is based on the notions that development and language is situated in institutional, cultural and historical contexts. Vygotsky (1986) posits that social interactions mediate learning and heavily influence development. Therefore, cognitive development and learning are considered to be a product of lived experiences in society and culture. For the purposes of this study, discourse will be analyzed through a sociocultural lens that will examine the potential for talk and writing to function as a mediated learning tool through a lived classroom experience. Within this framework, dialogue holds great importance, supporting the notion that learning occurs through collaborative understandings and shared experiences that are derived from culture and past experiences. According to Mercer (2004), "a sociocultural perspective highlights the possibility that educational success and failure may be explained by the quality of educational dialogue, rather than simply in terms of the capability of individual students or the skill of their teachers" (p.139).

Vygotsky: interpersonal and intrapersonal. There is great potential in exploring the role of multimodal digital compositions such as blogging, in response to reading texts. Vygotsky's (1978) understanding of inner speech provides context for the blogging-literacy event in this study. Vygotsky (1978) believed inner speech to be meaningful, thus, blogging

makes transparent inner speech in students, in that they are able to extend understandings and create new meanings by writing about literature, without first having vocalized their thoughts.

Reflecting on the process of socialization, Vygotsky (1978) discusses the development of the interpersonal and intrapersonal processes. According to McGrail & Davis (2011), "blogs can bring different dynamics into the classroom as writing becomes public, participatory and continually developing" (pg.1). Within the realm of blogging, writing moves from a private entity, to a public and collaborative forum that becomes increasingly dialogic. The internalization process occurs through mediated processes that occur internally and externally. When students take ownership of an activity such as blogging, they transform and interpret words for their own individual purposes. In analyzing blogs through a sociocultural lens, it is plausible to view blogs as mediated tools that students can transform, interpret and use for literacy learning.

Bakhtin: dialogic spaces. According to Bakhtin (1963), "an idea does not live and die in a person, instead, it lives and grows through dialogic relationships" (p.98). Bakhtin (1981) suggests learning occurs through a dialogic process of social construction. Thus, dialogism creates opportunities for student growth, unlike monologic talk structures, which have been argued to stifle student conversations (Wells, 2006). In contrast, dialogic teaching creates space for authentic student conversation, positioning students with interpretative authority (Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001; Boyd & Markarian, 2011; Boyd & Galda, 2011). Students are empowered to struggle with their interpretations, and take ownership of their knowledge through shared construction (Barnes, 2008).

Bakhtin argues discourse to be inherently dialogic, structured by tension between self and conversants. This tension pushes participants to grapple with the voices and ideas of others, creating a dynamic, evolving event. Within a dialogic context, there are no limits extending into the past and future. Past utterances are never finalized; instead, they are in motion of change and exploration that can be renewed with new meanings. The exploratory notion of talk makes transparent how the meaning of each utterance both responds to and anticipates another utterance (Bakhtin, 1981). Thus, what one conversant says influences what others think and verbalize, showcasing the unpredictable and flexible nature of talk and it's openness to new possibilities. Dialogic teaching provides a public space for student voices, representing differing values and perspectives. Therefore, dialogic instruction embraces a sense of 'many voicedness' (heteroglossia) that embraces collaboration and interconnectivity within the classroom community (Bakhtin, 1981).

Oracy and literacy connections: readers' response theory. In analyzing the notion of private and public entities, one must examine both Vygotsky (1986) and Rosenblatt's (1978, 1994) ideologies. Vygotsky (1986) discusses cognitive development on two levels, the inter (social) and intra (individual). Rosenblatt (1978, 1994) builds on these notions in her transactional theory of reading and explication of readers' response theory. She acknowledges a reader's private and public response to literature, while also exploring differing stances: efferent (reading for information) and aesthetic (reading for pleasure). It is possible that writing, such as blogging, could be perceived as the private (intra) acts of processing and development, and talk, as the public (inter) component. Rosenblatt (1978, 1994) articulated the act of reading and writing as a transactional process between the reader. Since each reader brings their own context and beliefs to the act of reading, readers do not share the same meaning over time with self, or

with others.   Reading, writing, listening and speaking are indeed transactional events in the classroom, where students are free to interact with texts and share meaning with others to deepen understanding. The individual act of blogging provides opportunity for students to share private reader responses in preparation for the public discussion.   Thus, stimulating deeper understandings across students and texts.

Pedagogical Applications

Literacy events. Socio-cultural theory highlights the notion that cognitive development and learning are a result of lived experiences in society and culture. Thus, social interactions heavily influence and mediate learning experiences (Vygotsky, 1986). These interactions take place across time and are recurring patterns of literacy events (minilessons, read aloud, independent reading and writing) within a context (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Dyson, 1990). When using socio-cultural theory as a framework for studying classrooms, one must look towards literacy events. Event cycles occur within certain classrooms, requiring a level of cognition and learning that solicit mediated social experiences. Within strong classroom communities, a range of literacy-oracy events occur that are supportive, recursive and accretive, varying in structure, content and method (for example, participating in Workshop minilessons, varied genre reading- read aloud and independent, small and large group discussions, writing and blogging).   Effective teachers have a large repertoire that they pull from in an effort to contingently teach new content.   Thus, teachers must be well planned, purposeful and intentional, while also being responsive to students in the moment (Boyd, 2012). They must provide students with different talk opportunities to learn since different classroom communicative processes offer different occasions to interact with new information.   The offering of new information is most effective when grounded in student knowledge- "teachers

must find out what children already know, and take them from where they are to somewhere else" (Clay, 2005, p.9). Using student knowledge- made transparent in student talk and student writing such as blogging- as a springboard for instruction affords teachers greater opportunity to strategically plan within and across literacy events, particularly when soliciting literate language and introducing concepts such as inferencing, synthesizing and other overarching comprehension skills. In the focal literacy event examined in this study, the teacher was able to embed instruction within various literacy events such as reading, writing and talk. Within this cyclical process of blogging about reading (followed by small group discussions) reading and blogging acted as a springboard to student talk, anchoring content while also leaving space for flexibility and contingency. Specifically, the teacher positioned the students as primary knowers, while also maintaining structure and introducing new concepts through discourse. Thus, dialogic instruction plays a pertinent role within this particular classroom.

Dialogic instruction. Dialogic teaching creates opportunities for student growth by harnessing varied strategies and talk structures in service of a dialogic stance (Boyd & Markarian, 2011). Unlike monologic approaches that have been argued to stifle student conversations (Wells, 2006), a dialogic approach is not prescribed, rather, it is versatile, contingent and responsive to student contributions (Alexander, 2006; Lyle, 2008; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991; Renshaw, 2004; Reznitskaya, Anderson, McNurlan, 2001; Wells, 2001). Thus, these researchers would argue that effective teaching practices are not scripted; instead they are varied, flexible, contingent, and accessed from a teacher's repertoire in an attempt to further student reasoning in an environment which supports both multimodal and dialogic practices. Instead of focusing on specific talk forms, dialogism is defined by patterning in the language environment as a whole. Across one literacy event,

classroom participants experience a variety of talk practices, as teachers purposefully and collaboratively pull from their repertoire, building on the content, skills and ideas of others. Thus, students are supported and empowered to be risk-takers throughout the learning process.

Although significant research has been conducted in the field of dialogic teaching, its influence in the United States has been countered by pre-packed, scripted programs that are being forced into educator's hands (Dresser, 2012; MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen & Palma, 2004), it is imperative dialogic instruction continues to be explored in an effort to better understand the role of discourse within student development and learning. In the following sections, I discuss literature pertaining to dialogic instruction, specifically in relation to teacher awareness and intentionality, intertextual discourse links and questioning.

Teacher awareness and intentionality. Effective educators have a continual awareness and intentionality behind their teaching, knowing where and how to push students forward in their learning. In reviewing literature pertaining to dialogic instruction, many researchers (Boyd & Galda, 2011; Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan & Heintz, 2013; Lyle, 2008; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Myhill & Dunkin, 2005; Nystrand et. al, 2007) would argue that effective teachers are those who are not only planful and intentional in their teaching, but also responsive to student contributions. These educators afford students the opportunity of discourse, allowing them to share opinions, expertise and judgments, while also posing questions to others. However, the opportunities for dialogic instruction can and should be derived from teacher goals, yet are derived from the students, manifested through guided participation and scaffolding (Aukerman, 2007; Dyson, 1990). Thus, what becomes imperative is the teacher's intentionality and purpose when embarking on instructional practices with students.

According to Cazden (2001), lessons plans are considered to be in the *intended curriculum* and provide a valuable framework for teaching. In Matt's classroom, his daily lessons provided focus within the thematic based units that occurred throughout the year. He planned instructional activities in these units such as the reading-blogging-talk experience. However, the use of classroom talk within and across the instructional units represented the *actual curriculum* (Cazden, 2001) his contingent, in the moment teaching. According to Boyd (2012), "effective teachers are mindful of these shifting purposes as they plan lessons with both long-term and immediate learning goals in mind" (p.28). Therefore, effective teachers demonstrate an overall awareness of intended instructional moves, yet, contingently anchor their teaching moves in student contributions. When understanding pedagogy, it is important to look at both planned and contingent practices.

Teacher talk: intertextuality and questioning. In exploring the importance of teacher awareness and intentionality, one must look at the ways teachers can engender classroom discourse. In the following sections, I discuss students' use of intertextual links (as engendered by teacher discourse) and how teachers elicit student talk through questioning.

Intertextual links. According to Boyd & Maloof (2000), "exploratory epistemic talk is student-directed talk that explores connections between what students know and what is being taught" (p.164). Thus, in understanding the ways teachers engender student talk, one must look towards the epistemic student talk that occurs. In doing this, they looked closely at student intertextual links to provide insight into the content of classroom discourse and the ways these links were made socially and academically relevant. The use of student intertextual links is indicative of students extending conversation beyond the intended curriculum. Knowing Matt uses literature as a catalyst for both blogging and talk for his intended curriculum, it is important

to entertain the notion that intertextual links have the ability to come to life within the actual curriculum. Research and classroom experience confirms (Galda, Cullinan & Sipe, 2010; Langer, 1995) that literature has the potential to evoke a quality of talk that encompasses reflection and intertextual connections. By introducing concepts through literature, students have the ability to make personal and textual connections through talk.

Questioning. Questioning is critical when studying the ways that teachers engender student discourse. Past research on classroom questioning has focused on structures of talk, specifically between the teacher and student (see for example, Cazden, 2001; Dillon, 1984). From this, the Initiate, Response, Evaluation (IRE) talk pattern, that Mehan (1979) described as an evaluative pattern whereby the third turn (teacher evaluation) terminates the classroom interaction and perpetuates telling as opposed to discussion. Later researchers such as Wells (1993) highlighted the third move emphasizing the third turn as Follow-up (IRF) potential. This meant that the third teacher continued to open the conversation as opposed to close it, encouraging future exchanges. Since then, many researchers have focused on the third move, determining the teacher follow-up to be quite critical uptake (Boyd & Rubin, 2002, 2006; Nassaji & Wells, 2000; Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser & Long, 2003). The notion of uptake encourages and directs the continuation of conversation through questioning or commentary. Through contingent questioning (Boyd & Rubin, 2006) that takes student thinking into account and pushing it further, teachers can promote and engender deeper levels of inquiry and thought. Further, the act of contingent questioning demonstrates teacher listening and responsiveness in the moment and by building on and validating student contributions, the teacher signals to students that their ideas count and positions them to share interpretative authority (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Boyd & Devennie, 2009).

In keeping with teachers in general, the classroom teacher in this study employs questioning quite frequently. A critical component of Matt's varied discourse repertoire is his frequent use of authentic questioning (questions asked not already known by teacher). These questions give power to students, in that they embrace the right to interpret a question and provide their opinions. What is more important is Matt's level of contingent follow up during exchanges. These follow up questions can be open or closed in terms of syntax because of the critical characteristic is that they ask students to extend or hone in on. In such ways, even when a question is not authentic, contingent questions "continue the scope and depth of inquiry, facilitating students' thinking and exploration as they offer coherent bridges across ideas and contributions" (Boyd & Galda, 2011, p.18). Matt's teaching is purposeful and intentional, however, he understands when and how to deviate in an effort to be responsive and contingent to student responses, thereby facilitating and expanding student thinking. Thus, the IRF talk sequence, specifically teacher uptake, and the practice "leading from behind" (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992) is evident in that the teacher builds on student contributions, while also making clear, pertinent connections to the content.

Student questioning. In reviewing past literature, it is clear that research on student questioning is sparse (Markee, 1995; McGrew, 2005; Myhill & Dunkin, 2005; Ohta & Nakaone, 2004; Skilton & Meyer, 1993; Taboada & Guthrie, 2006; Yuksel & Yu, 2007; Yuksel, 2014). Student questioning has often been studied within the realm of reading comprehension, however, a limitation is that it is frequently measured within an isolated context for the purposes of assessment (Taboada & Guthrie, 2006) and not within a dialogic space. Researchers such as Myhill & Dunkin (2005) have recognized not only the absence of literature on student questioning and its notable absence in UK classrooms, "pupils rarely ask questions themselves,

particularly questions that might help them to clarify or elaborate upon their understanding of a given concept" (p.417). Within the IRE questioning framework, researchers such as Dillon (1988) and Alexander (1992) have argued that students have few opportunities to ask questions, and when they do, they are often blocked or marginalized. In many instances, teacher control of discourse in the classroom often limits contributions such as student questioning. As a result, teachers are often the focus within questioning studies. Therefore, research is centered on students *answering* teacher questions as opposed to initiating questions.

According to Yuksel (2014), previous studies that have focused on student questioning practices examined three aspects of questions: 1) categories of student questions (Skilton & Meyer, 1993; Yuksel & Yu, 2008), 2) teachers' treatment of student questions (Markee, 1995; Ohta & Nakaone, 2004) and 3) demographic characteristics of students who ask questions (Skilton & Meyer, 1993). Yet, these categories used in analyzing student questions were primarily taken from research on teacher questions. In an effort to delve deeper into student questioning, Yuksel (2014) examined students from an EFL (English and Foreign language) class from two semester long classes in Turkey. Quantity of student questions were identified and findings revealed student questions were quite low compared to the number of teacher questions (Class A: 54 questions across 9 weeks; Class B: 36 questions across 10 weeks). Across the studies in teacher and student talk/questioning, researchers recognize teachers and researchers must pay more attention to the involvement of students in classroom talk, specifically questioning. Further, he advised teachers and researchers to be more cognizant of how student talk, specifically questioning, can be hindered or otherwise opened to create meaningful and engaging experiences. Students asking questions is integral to the process of co-constructing knowledge (Yuksel, 2014) and to the dialogic notion of meaning making that is collective,

reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful (Alexander, 2006). Therefore, further exploration of student questioning is warranted within dialogic settings. In this study, I analyze student questioning in an effort to close the gap in literature.

New literacies/multimodality. How students experience and read the world at home (Freire & Macedo, 1987), differs drastically from what students experience in school. We can see this divide in the dichotomy between what students are using as texts outside of school, compared to what they are limited to use inside of school. Classrooms that begin to shift classroom digital spaces, and embrace tools such as iPads and activities such as blogging attempt to bridge the digital gap between home and school. To be sure the field of research in New Literacies, and the multimodal, digital spaces in the classroom contributes to our understanding of the qualities of dialogic classroom spaces.

Over the last decade, adolescents have increased their use of emerging literacies with multimodal texts, yet, are rarely given the opportunity to use these types of literacies for school learning (Blondell & Miller, 2012). Particularly, students from low-income urban environments, who may not have exposure to such literacies at home. Schools often narrowly constrain where students gather knowledge and fail to have multiple routes of participation through varying contexts. The new millennials (Ellison & Wu, 2008) struggle to transfer learning techniques acquired from digital technologies to school learning, and therefore, are faced with the contradictory nature of both spaces. One could argue the definition of literacy, and what it means to be literate, is continually evolving. New communications and media are reshaping how we use language. As various technologies transform, so must our schools. It is no longer the case that one set of skills or standards constitute literacy learning.

There is reason to be optimistic when reviewing research pertaining to multimodal literacy practices. Conversely, when analyzing the benefits of multimodal practices, one must take caution. Technology cannot simply be placed into students' hands without purpose or meaning. Further, we cannot begin to grasp the role of technology in literacy if we set it apart as only a tool (Bruce, 2008). Multimodality is not merely a technological tool, instead, it encompasses a stance and approach to learning. Similar to dialogic environments, multimodal practices must be approached with intention and purpose, guiding students, while also inspiring agency and autonomy. The key player here is the teacher "making decisions about which technologies and which forms and functions of literacy support one's purpose" (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear & Leu, 2007, p.24). The teacher shapes both the planned and enacted learning opportunities and the extent to which they invite and empower students to take ownership of their learning, classroom experiences become increasingly social, purposeful and meaningful (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011).

Multimodal activities provide dialogic spaces for talk, problem solving and collaboration. Collective intelligence aligns closely with the notion of dialogic space in that "such a world, everyone knows something, nobody knows everything, and what any one person knows can be tapped by the group as a whole" (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton & Robison, 2009, p.40). Companies and places of work often invest in the notion of collective intelligence, and yet, schools fail to prepare students for this ideology. Schools are unfortunately training autonomous problem-solvers for a workforce where creativity and collaboration is required (Jenkins et. al, 2009). Teachers and teacher educators should help shape students' identities through multimodal practices afforded by the digital world, in an effort to create productive, civic, personal and social citizens for the new century (Shanahan, 2012).

Writing to learn: student journaling. Although this particular study focused on blogging about reading, it was important to provide a historical context of student journaling. Past research on student journaling introduced the concept of utilizing writing as a means to learn- providing students space to process and arrive at new understandings, specifically in response to literature. Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod & Rosen (1975) identified functional types of writing as transactional, poetic and expressive- the concept of exploring and reflecting upon ideas. Thus, the notion of "writing to learn" (Britton, 1993; Emig, 1971; Elbow, 1985; Langer and Applebee, 1987) is an expressive form of writing that engages students in a process of discovery and learning in an effort to expand their thinking. In more traditional classrooms, writing serves as a passive, transferal act of information from teacher to student. Conversely, expressive writing engages students in the process of learning- supporting students to make connections and embark on a journey of "knowledge making." Instructional activities such as journal writing provide spaces for students to explore new thinking and embark in a process of inquiry.

When journaling is used in a classroom, the learning moves away from being teacher centered and instead allows for students to take ownership of their learning, generating ideas and questions (Brodine & Isaacs, 1994). When students are engaged in a process of journaling, it provides opportunities for organization of thoughts prior to communicating ideas through oral language (Golub & Reid, 1999; Hughes & Kooy, 1997). Thus, the purpose of writing becomes intentional in that it advances students' communicative skills and thoughts, serving to develop students' cognitive and intellectual skills, as well as increase the depth of student comprehension (Barlow, 1999; Goma, 2011). Researchers such as Burke (1999) and Golub & Reid (1999) attest that journaling allows for a metacognitive process of reflection, making students more aware of

their own thinking in regards to connecting, self-exploration and questioning. Furthermore, journals have the ability to be used in support of students' growth, synthesis and reflection (Hiemstra, 2001).

Dialogue journaling is a form of student journaling that is discussed in past literature. Dialogue journaling is considered to be a private discourse between the teacher and student, allowing for an exchange of thoughts in a non-public venue (Meel, 1999). Students who are hesitant to make contributions orally during class are more likely to share thoughts and engage in dialogue with the teacher through this form of journaling. Students have the ability to ask questions and contribute thoughts that may not have been otherwise shared in a public venue (Harper, Knudsen & Wagner, 2000). Further, more traditional classrooms which may use talk for the sole purpose of assessing student learning may engender journaling as a means to encourage individualized thoughts. Conversely, as we will see from Matt's classroom, students within his environment were not hesitant to take risks beyond writing, and instead, intellectually grew within public, dialogic spaces.

In reviewing the historical aspects of student journaling, we can see that this act of writing is a way for students to grapple with new ideas and broaden their thinking. It also serves as a record for students to keep track of their thinking through writing (Burnes & Sibey, 2001). Similar to student journaling, blogging functions with many of the same purposes. Blogging, however, offers a live interactional component of responding to peer writing that student journaling does not. In the following section, I review past literature pertaining to student blogging and contextualize the research within the confines of this study.

Blogging. In reviewing past literature pertaining to multimodal classroom practices, I examine various studies related to educational blogging. In addition to insight into the history of blogging (Baumer, Sueyoshi & Tomlinson, 2008) and also the pragmatics involved in classroom blogging practices (Davis & McGrail, 2009; Oravec, 2002; Zawilinski, 2009), these studies also revealed innovative ways to analyze blogs within the realm of analytic, critical and inquiry based literacy activities (Bartlett-Bragg, 2003; Thein, Oldakowski & Sloan, 2010). Further, research conducted on blogging also made transparent valuable information pertaining to reading comprehension within the realm of digital spaces (Coiro, 2003; Tse, Yuen, Loh, Lam & Wai Ng, 2010; West, 2008). However, few studies specifically address the role of blogging within dialogic classroom spaces.

However, only a small number of studies discussed the connection between blogging and talk. Studies conducted on blogging by Davis & McGrail (2009) and Zawlinski (2009), address the importance of collaboration and talk within their classroom studies. Both researchers attest that blogging activities in their classrooms created a dialogic environment that students not only engaged in digital online dialogic spaces, but also participated in multiple conversations about their blogs with teachers and classmates. Thein and colleagues (2010) examined an English class of 13 junior high school participants and reported findings based on the varied content of student blogs in response to a text. Students were asked to explain their understanding of the term "social worlds" in their blogs after reading a text. Findings revealed that each student interpreted the meaning of "social worlds" quite differently in their blogs. Thein and colleagues (2010) noted in the implications and discussion portion of the paper that blogs had great potential to act as collaborative spaces in their ability to engage students in authentic conversations-something the participants in this study did not do. Thus, they attested if students were provided

spaces to discuss texts after blogging, it would lead to a shared, deeper understanding of texts amongst students.

A review of literature pertaining to blogging revealed a gap in research pertaining to the relationship between digital writing and dialogic spaces. Although some literature acknowledges the potential for talk within blogging, no studies analyze the possibilities of blogging as a precursor to student conversation. Research that addresses how blogs can facilitate discussion and collaboration is scarce (Wang & Hsua, 2008). Further, few studies explore the role of blogging within literature responses in urban school settings. Costello (2010) acknowledges the lack of multimodal research in urban schools, encouraging researchers to further explore the experiences of teachers and students' use of digital literacies in urban schools.

Speaking and writing connection. The connection between reading, writing, speaking and listening is complex and interdependent. A robust history of reading and talk has been mostly one-sided, in that talk informed writing (Barnes, 1990, Calkins, 1986, Elbow, 1985; Rubin & Dodd, 1987). To better understand the connection between reading, blogging and talk-specifically writing as a precursor to talk, I explore previous studies pertaining to this notion.

According to Belcher and Hirvela (2008), the speaking-writing relationship, has been neglected in educational research. Rivard and Straw (1999) conducted an extensive review of literature regarding the speaking-writing relationship, stating, "the review of the literature cited many studies separately confirm the role of talk and the role of writing as heuristic strategies, however, no study has addressed how these two modalities cognitively mesh together" (p.568). Research devoted to talk and writing in the classroom have been studied as two separate entities (Rubin & Kang, 2008), however, few studies have explored how these two modalities co-exist.

Within the realm of the speaking-writing connection, much focus has been placed on talk, serving as a pre-cursor to writing (Barnes, 1990), specifically in classrooms that enact writers' workshop curriculum (Calkins,1986). Few studies explore how talk can act as a scaffold following a writing composition, specifically within the realm of blogging. In an attempt to address this research gap, Rivard and Straw (1999) discovered writing to be an important process in promoting student retention in content over time, however, they uphold peer discussion as a necessary sequel, stating, "writing only seems to work if talk works with it" (p.586). Another study conducted (Mason, 2001) examined the role of talk and writing within a science based activity in a fourth grade classroom. During implementation of an ecological curriculum unit, students engaged in writing activities and small group discussions, however, writing took place individually at different times. Findings revealed students were able to collaboratively argue different ideas and beliefs during discussions, and also, express, clarify and reflect on their ideas in writing. Thus, both writing and talk were used as tools for students to arrive at new, scientific understandings. Mason's (2001) findings revealed the power of using both written and spoken modalities- "both oral and written texts are to be treated as thinking devices by teachers and students" (p.309). The findings of this study supported the notion that interrelating talk and writing provided more chances for students to learn than talk or writing alone (Dysthe, 1996; Pomerantz and Kearney, 2012). These studies (Dysthe, 1996; Mason, 2001; Rivard and Straw, 1999) raise questions on the potential role speaking and writing can play when used in conjunction with dialogic instruction, specifically when writing is used as a precursor to student talk. Thus, within the realm of dialogism, there is a need to increase research within this discipline and explore the relationship between oral language and writing in an effort to expand current understandings in the field.

This current study adds to this stream of literature informed by sociocultural theory (Mercer, 2004; Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch 1991, 1998), interpersonal and intrapersonal stance (Vygotsky, 1978), dialogic space (Bakhtin, 1981), and readers' response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1994). In doing so, it grounded pedagogical applications pertaining to literacy events, dialogic instruction, teacher awareness and intentionality, student talk, new literacies/multimodality and the speaking-writing connection. The literature reviewed will situate and inform findings derived from this study. In the next chapter, I discuss methodology and the application of Mercer's (2004) sociocultural discourse analysis to examine my data.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The methodology for this study was grounded in a socio-historical-cultural orientation to learning, emphasizing the interdependence of individual and social processes in a co-construction of knowledge across time (Mercer, 2004; Vygotsky; 1978; Wells, 1999). The focal literacy event involved eighth graders blogging and talking about literature in a classroom context that was examined throughout a school year. This event was viewed as recursive, accretive and collective (Alexander, 2006; Boyd & Jordan, under review; Dyson, 1991). Thus, methodology was framed with the understanding that dialogic encounters must be explored as a co-constructed effort across time to understand how intellectual resources such as language and meaning making can be utilized as tools to promote collective growth (Mercer, 2004).

Dialogic classrooms engender a sense of purpose, collaboration, support, attentiveness and risk taking (Alexander, 2006; Boyd & Markarian, 2001; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Renshaw, 2004; Rubin, 1990; Swain, 1995; Wells, 2006). In dialogic environments, students are supported, and feel safe to engage in conversation, yet are also empowered to build on the ideas of others and supported towards further reasoning and elaboration (Boyd & Rubin, 2006; Mercer, 2002). Boyd (Boyd & Rubin, 2006; Boyd, 2012) argues effective teaching practices are not scripted; instead, they are varied, flexible, and contingent as the teacher pulls as needed from their repertoire. To further student reasoning, instruction must develop and evolve with versatility over time.

My research design was a case study: that is an in-depth approach in understanding one focal event, or a comparison of numerous events (Creswell, 2007). It is, "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (Yin,

2009, p.18). My research concentrated on a focal literacy event in the real-life context of an eighth grade classroom, where I strived to gain in-depth understandings of teacher and student participation in a series of digital writing and oral language experiences. This focal event is detailed later in this chapter in the discussion of context. In this chapter, I explicate the following six design components: 1) role of researcher, 2) research purposes, 3) research questions, 4) context and participants, 5) data collection, 6) methods of data analysis. I employed these design components to gain a deeper understanding of various social, cognitive, meaning making processes and also situate and contextualize the focal event of the research study (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992).

Role of Researcher

Within this study, I identified myself as observer as participant, with some interactions with participants (Glesne, 2011). I choose not to actively participate in the events in the study, minimizing my influence on the actions of the teacher and students. However, if the students or teacher initiated dialogue, I responded briefly, with the intent of wanting participants to feel comfortable throughout the data collection process. It should also be noted that I am a member of this school community and colleague to the focal teacher. Student participants are used to seeing me around school. As an insider to this school community, I bring both biases and insights to this study.

Research Purposes

A main purpose of this case study was to explore the relationships between a classroom digital writing experience and oral language event grounded in a shared classroom text. An attendant intent was to deepen my understanding of speaking-writing connections. In addition,

there were two broader, academic purposes for conducting this research study. To begin, teachers are under increasing pressure to teach to the Common Core State Standards (2011), standardized tests, and specific school wide curriculum mandates. Instead of productive discussions on how teachers can incorporate these mandates in their ongoing instruction, there have been administrative adoptions of scripted, curriculum models in an attempt to address such mandates. Teachers struggle to find ways that do not to abandon their educational pedagogy, yet, work within various constraints set forth by greater bureaucracies. Teachers should recognize what is already working, and advocate for current practices that align with curriculum and assessment mandates. Thus, teachers live between both intended and enacted curricula (Boyd, 2012, Cazden, 2001). The intended curriculum occurs within the planning- which can be thoughtfully and well planned. However, within this study, the intended curriculum aligns heavily with state standards and testing. Conversely, the enacted curriculum authentically occurs between the teacher and students. The difference is in the scope, focus and contingency of contributions. Within the enacted curriculum, the teacher builds on instructional moments and opportunities derived from student contributions. Thus, the enacted curriculum is mediated by classroom oracy practices and a teacher's ability to be contingent and responsive in the moment (Alexander, 2006; Boyd, 2012; Mercer, Wegerif & Dawes, 1999; Wells, 1999). In this study, I investigated a teacher's role across conversations as he enacted his intended curriculum, to gain a deeper understanding of various dialogic talk moves within a classroom discourse community. Further, I was interested in exploring how this teacher used dialogue to shape student responses in discussions around texts. Examining the talk moves of this particular teacher allowed me to understand how he engendered higher levels of student understanding and achievement. Furthermore, analyzing this teacher's instructional moves made transparent how he performed

under various curriculum mandates, while also staying true to his espoused pedagogical beliefs, to embody autonomy, dialogism and critical thinking.

A second purpose of this study was to explore how writing, reading and oracy worked together and were mutually constitutive in an eighth grade classroom to better support deeper levels of learning, reasoning and understanding amongst students. Relationships between these modalities were explored through the students' and teacher's participatory roles within the digital writing and talk event, and also the ways reading, writing and talk influenced each other throughout the process. Thus, student learning and reasoning was analyzed through the content of writing and talk, and also, in the teacher's use of dialogue. Specifically, how teacher talk moves shaped student talk opportunities and understanding.

In this year-long study, 8th grade students used blogging and talk as tools to respond to various genres of literature. Specifically, students: 1) read texts pertaining to units of study, 2) responded to the literature through blogging, 3) engaged in small group discussions with their peers and classroom teacher. In this study, I describe teacher talk moves and how they evolved throughout the year. I also explicate how teacher talk moves impacted students' responses. Further, I elucidate the potential for independent reading and blogging to act as a springboard for authentic, small group conversations. A focus was unpacking the two-way relationship that existed between written and spoken modalities (Rubin & Kang, 2008; Rivard & Straw, 2000). Analyzing both modalities allowed me to understand how students demonstrated understanding in both writing and talk, and the potential for each space to create opportunities for reasoning. I conducted this study in an effort to fill the gap in literature pertaining to the speaking-writing connection, and also, explore innovative spaces for student learning.

Research Questions

This study explored dialogic teaching as manifest through teacher and student talk moves and digital, multimodal ways of composing in response to literature. This study is important because it explored 1) innovative instructional approaches that aligned with the Common Core Standards (2011), and, 2) the power of dialogism, in a reform era where opportunities for meaning making are silenced by state testing mandates (Siegel, 2012). The following are my research questions for this study:

1. What is the scope of the content of student blogs across four teaching cycles across the school year?
2. What types of teacher talk moves are employed within and across four teaching cycles of the literacy event?
   a. How does this teacher demonstrate awareness and intentionality in teaching practices throughout the course of the school year?
3. How do students' reading, writing and talk practices build the focal literacy event both as an individual iteration and over the course of the school year?
   a. How does the content of the digital writing experiences vary from the content of the talking event?

Context and Participants

Urban school. The following section, explicates the physical and social context of the focal school. This research was conducted in an urban, K-8, title 1 school [Urban School], located in a large, "rust belt" city in the northeastern, United States. The school's student population was 562 students. Of the student population, 97% were African American, with 85% of students receiving free and reduced lunches (U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Close to 75% of the school was reading below grade level and

received a score of 2 or below out of 4 on the New York State ELA exam (New York State Department of Education Database, 2012). Urban School received similar test results in past years, and was placed under increasing pressure by school administrators and state curriculum leaders to improve scores.

As one walks through the neighborhood of Urban School, the impact of urban blight is evident. There are homes with broken windows, chipped paint and boarded up doors. Approaching the school, one would see a large beautiful brick building, landscaped, with fresh paint and a new, modern playground. Unlike the neighborhood, the area surrounding the school is clean and litter free. Upon entering the school, one is greeted by skyline windows, a newly renovated corridor, flat screen televisions displaying slideshows of students, and brightly painted white hallways adorned with student artwork. Awards and newspaper articles about the school are posted on the bulletin boards.

In recent years, Urban School has experienced significant change. Within the past three years, the school board hired three different principals. The principal from the previous year was released for reasons unknown to the staff. An interim principal launched the school year, and the current principal was hired in late October. The new principal was credited to specialize in urban school turnaround models, and pushed for change through multiple facets in the building. The principal was perceived by many as "tough" and brought about significant change to the systems and structures within the building, drastically altering the curriculum midway through the school year.

The school's instructional model was centered on a Reading and Writing Workshop model (Calkins, 1986, 2000) where teachers were provided with frequent opportunities to participate in professional development experiences. Teachers throughout the building held

differing opinions regarding the school's existing workshop model curriculum. The new principal pushed teachers to change the way they thought about curriculum in an effort to improve instruction and test scores, specifically in alignment with the Common Core State Standards (2011). For example, teachers integrated humanities and aligned New York State Common Core units across core subjects. The principal also pushed for an increased use of technology, and expansion in foreign language programs. The new principal also increased mandates for lesson plan preparation that resulted in teachers spending significant amounts of time on lesson planning. In addition to lesson planning, the principal restructured schedules in the middle of the school year that cut down teacher preparation periods by fifteen minutes each day. Such changes in the building were welcomed by some staff and resented by others.

In addition to the changes listed above, this was the first year teachers in Urban School underwent an intensive teacher evaluation process. This process determined teacher effectiveness based on standardized test scores and teacher observations. This change created a contentious environment between some teachers and administrators in the school. As a result, the union took on a significant role within the building, and was involved in various school wide changes.

The changes at Urban School set in motion a process of school reform. Regardless of the changes and varying reactions from staff, some teachers continued their focus on students and good instruction. The focal teacher for this study, Matt, considered himself to be accepting of the changes brought about by the new principal, and expressed through informal conversations that he felt optimistic about the direction the school was moving, specifically, the middle school program. In previous years, Matt implemented the Reading and Writing Workshop model (Calkins, 2000, 1986), which he hoped to blend with current, curriculum mandates.

Matt- 8th grade ELA teacher. The teacher participant for this study was Matt, a Caucasian 8th grade teacher, who requested his actual name be used in this study. At the time the research was collected, Matt was twenty-nine years old and in his eighth year of teaching at this particular school. Urban School was Matt's only full time teaching position following graduation. This was Matt's first year teaching eighth grade, in years past, he taught fifth and sixth grade.

Matt was considered to be a hardworking, energetic teacher in the building, who often showed up to school an hour before the start of the school day, and stayed late into the evening, where he allowed students to use his computers and classroom to catch up on school work or talk with him about personal issues. He was also involved in school activities such as reading afterschool programs and drama club; thus, it was not uncommon for Matt to come into the school on the weekends to work on his classroom. Matt spent time with students outside of the school day as well, taking them to events such as college football games or career fairs on the weekends. Matt also had a strong love for the arts, which was demonstrated through his dedication to the Urban School musical- a yearlong project he diligently pursued each year. Lastly, Matt was highly participatory in professional development experiences, and attended academic conferences that he often personally funded. Matt devoted a majority of his life to Urban School and was dedicated to the teaching of literacy in his classroom.

For many years, Matt created dialogic spaces, where students were invested in practices of talk around texts. Matt believed strongly in choice reading, where students selected texts at their appropriate reading level from a library of high-interest, multiple genre books. Further, he supported the notion of writing about reading as a tool to aid students in understanding texts on a deeper level. Throughout the year, Matt became highly interested in using blogging as a tool to

write about reading. He was also intrigued with how writing could be used to support

conversations about choice texts in the classroom.

Physical and social classroom environment. Matt's eighth grade classroom featured

wide windows with a view of the neighborhood. The classroom was warm and welcoming, with

colorful bins, charts and student work displayed on the walls. As you walked into the classroom,

you saw a carpet, large whiteboard and classroom library. The classroom library was based on

the Fountas and Pinnell (2007) leveling system, and was filled with colorful bins of fiction and

non-fiction texts, with both picture and chapter books. The walls were filled with hand-written

charts with information about current literacy units, specific to the reading and writing strategies

the students were learning. There were four computers in the classroom, in addition to document

cameras and digital cameras. Students sat at tables in groups of four.

In observing Matt during informal times with his classroom, such as breakfast time

(twenty minutes prior to the start of the day- all students qualified to receive free breakfast), it

was evident that he was devoted to his students. This claim is supported through observations

during breakfast time with his homeroom. In this particular eighth grade classroom, it was not

uncommon to walk in most mornings to hear music playing from an online radio station, and

observe students chatting with the classroom teacher and fellow peers. Both the students and

teacher engaged in laughter, and would often sing along or dance with music playing from the computer. Choice of music often became a comical battle between the teacher and students. Matt often used this time to have informal conversations with students about home life and students' personal interests. He also infused a sense of enjoyment that was evidenced through joking, laughter and playful teasing. Matt stood at his door each morning to greet each student with a hug, handshake or a simple hello. As students ate breakfast in the classroom, they were able to work on the computers or other projects before the start of the school day. In addition to these activities, students were assigned duties in the classroom such as taking attendance, marking breakfast, or creating instructional charts for the class, when provided with the content and supplies from the teacher.

At the beginning of this year of study, Matt described the behavior and academic performance of his 8th grade students as inconsistent. He commented that while a majority of the time, his students appeared to be engaged and hardworking, in other moments, they lacked motivation and effort. Matt attributed this behavior to the age and grade level, which he believed was difficult to manage, particularly in an urban school environment. In informal conversations, Matt expressed his frustration in that he felt the students were not working to their full potential. Further, he expressed concern over their quality of writing, specifically, their lack of exposure to typing, and overall lack of stamina. From the start of the year, it became evident that Matt was dedicated to developing students' reasoning about reading not only through writing, but through talk as well. This became evident through interviews and informal conversations throughout the year. Lastly, Matt articulated high expectations for his students; he viewed them as capable, knowledgeable participants in his classroom community.

Matt's curriculum stance. As an eighth grade teacher, Matt had a departmentalized schedule and taught three, 90 minute sections of reading and writing to eighth grade students. In the 2012-2013 school year, he continued to implement a Workshop model while infusing thematic Common Core units across both reading and writing. Matt believed he found a way to teach the new curriculum, while also maintaining fidelity of the Reading and Writing Workshop teaching model (Calkins, 2000, 1986). Matt also frequently used technology and multimodal activities in his classroom. In these ways, he aligned with the new principal's initiative for increased use of technology.

Classroom curriculum context. This eighth grade classroom followed a departmentalized schedule, where students spent the first 90 minutes of their day with their homeroom teacher for reading and writing, and then moved to other classrooms for math, science and history. The research for this study focused on Matt's eighth grade homeroom students, consisting of 17 African American students (10 boys; 7 girls). As part of the first 45 minutes of their departmentalized reading block, there was a fifteen minute mini-lesson, where students joined the teacher on the rug for direct and relevant instruction on specific literacy skills pertaining to the current unit. During the lesson, Matt typically referenced an accessible text that he had either read to the class previously, or shown digitally through a document camera or video segment. In line with the writing workshop model, Matt modeled the strategy with the students, and then asked the students to practice the strategy on the carpet, using partnership conversation or teacher coaching as a scaffold. Students were then asked to return to their group desks and try the strategy independently in their reading work, and were provided a written artifact such as a chart, or other visual, to support them in their attempts. This similar format was used in the 45 minute writing block following reading.

Focal blogging-talk literacy event. In this focal literacy event, students blogged about their reading, and then discussed their blog and thoughts about literature in a small group discussion with the classroom teacher and their peers. The focal event is detailed in the following sections.

Selection of texts. Throughout the year, groups of four to five students were asked to read common texts, and engage in book conversations about the texts with their peers in the classroom. Students had autonomy in selecting texts to read, however, they were often instructed to select a text that pertained to a specific genre or theme. Often, Matt made recommendations when students struggled to find a text that was of interest to them. The genres of texts varied, including novels, short texts, movies and non-fiction articles.

Response to texts: blogging and small group discussions. During reading, Matt encouraged students to use artifacts such as post-its, readers' notebook entries and blogging as a tool to help drive small group conversations. Students were expected to record their thinking through visual or written representations as they read. Throughout the year, students were able to blog during their reading blocks, or preferably, during their morning breakfast time on the classroom computers. Students were able to blog at home; however, few did, due to minimal access to the internet at home, or preference to complete the assignment in school. Students typically blogged for ten minutes, using their text as support while typing. The teacher read the blogs on a weekly basis, however, rarely participated as a writer. Instead, Matt acted as facilitator, creating and organizing chat spaces with the change of each new unit. Further, he did not provide students with specific prompts, assignments or restrictions, instead, students were asked to share their thoughts about the text. Independent reading was expected to be completed

at home and during school hours. Finally, small group conversations were primarily conducted during the reading block, or in the morning before the formal start to the school day.

The process of blogging and reading was recursive, occurring in five cycles across the school year. Explicitly, students were expected to 1) create a plan to complete the text, 2) blog their thoughts about the text [no restrictions on assignment], 3) read their peers' blog posts and occasionally respond, 4) discuss their thoughts about the text from their blog and/or other artifacts in a small group conversation. These steps were completed a second time, with the same text, or a different text. The length of the blogging/talk cycle was two weeks, occurring five times over the course of a school year. This work was often complimented with what was being taught during the literacy block.

At the end of the school year, Matt applied for an iPad grant for his classroom. In June, each student was given an iPad to use. As a result, Matt attempted alternative forms of digital writing for his last instructional unit on genocide. Matt established a classroom website where he posted multiple text sources pertaining to the unit of study, such as articles, documentaries and video clips. Instead of blogging, students created "show me's", an application that allowed students to create visual representations through drawings and photographs. While students created their visual representations, they were able to record their voices and explain their design. Students used their "show me's" to discuss the topic of genocide in small group discussions. The iPads offered students a different medium to demonstrate their thoughts about the readings. Since this study is across the entire academic year, the blogging-talk literacy event examined both student blogging on computers and "show me's" on iPads.

Student participants. There were 17 eighth grade homeroom students in Matt's class, nine returned consent forms and became the focal participants for this study. Five of the student

participants were males, and four were females. The pseudonyms for these student participants are: Samuel, Deshawn, Andrew, Thaizon, Benjamin, Aaliyah, Kayla, Jahia and Tanysha (see Table 3.1 for details). All of the participants lived in the surrounding neighborhood of Urban School, and received free and reduced lunch. Since the student participants were reading at similar levels, it allowed for selection of texts at similar difficulty levels. At the start of the school year, two out of the nine students were reading at a seventh grade reading level, and seven of the students were reading on an eighth grade reading level. No participants were considered to be reading above grade level. In seventh grade, 7 students scored 3 out of 4 on the New York State ELA exam, and 2 students scored a 2.

Table 3.1

Student Participants

Name	Age	Gender	Reading Level September	7th Grade ELA Score
Thaizon	13	M	Z/8th	3
Samuel	13	M	Z/8th	3
DeShawn*	13	M	Z/8th	n/a
Andrew	13	M	Z/8th	2
Benjamin*	13	M	Z/8th	3
Aaliyah	13	F	Y/8th	2
Kayla	13	F	W/7th	3
Jahia	13	F	W/7th	3
Tanysha	13	F	W/7th	3

*Participated in study for part of the year due to DeShawn moving schools.

For the purposes of this study, the teacher grouped these nine participants into two groups based on reading level. The first group consisted of four girls: Aaliyah, Kayla, Jahia and Tanysha. The second group consisted of five boys: Samuel, Deshawn, Andrew, Thaizon and Benjamin. The second group had five participants because DeShawn left Urban School in the middle of the year to attend another school, and was replaced by Benjamin. Each group engaged

in five cycles of reading, blogging and talking, as explicitly discussed in the classroom context. The cycles were determined by change in units of study throughout the school year.

Data Collection

Since "data collection in a case study research is typically extensive, drawing from multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, documents and audiovisual materials" (Creswell, 2007, p.75), throughout the 2012-2013 school year, I collected the following classroom artifacts: 1) student blogs (80), 2) video recorded small group conversations (23), 3) audio recorded informal student informal interviews (24), 4) student interest surveys and written student reflections (9), 5) audio recorded teacher interviews (4), 6) observation field notes (5), 7) photographs of lesson artifacts (33), and 8) classroom texts (8). I collected data across five intact instructional units, selected to range across the calendar school year. I explicate the classroom artifacts below:

1. Student blogs: I collected student blog postings across five instructional units over the course of one school year (approximately totaling 63 blog entries). Blogs were password protected by the classroom teacher and digitally stored on my computer. The blogs were written in the moment by the students- providing a written record that served to compare both writing and talk modalities, while also allowing me to track student reasoning and understanding in response to texts through digital writing practices throughout the year.

2. **Video recorded small group conversations:** Small group conversations were recorded in five cycles, across units, throughout the school calendar year. Conversations occurred in pairs of two following the reading of a text and blog post. Video recorded small group conversation data totaled approximately 188 minutes/3 hours. These conversations were

analyzed and transcribed to further understand teacher and student talk moves, the writing and talk relationship and the evolution of student reasoning and understanding across a school year. Specifically, video records were beneficial to combine with other forms of data (Derry, Pea, Barron, Engle, Erickson, Goldman, Hall, Koschman, Lemke, Sherin & Serin, 2010) to further investigate the comparison of the students' writing and oral language, while also providing evidence of the teachers' role within both components.

3. Audio-recorded informal student interviews: Students were interviewed 3 times throughout the year: in the first cycle (October), middle cycle (January) and last cycle (May/June). Three cycles of eight interviews were conducted for 8 students, totaling 24 interviews and approximately 80 minutes of student interview data. Interviews were conducted informally in conversation on an individual basis. The purpose of these interviews was to provide opportunities for participants to reflect and gain a deeper understanding of their thoughts and perspectives regarding the focal writing/talk experience. These data informed my understanding of what relationships, if any, existed between the blog and talk experience, and also, how blogging and talk may have impacted the students' understandings of the texts. Further, it helped me understand what ways, if any, the writing, reading or talk content evolved throughout the year.

4. **Student interest surveys and written student reflections:** Student interest surveys were given to students once at the start of the school year to help the teacher and researcher understand the likes/dislikes and perceived strengths and weakness of each student participant. These surveys provided information about student learning styles and future goals, ambitions and interests of each student participant. This document was used by the classroom teacher to inform instructional practices when working with all 8 focal student participants (Appendix A). Written

student reflections were given to students once at the end of the year to better understand how students viewed the blogging and talk practice, and also how it may have altered student reasoning and understanding of texts. Further, the teacher used this document to inform future instructional decisions (Appendix B).

5. Audio recorded teacher informal interviews: Informal teacher interviews were conducted throughout the course of the year. The interviews occurred in October, January, March, and May and these 4 interviews totaled approximately 28 minutes of teacher interview data. Interviewing the classroom teacher provided information regarding the intentions behind teacher contributions during the small group conversations. The teacher reflected on the focal events, having gained a deeper understanding of his teaching, specifically, how his talk moves shaped student contributions. These data helped determine teacher perceived relationships between the blog and talk experience, and also, how teacher talk moves may have shifted throughout the school year, and how this may have impacted student reasoning and understanding of texts.

6. Observation field notes: Real time observations of reading lessons, small group conversations and morning activities were collected across 5 units throughout the school year. Specifically, moments that were not captured through video and audio recordings were collected through field notes. These data were triangulated and supported with other data artifacts in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the classroom context and inform research questions.

7. Photographs of lesson artifacts: Photographs of lesson artifacts such as charts, lesson plans, student work in readers' notebooks, or teacher produced lesson artifacts such as handouts

were collected to further inform the study. Further, photographs of classroom space were also collected in an effort to capture the overall essence of the learning environment.

8. Classroom texts: Various texts were collected, consisting of trade book novels, digital texts, and short texts that the students read. These books contextualized the content of student blogging and small group conversations, and also provided information regarding the readability level of the text. The titles of these texts can be found in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Data Sources

Data Titles	Texts	Data Forms/Dates	Quantity
Entry	n/a	• Student Interest Survey (9.12)	• 9 Student Interest Surveys
		• Initial Student Interview (9.25.12)	• 8 Student Initial Interviews
Watsons- October 2012	Watsons Go to Birmingham (Curtis, 1995)	• Girls Blogs (10.12)	• 7 Girls Blogs
		• Boys Blogs (10.12)	• 8 Boys Blogs
		• Girls Talk 1 (10.12.12)	• 1 Girls Talk 1 [6:24]
		• Boys Talk 1 (10.12.12)	• 1 Boys Talk 1 [10.50]
		• Girls Talk 2.1 (10.18.12)	• 1 Girls Talk 2.1 [3:02]
		• Girls Talk 2.2 (10.22.12)	• 1 Girls Talk 2.2 [6:30]
		• Boys Talk 2.1 (10.18.12)	• 1 Boys Talk 2.1 [10:54]
		• Boys Talk 2.2 (10.18.12)	• 1 Boys Talk 2.2 [4:56]
		• Lesson Artifacts (10.12.12)	• 8 photographs
		• Lesson Observation	• Field Notes
		• Field Notes (10.12.12)	• Field Notes
		• Lesson Artifacts (10.18.12)	• 5 photographs
		• Matt Interview (10.24.12)	• 1 Matt Interview [5:36]
Holocaust- November/December 2012	NF Holocaust /Boy in Stripped Pajamas (Boyne, 2006, Director: Herman, 2008)	• Girls Blogs (11/12.12)	• 8 Girls Blogs
		• Boys Blogs (11/12.12)	• 8 Boys Blogs

		• Boys Talk 1 NF (11.29.12)	• 1 Boys Talk 1 NF [8:08]
		• Girls Talk 1 NF (11.29.12)	• 1 Girls Talk 1 NF [8:50]
		• Boys Talk 2 StripPJ (12.7.12)	• 1 Boys Talk 2 StripPJ [7:39]
		• Girls Talk 2.1 StripPJ (12.7.12)	• 1 Girls Talk 2.1 StripPJ [5:01]
		• Girls Talk 2.2 StripPJ (12.7.12)	• 1 Girls Talk 2.2 StripPJ [6:39]
		• Lesson Artifacts (12.12)	• 7 photographs
		• Observation Field Notes (11.27.13)	• Field Notes
Urban- January 2013	Something Beautiful (Wyeth, 2002) & Stranger (Myers, 1997)	• Girls Blogs (1.13)	• 8 Girls Blogs
		• Boys Blogs (1.13)	• 8 Boys Blogs
		• Girls Talk 1 Stranger (1.22.13)	• Girls Talk 1 [13:09]
		• Boys Talk 1.1 Stranger (1.22.13)	• Boys Talk 1.1 [9:09]
		• Boys Talk 1.2 Stranger (1.22.13)	• Boys Talk 1.2 [3:26]
		• Boys&Girls Talk Beautiful (1.30.13)	• Boys&Girls Talk Beautiful [5:09]
		• Lesson Artifacts (1.13)	• 2 photographs
		• Observation Field Notes (1.22/30)	• Field Notes
		• Mid-Year Informal Stud. Interviews (1.13)	• 8 informal student interviews
		• Matt Interview (2.6.13)	• 1 Matt Interview [6:27]
Power- March 2013	Ain't No Good Girl & Mookie in "Who Am I Without Him?" (Flake, 2009)	• Boys Blogs (3.13)	• 8 Boys Blogs
		• Girls Blogs (3.13)	• 8 Girls Blogs
		• Boys Talk 1 Ain't No Good Girl (3.6.13)	• Boys Talk 1 Ain't [16.36]
		• Girls Talk 1 Ain't No Good Girl (3.7.13)	• Girls Talk 1 Ain't [15:02]
		• Boys&Girls Talk Mookie (3.21.13)	• Boys&Girls Talk Mookie [18.25]
		• Lesson Artifacts (3.13)	• 8 photographs

		• Matt Interview (3.26.13)	• 1 Matt Interview [3:46]
Social Issues- May/June 2013	Genocide Texts	• Boys "Explain Me"	• 4 Boys Explain Me's (recorded on video in talk)
		• Girls "Explain Me"	• 4 Girls Explain Me's (recorded on video in talk)
		• Boys Talk Genocide (5.22.13)	• 1 Boys Talk [11:27]
		• Girls Talk Genocide (5.23.13)	• 1 Girls Talk [11:49]
		• Lesson Artifacts (5.23.13)	• 7 pictures
End Data- June 2013	n/a	• Matt Final Interview (6.5.13)	• Matt Final Interview • [11:45]
		• Student Reflection (5.30.13)	• 8 Student Reflections
		• Student Final Informal Interviews (6.3.13)	8 Student Final Informal Interviews

Methods of Data Analysis

Data sources collected for this study support the research questions- framing and situating

language in multiple layers. These different layers allow for the analysis of both the quantity and

quality of talk-as well as attention and awareness of talk- from the varying angles and

perspectives of the participants. Interconnectivity exists between the literature review and choice

of methods for this study. As gleaned from the review of literature, language is inherently

dialogic and multimodal. Thus, for the purposes of this study, I approached the data from a

sociocultural stance. Using both descriptive statistics and qualitative methods to analyze the data

(Mercer, 2004) I aimed to understand dialogic and multimodal forms of language. I incorporated

micro-ethnographic methods (LeBaron, 2008) in an effort to deepen my understanding of talk in

the classroom. In order to analyze classroom talk practices, it was beneficial to analyze multiple

occurrences across time. Thus, I collected a notable amounts of data over the course of one

school year.

When you have large amounts of data it is helpful to analyze the scope of events across time (Mercer, 2004; Nystrand et. al, 2007; Wortham, 2006). Thus, I created "road maps" to support my understanding of patterns across multiple data points throughout the year and to identify where I would home in for micro-analysis. Field notes, participant profiles, tables, descriptive statistics and other organizational tools, contextualized and deepened my understanding of the recursiveness and patterning of talk practices across time. Employing these forms of analysis allowed me to mark focal areas of interest and conduct a sociocultural discourse analysis that acknowledged and examined both macro and micro patterning across data (Mercer, 2004; Boyd, 2012). The macro allows a researcher to observe broad patterning, while also providing a guide on where to delve in on a micro level to gain a more in depth understanding. For example, I reviewed interactional events as a whole, and then closely transcribed episodes of interest, studying face to face interactions to better understand how they were socially and culturally situated (Erickson, 2006). In gaining an understanding of the scope of the study, I determined where to dip in, and which components to closely analyze. Using both macro and micro methods provided a sense of coherence across the data, allowing for triangulation across all data points (Creswell, 2007; Mercer, 2008). Furthermore, this analysis captured a classroom focal talk event over time. The participation in reoccurring speech events over time showed trajectories over a timescale (Wortham, 2006). The importance of a timescale process showed how this study moved beyond "macro" and "micro" to study talk events that were not necessarily cumulative, rather, reoccurring, different from a moment-to-moment analysis of interaction.

Table 3.3:

Research Questions and Forms of Analysis

Research Questions	Forms of Analysis
1. What is the scope of the content of student blogs across four teaching cycles across the school year?	• Average length/word count of focal student blogs • Forms of literary elements in student blogging
2. What types of teacher talk moves are employed within and across four teaching cycles of the literacy event? a. How does this teacher demonstrate awareness and intentionality in teaching practices throughout the course of the school year?	• Teacher communicative functions (Boyd, 2000) • Frequency of teacher questioning/rate of contingency • Forms of teacher questioning (Myhill & Dunkin, 2005) • Themes across teacher interview data
3. How do students' reading, writing and talk practices build the focal literacy event both as an individual iteration and over the course of the school year? a. How does the content of the digital writing experiences vary from the content of the talking event?	• Student communicative functions (Boyd & Maloof, 2000) • Frequency of student questioning/rate of contingency • Intertextual links in student talk (Boyd & Maloof, 2000) • Reasoning word usage in student talk and blogs (Mercer, 2008)

The methodology used within my analysis encompassed both micro and macro methods when looking across the data bank and focal data days. My analysis initially focused on the content of student blogs and the forms of literary elements that existed within. Following, I looked closely at the role of teacher talk within and across the focal literacy event. Within teacher talk, I analyzed teacher communicative functions and questioning (frequency,

contingency, Boyd & Rubin, 2002, 2006) and questioning forms (Myhill & Dunkin, 2005).

Additionally, I analyzed the teachers' awareness of talk shifts in themes that arose from teacher

interviews. Next, I analyzed student talk within and across focal days, specifically,

communicative functions (Boyd, 2000), questioning and the students' use of intertextual

connections (Boyd & Maloof, 2000). I also explored the students' awareness of talk shifts as

gathered from student interviews. Lastly, I compared the content of both talk and writing

modalities through an analysis of student reasoning words (Mercer, 2008; Mercer, Wegerif &

Dawes, 1999; Soter, A., Wilkinson, I., Murphy, P.K., Rudge, L., Reninger, K. & Edwards, M.,

2008). It must be noted that interdependence existed between both teacher and student findings,

however, they are explicated separately in Chapter 4 for purposes of clarity. In the following

sections, I explicate the frameworks used in my analysis: forms of literary elements,

communicative functions, forms of questioning, intertextual links and reasoning words.

Blogging: forms of literary elements. I used inductive coding to analyze the content of

the original student blogs. When I began my analysis, I read through each focal student blog

numerous times to determine the literary forms evident across student writing. This process

allowed me to create various categories derived from the determined literary forms. The

categories were then developed into codes. The process for categorizing and creating codes

familiarized me with the data on a deeper level. According to Ely (1991), "creating categories,

subcategories, and discovering their links brings a researcher into intimate reacquaintance with

the data" (p.145). In the following Table 3.4, I provide the definitions and examples for each of

the codes developed from my analysis.

Table 3.4

Forms of Literary Elements in Blogging

Form	Definition	Example
Retell	Retelling events/information from the text	the main character Bruno moving away because of the war and then it leeds into him finding out what was really going on and why his dad does what he does. 12.7.12 [Andrew]
Critique	Critiquing the text, or authors craft	The Boy in The Striped Pajamas was a great movie…the movie was a great way to show the Holocaust mainly because it was from Bruno's (a child) point of view 12.7.12 [Samuel]
Empathy	Expressing empathy for events in the text	I Feel Bad For Them Because They Are Freezing 10.12.12 [Kayla]
Personal/Worldly Connections	Making a personal or worldly connection to the text	everyone can't have power and an society can't thrive without a head(leader).power self balences itself even in nature a pack of wolves has anlpha doesn't it.. 12.7.12 [Thaizon]
Character Motivations	Inferring a character(s) motivation	life got hard and it made her feel good getting the pain and struggle off her 10.12.12 [Aaliyah]
Character Development	Making inferences about a character(s) relationships, or the development of a character(s) throughout a text	Her family is a wonderful family who gets along and has struggles thats brings them closer together and helps them understand each other 10.12.12 [Jahia]
Text Evidence	Specifically cites information from the text to support statement	In the text it states " you didnt get no straight Bs in district 5 unless you had smarts." 1.22.13 [Tanysha]
Text to Text Connections	Making a text to text connection with an alternate text	This movie connects to the article because what was happening in the movie actually fits the description of the camp in the movie. But the movie unlike the article shows not all Nazi's were so dedicated to Hitler's cause and the whole world did not know what was actually happening in the camps like Bruno. 12.7.12 [Thaizon]

As observed in the above table, eight literary elements were identified across the student blogs. The forms are as follows: retell, critique, empathy, personal/wordly connections, character motivation, character development, text evidence and text to text connections.   The

forms of literary elements allowed for a deeper understanding of the content of the student blogs within and across focal data days. Identifying the content of the blogs was only one component in understanding the full scope and depth of the literacy event that encompassed both writing and talk modalities. Thus, I analyzed the content of both teacher and student talk. To understand the roles enacting the scope of talk, I coded the communicative functions of both teacher and student talk. In the following section, I explicate the communicative function framework implemented as part of my analysis.

Communicative functions. Communicative functions adapted from Boyd (2000) were analyzed across teacher and student talk moves in the four focal discussion groups that occurred across the school year. Analysis of communicative functions provided deeper understanding of talk functions employed by the teacher and student and the degree to which their patterning changed throughout the year. In Table 3.5 below, I provide definitions and examples for each of the following communicative functions that serve as a guide throughout my analysis.

Table 3.5

Communicative Functions Definitions and Examples

Communicative Function	Definition	Example (student & teacher)
Authentic Questions	requests for information not already known by the teacher or student	(e.g. "So you're saying the movie didn't show remorse, do you think there was remorse for people? Soldiers?" 12.7-TOT 35)
Display Questions	requests for information already known by the teacher	(e.g. "Did anyone catch the words used to describe jews?" 12.7-TOT 43)
Clarification Requests	messages to bring about explanations or redefinitions of preceding passage. May take the form of a question or response	(e.g. "What did you say Tanysha?" 1.22-TOT 112).
Directing	messages connected with the control of the interaction and/or behavior of participants	(e.g. "You're talking over each other again…let him talk" 3.6-TOT 96)

Responses (extensive)	responses in a complete sentence or more	(e.g. "She was by herself, she was doing everything on her own, she was independent" 1.22-TOT 76)
Responses (minimal)	responses with seven or less utterances	(e.g. "There's an outsider narrator" 10.12-TOT 18)
Explaining	exchanges that can provide information	(e.g. "The brother Byron…he's like too old to deal with life's problems" 10.12-TOT 6
Evaluating	messages intended to challenge each other's ideas by telling why they are agreeing or disagreeing	(e.g. "I agree and disagree at the same time"…3.6-TOT 8).
Feedback	comments about previous participation	(e.g. "Ok you can't probably" 12.7-TOT 52).
Repeating	exact repetition of previous message unit either partially or fully	(e.g. "Girl don't make me" 3.6-TOT 41).
Assigning Turns	messages to assign a turn in the conversations	(e.g. "go ahead Andrew 3.6-TOT 82).
Reading	reading directly from text	(e.g. "Raheem smashed the words right back in my mouth" 3.6-TOT 38).

Forms of questioning. In order to further understand the purposes in Matt asking his students questions, I applied Myhill & Dunkin's (2005) framework to identify forms of questioning. Table 3.6 below lists Myhill & Dunkin's questioning forms, providing definitions and examples derived from the data. It is important to note that in some instances, there were questions that did not fit within Myhill & Dunkin's (2005) coding framework; thus, I listed those questions under the column titled "rhetorical clarification." Teacher questions listed under this column consisted of rhetorical questions or clarification requests.

Table 3.6

Question Forms Definitions & Examples [Adapted from Myhill & Dunkin's (2005) Forms of Questions]

Form	Definition	Example
Factual	Questions which invited a predetermined answer	Does Byron tell the story, does Kenny tell the story, or is there an outside narrator? [TOT 17, 10.12.12]
Speculative	Questions which invited a response with no predetermined answer, often opinions, hypotheses, imaginings, ideas	So you're saying the movie didn't show remorse, the article didn't show remorse, do you think there was remorse for people? Soldiers? [TOT 35, 12.7.12]
Process	Questions which invited children to articulate their understanding of learning processes/explain their thinking	What are you thinking? [TOT 68, 1.22.13]
Procedural	Questions which related to the organization and management of the lesson	Alright guys, so you got your blogs, did you read through each other's comments yet or no? [TOT 1, 3.6.13]
Rhetorical Clarification	Teacher rhetorical questions or clarification requests	Does that make sense? [TOT 131, 1.22.13]

Understanding the forms of teacher questioning allowed me to better understand Matt's purpose, awareness and intentionality behind his instructional practices. Also knowing when and why Matt posed particular questions informed my understanding of Matt's teaching repertoire, and what ways, if any, he was contingent and responsive to student contributions in the moment. I also aimed to understand if Matt was creating cognitively challenging spaces for students that were sustainable throughout the school year.

In analyzing teacher and student talk, I coded all TOTs for communicative functions. However, when looking solely at teacher talk, I aimed to understand the forms of teacher

questions and applied Myhill & Dunkin's (2005) framework. To delve deeper into the student talk, I wanted to further understand the students' use of intertextual links throughout the literacy event. In the following section, I explicate the framework used to analyze student intertextual links within and across focal talk days.

Intertextual links. Research confirms (Almasi, 1996; Boyd & Maloof, 2000; Langer, 1995) that literature has the potential to evoke a quality of talk that encompasses reflection and intertextual connections. By introducing concepts through literature, students have the ability to make personal and textual connections through talk. Teachers who use literature as a catalyst for both blogging and talk aim to understand what intertextual links, if any, are elicited by students during conversation. To do this, I used Boyd & Maloof's (2000) intertextual links framework. In Table 3.7 below, I provide definitions and examples of intertextual links (as adapted from Boyd & Maloof, 2000) across student talk. The intertextual connections explored throughout the student TOTs are classified as: literature-based, personal, classroom community, language and culture and universal. Each intertextual link encompasses a social, interactional notion that connects with worldly, personal and literature based ideals. Please note, in coding for intertextual links, I found that each student TOT did not fit within the intertextual framework. Thus, the student TOTs that did not classify as intertextual links were coded as minimal responses.

Table 3.7

Intertextual Links (Adapted from Boyd & Maloof, 2000)

Intertextual Link	Definition	Example
Literature-based	these included facts, quotes or questions about literary work; perceptions of authorial perspective or intent; opinions about the literary work; and links to other literary works	"the dad really realized that he had made that decision of sending him to Alabama because he really cares about him and he wants him to learning the real world" (10.12.12, TOT 7)
Personal	these related to family, friends, self-experience, and identity	"there are teens addicted to drugs, and not just a stupid thing like weed or something" (1.22.13, TOT 51)
Classroom community	these were utterances where the members of the class built on each other's comments inviting or creating solidarity among them	"Thaizon, I know you have a different view on it because when we were on the carpet, you were saying different things so you must have a lot of things to say" (3.6.13, TOT 90)
Language and Culture	these were connections made to other languages and cultures	"there was a possibility that they could be killing their own brother or family if they agreed with the jewish people" (12.7.12, TOT 39).
Universal	these were connections relating to the universal qualities of man and general concepts accepted by all	"I think authenticity means like real, as in possible, it could happen in the world" (1.22.13, TOT 37).
Minimal Responses	these TOTs did not classify as an intertextual link due to their limited content	"Yeah" (1.22.13, TOT 100).

The intertextual links allowed for a deeper understanding of student talk and also elucidated trends that existed throughout the small group conversations. The coding of intertextual links provided a measure of comparison across conversations, to see what intertextual changes in content, if any, occured throughout the four focal conversations. In doing

so, I aimed to understand if particular literature selections used across thematic based units influenced students' use of intertextual links across conversations.

In analyzing the content of student blogs and teacher and student talk, I intended to understand the similarities and differences between both writing and talk modalities within and across the four focal days. To do this, I compared the content of the student blogs to the content of the student talk and documented the incidence of reasoning words across both modalities (Boyd & Kong, under review; Soter et al., 2008).

Reasoning words. Reasoning words (Mercer, 2008; Mercer, Wegerif & Dawes, 1999; Soter et al., 2008) facilitate interthinking through claiming and positioning (I think, I agree/disagree), exploring new possibilities (maybe, could, would) and analyzing (how, why). In an attempt to better understand the ways students explored new concepts and openly grappled with talk, I analyzed the initial ways students were able to interthink collaboratively (Mercer, 2002) across the four focal days. The framework below is adapted from Boyd & Kong, (under review) and combines Mercer & Soter's lists of reasoning words. In Table 3.8, I provide definitions and examples from student blogging and talk data for each reasoning word.

The purpose of studying student reasoning word usage allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the flexibility and exploratory facets of language elicited across both writing and talk modalities. Exploratory talk is not innate; rather, it is taught, and valued as a process of grappling with and challenging new understandings. Thus, the evidence of reasoning word usage provided an exploratory look at the context of the classroom community, one that promoted a culture of safeness and risk-taking.

Table 3.8

Definitions and Examples of Reasoning Words (Adapted from Boyd & Kong, under review)

Might/maybe	
Writing (Blog):	12.7.12 (Samuel-excerpt): The Boy in The Striped Pajamas was a great movie, and if it was a book it **might** also be good.
Talk:	1.22.13 (Aaliyah, TOT 16): Um, I just had something to say, **maybe** she was sober at the time? Like, after she took the drugs, because like, I think she was like high and sober at the same time
Could	
Writing (Blog):	1.22.13 (Kayla-excerpt): This story is authentic because this **could** happen.
Talk:	12.7.12 (DeShawn, TOT 1-excerpt): I did understand there were a lot of good facts in, but I didn't understand why he **could** recommend this movie because this movie wasn't really a movie you would want to see because it's an emotional movie
Would:	
Writing (Blog):	3.6.13 (Samuel-excerpt): There's many different perspectives you can look at it from, but there is one specifically that I **would** like to focus on which is the mother.
Talk:	10.12.12 (Kayla, TOT 8-excerpt): I feel like the dad, or where the dad come from, I think he's a good man, because most people **would** like, they **would** like bypass all of it
Think:	
Writing (Blog):	10.12.12 (Tanysha-excerpt): The waston's go to Birmingham is an interesting book. I **think** this book will teach alot of imporant things in life.
Talk:	3.6.13 (Benjamin, TOT 109-excerpt): I **think** it was a team effort, because it takes two to be together, it can't be a pair with just one person
So:	
Writing (Blog):	12.7.12 (Andrew-excerpt): It had alot of good facts **so** i would recommend this movie to anybody who wants to learn about the holocaust.
Talk:	12.7.12 (Samuel, TOT 12-excerpt): he just sat there and he knew probably if he did something, something bad would happen, **so** he just had to sit there and just experience that happening
Because:	
Writing (Blog):	1.22.13 (Aaliyah-excerpt): The main character Cassie was addictied to drugs **because** life got hard and it made her feel good getting the pain and struggle off her.
Talk:	10.12.12 (Tanysha, TOT 9-excerpt): I agree with Kayla **because** I think that Byron, being a delinquent, a juvenile delinquent, he think that he could carry himself, he don't need anybody else to help him
But:	
Writing (Blog):	3.7.13 (Samuel-excerpt): There's many different perspectives you can look at it from, **but** there is one specifically that I would like to focus on which is the mother.
Talk:	1.22.13 (Jahia, TOT 31-excerpt): She's more high than sober, like, I agree with what Aaliyah said, she's high and sober, **but**, because, she's not wising up, **but**, she's more high because she like looked in the mirror and saw this stranger and she was shocked
If:	
Writing (Blog):	3.6.13 (Andrew-excerpt): . **If** this was a book i would read it
Talk:	1.22.13 (Thaizon, TOT 31-excerpt): **If** it was, then it was outdrawn by the idea that he had to make his country proud
How/why:	
Writing (Blog):	10.12.12 (Jahia-excerpt): She really inspires me **how** intellegent she is to be 10 years old
Talk:	3.6.13 (Andrew, TOT 62-excerpt): And **why** would they put "don't make me" if they already slapped her?
Agree/Disagree:	
Writing (Blog):	No examples applicable.
Talk:	3.6.13 (Benjamin, TOT 8-excerpt): I **agree** and **disagree** at the same time cause I don't really think she thinks it's normal, I just think that she accepts it

Validity

Validity plays an imperative role in any sound research study. Consistent member checks with the 8th grade classroom teacher allowed me to further validate any observations or analysis I completed. Reliability checks throughout the coding process were done with my academic advisor ensuring the validity of my claims. Results from my analysis were triangulated (Creswell, 2007) across all data sets. Lastly, I utilized my dissertation committee for direction and suggestions regarding my research findings and discussion.

Chapter Four: Findings

The data for this study were collected in an eighth grade classroom in an Urban Charter School during the 2012-2013 school year. The classroom teacher, Matt, implemented a Workshop model while also infusing thematic Common Core units across both reading and writing.   In Matt's eighth grade classroom, students used blogging and talk as a tool to respond to varied genres of literature. In this literacy event students 1) read texts pertaining to the units of study, 2) responded to literature through blogging, and 3) engaged in small group discussions with their peers and classroom teacher.   Current data included five research cycles spanning from September to May. Each cycle spanned across two weeks and involved two rounds of student blogging and two rounds of small group conversations. Nine of the 17 students in this eighth grade class completed IRB paperwork and were the focal participants for this study; the teacher assigned them into two groups, one boys group (5 students) and one girls group (4 students). Like any good case study, extensive data were collected.   Research questions were addressed through analyses conducted on two levels of macro analysis of patterns across the total data bank and micro analysis of a focal data bank. These macro analyses provided a context for micro analysis of a focal data bank. Findings were then triangulated across multiple data points. Together, these varied and rich data informed a consideration of the overarching research inquiry sought to unpack and examine teacher and student practices that made up this literacy-oracy event. Specifically this study examines:

1. What is the scope of the content of student blogs across four teaching cycles across the school year?
2. What types of teacher talk moves are employed within and across four teaching cycles of the literacy event?

a. How does this teacher demonstrate awareness and intentionality in teaching practices throughout the course of the school year?

3. How do students' reading, writing and talk practices build the focal literacy event both as an individual iteration and over the course of the school year?

a. How does the content of the digital writing experiences vary from the content of the talking event?

Total Data Bank

The data bank for this study consisted of 16 small group conversations (totaling 3.01 hours) and 63 student blogs collected from four teaching cycles across the school year. Across the cycles/instructional units asynchronous, student blogging was followed by focus small group conversations with the teacher. These small group conversations were grounded in the content of students' blogs and thematic based texts. Rich data was collected in this ethnographic case study. In the following section I provide an overview of the total data bank (student blogs, video data, interviews and student surveys/reflections) followed by a detailed description of the focal data bank.

Blogging data. The scope of the content for the blogs was student responses to literature used across thematic units spanning from September to June. Twenty-two texts were read throughout the year, spanning in genre from historical fiction, non-fiction, digital movies and fictional texts. Scope and length of content ranged across literature and students. Students' blogged about the literature they independently read, entailing retellings of plot, character and personal connections, opinions and literal information about the texts. The length across the 63 student blogs varied in terms of work count (averages span from 38-107, with a total average of 80 words). Across the cycles/instructional units asynchronous, student blogging was followed

by focus small group conversations with the teacher. These small group discussions were grounded in the content of students' blogs and thematic based texts.

Classroom talk data. In the sections below, I explicate the types of classroom talk data I collected, including video data and teacher and student interviews.

Video data. The video data of small group conversations totaled 3:01 hours. The length of small group conversations ranged from 5:09 to 18:25 minutes, with an average of 11:20 minutes. Analysis of length of written and verbal student contributions revealed the small group conversations to be longer than the student blogs (311 words across 23 turns of talk compared to 47 words used in blog-Andrew, 3.6.13). The length and content of student blogs and talk is explicated further in later sections of chapter four. Analysis will show blogging and talk as a two way street- blogging will act as a springboard for conversation, whereas the talk is a live aspect where both students and teacher are listening, co-constructing and responsive to one another.

Interviews. In order to contextualize the classroom culture, teacher and student interviews were collected: data bank included 4 teacher interviews (totaling 25 minutes, selectively transcribed) and 24 student interviews (totaling 1:15 hours, selectively transcribed).

Student surveys/reflections and anecdotes. To further contextualize the culture of the classroom, the following data were collected: each of the 9 focal students were administered written student interest surveys created by the classroom teacher in the beginning of the year (see Appendix A). Eight written student reflections on the blogging/talk literacy event were completed at the end of the school year (one student had left the school by the end of the year). Field note documents entailing classroom observations and 37 lesson artifacts consisting of photos of the classroom environment and student work were also collected.

Table 4.1

Data Bank

Data Items	Entry Data	(1) Watsons	(2) Holocaust	(3) Urban	(4) Power	(5) Genocide	End Data	TOTALS
Texts Used	-	1 Historical Fiction	1 Non-Fiction, 1 Movie	2 Fiction	2 Fiction	15 Non-Fiction: [Movie/Text]	-	22
Written Student Interest Survey [researcher generated]	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Blogs [ind. entries]	-	15	16	16	16	-	-	63
Video of Talk [small group]	-	41:16 (minutes) 4 conversations	35:37 (minutes) 4 conversations	30:53 (minutes) 3 conversations	50:03 (minutes) 3 conversations	23:16 (minutes) 2 conversations	-	3:01:05 hours 16 conversations
Student Interviews	8 (44:28) (minutes)	-	-	8 (10:31) (minutes)	-	-	8 (20:50) (minutes)	1:15:49 hours
Written Student Reflections [on blogging/talk experiences]	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	8
Lesson Artifacts	-	13 photos	7 photos	2 photos	8 photos	7 photos	-	37 photos
Field Notes	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	3
Teacher Interview	-	5:36 (minutes)	-	6:27 (minutes)	3:46 (minutes)	-	11:45 (minutes)	25:34 minutes

Table 4.1 summarizes the total data bank in terms of literature cycles and displays,

evidence of varied use of text genre (1 historical fiction, 16 non-fiction, 4 fiction), text forms

(print, digital texts and movies). Interviews with the teacher revealed (4 teacher interviews

spanning from October-May) that this planning was intentional and responsive to students,

grounded in the Workshop program and Common Core thematic units. The next section will

discuss the focal literacy event (student blogging, followed by student/teacher talk) that was

embedded within the larger scope and sequence of the year, encompassing a cyclical process of

reading, blogging and small group conversations. Analysis will show the focal literacy event

was in many ways recursive, accretive and authentic, building and growing as the year

progressed.

Focal Data Bank

Across the academic year there were 5 literature cycles of this literacy event involving 16 small group conversations, 63 student blogs and 22 texts. This study homes in on 4 literature cycles. Each cycle consisted of two rounds of blogs and two rounds of small group conversations- a total of 16 blogs and 4 small group conversations. These data represented approximately a quarter of the talk data bank (43 minutes), and 16 of the total blogs (63 blogs). Two cycles from each group (teacher grouped by gender- one group of 5 boys and one group of 4 girls) were purposefully selected to reflect variation in text genre (historical fiction, non-fiction, fiction) and text type (print, movie, digital texts) and timing in the school year (Girls: October and January; Boys: December and March). By selecting two from each group, I was provided the opportunity to note changes in the data across a 6 month period (October-March) - although text genres in each cycle were different. These data were transcribed and analyzed.

Table 4.2

Focal Data Bank

Cycle	Cycle 1: Watsons October 2012	Cycle 2: Holocaust December 2012	Cycle 3: Urban January 2013	Cycle 4: Power March 2013	TOTALS
Texts	Watsons Go to Birmingham (Curtis,1995)	NF Holocaust, Boy in Stripped Pajamas (Boyne, 2006, Director: Herman, 2008)	Stranger (Myers, 1997)	Ain't No Good Girl & Mookie in "Who Am I Without Him?" (Flake, 2009)	5 texts
Focal Talk Day	10.12.12 (Girls): 6:24 minutes	12.7.13 (Boys): 7:39 minutes	1.22.13 (Girls): 13:09	3.6.13 (Boys): 16:36	43:08 minutes 4 conversations
Blogs	4 blogs	4 blogs	4 blogs	4 blogs	16 blogs

To provide a window into the classroom across the year I selected four literature cycles (two from the girls' group and two from the boys' group) that spanned the year and focused on four different texts.

Group 1: girls. I purposefully selected two cycles of girl discussions and blogs. Cycle 1 was part of the historical fiction unit. Focal data revolved around the text, "The Watsons Go to Birmingham" (Curtis, 1995) that included 15 blog entries and 4 small group conversations. Focal data on 10.12.12 included the girls 4 blog entries and 1 small group conversation. This teacher- selected a novel focused on an African American family from Flint, Michigan who visited their grandmother in Birmingham, Alabama. The characters in the story witnessed violent racial acts such as the Bethel Street Church Bombing. The content and scope of student blogs and conversation focused on how the setting and time period influenced the characters' actions within the story. Within focal cycle 1, there were 4 student blogs with an average word count of 83 words and a small group discussion talk time of 6:24 minutes.

Cycle 2 was part of the urban-authenticity unit and revolved around the text titled, "Stranger" (Myers, 1997) that included 16 blog entries and 3 small group conversations. Focal data on 1.22.13 included the girls 4 blog entries and 1 small group conversation. The "Stranger" text aligned with the unit and focused on authenticity of narratives situated in urban environments. This short text explored drug addiction and poverty in an urban setting that was suggested by the teacher and selected by the students. The main character in the story struggled with drug addiction and believed a stranger was roaming around her house. In both their blogs and conversation the girls grappled with the idea of an imaginary character as the "stranger", however, the young woman in the story struggled to recognize the stranger as herself because she was under the influence of drugs. The scope of student conversation also included discussion of authenticity of the story in an urban environment, and the girls debated if the story was indeed plausible. Within focal cycle 2, there were 4 student blogs with an average word count of 81 words and a total small group discussion talk time of 13:09 minutes.

Summary of group 1: girls. The two focal texts for the girls' blogs and conversations varied in terms of content and genre of texts. The civil rights content of the historical fiction text (Curtis, 1995) was arguably more aligned with school literacies than the provocative drug-use content (1.22.13). But, the students had more to say about the January text selection- perhaps because they lived in an urban neighborhood and had witnessed similar experiences, perhaps this topic would be more engaging to most teenagers. Whatever the reason, the small group discussion was double in length (13:09 minutes on 1.22.13, compared to 6:24 minutes on 10.12.12).

Group 2: boys. For the boys group, I selected two instructional cycles that contrasted with each other and focused on different texts than the girls group. Cycle 1 was part of the non-fiction holocaust unit that included 16 blog entries and 4 small group conversations. Focal data on 12.7.12 included the boys' 4 blog entries (average word count 107 words), 1 small group conversation (7:39 minutes), 1 non-fiction text and 1 movie, "The Boy in the Stripped Pajamas" (Boyne, 2006). The non-fiction text was selected by the teacher and the movie was selected by the students based off the teacher's recommendations. Both texts aligned with the non-fiction unit. In the student blogs and conversation, the boys compared both texts and explored the notions of portrayal and perspective. Students explored how each writer portrayed the Holocaust, and also attempted to understand the perspective of the Nazi's soldiers during WWII.

Cycle 2 for the boys was part of the power unit and revolved around the text titled, "Who Am I Without Him" (Flake, 2009) that included 16 blog entries and 3 small group conversations. Focal data on 3.6.13 included the boys 4 blog entries (average word count 83) and 1 small group conversation (16:36). The teacher had suggested multiple texts to the students and they selected "Who Am I Without Him" (Flake, 2009). This text was about a dysfunctional relationship

between a young woman and man that aligned with the unit of study on power- exploring the social positioning of power in fictional texts. The boys discussed the role of power within the story between the main characters in both the blogs and conversation.

Summary of group 2: boys. The first boys' conversation on 12.7.12 involved students reading a non-fiction text on the holocaust and paralleling perspectives with a movie based on the holocaust. The content within this unit not only required background knowledge of a historical event, but also close reading and interpretation across varying texts forms and genres. Compared to the second cycle of blogging and conversation on 3.6.13, the content addressed on 12.7.12 may have been more challenging for these students to relate to their own lives. For example, on 3.6.13, the boys read a text about a dysfunctional teenage relationship and discussed the role of power between the characters. The ensuing conversation was extensive (16:36 minutes). In contrast on 12.7.13, the boys read more academic content on the Holocaust, resulting in a shorter conversation (7:39 minutes). Perhaps the students had more to contribute to the discussion on 3.6.13 due to their ability to make personal connections with the text.

Summary of both focal groups. A cursory examination of all four literature examples revealed that small group conversations became longer as the school year progressed. Many factors may have influenced this increase. Students may have been more comfortable at talk or the genres may have been more appealing, or the topics may have been of greater interest. For example, in both instances, the genres in earlier cycles (10.12.12 and 12.7.12) focused on historical fiction and non-fiction texts based on more academic events, whereas later cycles (1.22.13 and 3.6.13) pertained to more provocative issues such as urban drug use and relationships. The content and scope of earlier conversations (10.12.12 and 12.7.12) pertained to historical events dealing with the civil rights era and holocaust, compared to later conversations

(1.22.13 and 3.6.13) that explored authenticity of urban settings and the role of power in characters' relationships. While it may be suggested that later conversations on 1.22.13 and 3.6.13 were more extensive due to the nature of content and the students' ability to make personal connections with the texts, I was interested in knowing the role that teacher talk played in inviting, guiding, directing and connecting student contributions and exchanges. Thus, student conversations were supported by various teacher talk moves. This was a focus of analysis and findings explicated later in this chapter as they address the following research question:

1. **What is the scope of the content of student blogs across four teaching cycles across the school year?**

Focal blog data. The literacy event involved a recursive process of students reading a text, blogging and engaging in a small group conversation about both the blog and text with student peers and classroom teacher. The blogs were a precursor to the small group conversations that grounded student and teacher talk. The focal data looked at student blogs across 4 cycles of the literacy event. In an effort to better understand the role of teacher talk across focal data days, one must first understand the content of student blogs. In the following section, I analyzed the forms of literary elements within and across the focal student blogs that provided a framework for the teacher and student talk experience.

Across the four focal data days, I analyzed a total of 16 student blogs from both the boys and girls focal groups. I analyzed two blogs for each of the eight students across the four focal days. Thus, one blog for each student was analyzed per talk cycle. The blogs were a required assignment completed in school on classroom computers. Prior to each small group conversation, students read the focal text and blogged about the content. Students were not given prompts or direction prior to writing the blog; instead, students were instructed to share their thoughts on the

focal text. Further, students did not receive coaching or instruction from the teacher while in the process of blogging.

Table 4.3

Focal Blog Data

Cycle	Total # of Student Blogs	Average Word Count Per Blog Entry
10.12.12 Girls (HF)	4	83 words Range: 65-97
1.22.13 Girls (FIC)	4	81 words Range: 71-88
12.7.12 Boys (NF)	4	107 words Range: 85-116
3.6.13 Boys (FIC)	4	83 words Range: 47-112
TOTAL	16	Average 86 Words Per Entry

There were limitations to measuring the blogs by word count (which was relatively similar across the four focal days: range: 81-107 words; average: 86 words). To be sure, consistent length of blog entry suggested a commitment in terms of time taken and student engagement with blogging across the year. But the scope of the blog- what students were doing as they blogged in terms of connecting to the texts: evoking textual evidence, building personal connections, understanding character development and plot provided more in depth information. In an effort to better understand the content of student blogs, various forms of literary elements (Table 3.4) were used as measures of coding. Each literary form was present across the student blogs, but to varying degrees. In the following section, I discuss my findings and provide a microanalysis of two student blog examples.

Representative sample of student blogging. In analyzing student blogs across the four focal days, it became evident that students primarily retold the text. For example, on 10.12.12, Kayla provided a brief retell of events in her blog, stating, "They Have Just Been Hit By A Major Snow Storm And They Are Below O degrees. No Matter How Much They Put On The Will Always Be Cold." It is possible that in the first two focal days [10.12.12 & 12.7.12], retelling constituted most of the blog, perhaps because the students had received less instructional time and were not yet confident in the blogging process. Later in the year, and as represented in the second two blogs [1.22.13 and 3.6.13], in addition to retelling, students offered deeper interpretations of texts, employing a greater variation of literary elements in the writing of their blogs. For example, these student blogs included literary elements such as personal connections, character development, character motivation and critiquing of the text. Perhaps this was because more instruction had occurred, or, it could have been the result of students writing about texts that were of high interest.

As already noted, for the purposes of this analysis, I selected a representative sample and homed in on four focal blog examples spanning from 10.12.12 through 3.6.13 from both the girls and boys focal groups. Pulling samples that spanned across the year allowed for a deeper understanding of the content of blogs from the beginning of the school year to the end. The blog examples were selected to illustrate forms of literary elements: retelling, literal information, critique, personal connections, character motivation and character development. In the following section, I explicate the content of four blogs for two focal students, Aaliyah and Samuel, spanning from October to March.

Student blogs: Aaliyah and Samuel. When looking at both Aaliyah and Samuel's blogs, retellings of texts were mostly found on earlier dates (10.12.12 and 12.7.12). On later dates

(1.22.13 and 3.6.13), however, both Aaliyah and Samuel elicited a variety of literary elements

(retelling, literal information, critique, personal connections, character motivation and character

development) in their blogs which were not evident on earlier focal days. See Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4

Student Blog Examples

Watsons Go to Birmingham-10.12.12 HF Aaliyah	Stranger-1.22.13 HF Aaliyah
For Now All I Know About This Book Is That It's Telling Me That My Characters "The Werid Watsons" Live In Michigan. Were There's Been A Terrible Blizzard. To Add On... My Character Byron Has Gotton His Tounge Stuck To The Car Door Mirror An Can't Get Off. Which Leads His Little Brother "Kenny" Into All These Small Moments Telling Us About Their Brotherly Relationship.	When reading the stranger it mad me think of struggles. When haveing problems you tend to try an take ease with things. That are sometimes Ok to do An sometimes not so good. The main character Cassie was addictied to drugs because life got hard and it made her feel good getting the pain and struggle off her. An when having a problem like she did she tried to get off but it mad life harder.
Boy Stripped PJ-12.7.12 NF/MOV Samuel	Power-3.6.13 POWER Samuel
The Boy in The Striped Pajamas was a great movie, and if it was a book it might also be good. The movie was a great way to show the Holocaust mainly because it was from Bruno's point of view. I say this because it was a somewhat mystery throughout the entire movie also building suspense each scene. Like when Bruno befriended the Jewish boy, Schmuel and eventually Bruno had to move but instead he snuck in and died with his friend holding his hand.	From my perspective of the book "There Ain't No Good Girl" By Sharon Flake is a very interesting book that gives power a entirely different new meaning. There's many different perspectives you can look at it from, but there is one specifically that I would like to focus on which is the mother. I think that she is the reason that the narrator has self esteem issues. And the things raheem does around her doesnt help her, including his abusiveness. Lastly I think Raheem needs has his Power because of what he sees from his parent which trandcends into multiple situations and accusations. Swagg !!!

Aaliyah's blogs. In reviewing Aaliyah's 10.12.12 blog, you can see she primarily offered

a retelling of the historical fiction book, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* (1995). For example,

she stated, "Byron has gotten his tounge stuck to the car door mirror and can't get it off."

Aaliyah is providing no inferential work; rather, she is simply recalling the events from the text. In the second blog post (1.22.13), Aaliyah's writing consisted of some retellings; however, the majority of her blogging pertained to personal connections and character motivations. For example, on 1.22.12, Aaliyah made a connection with life, explaining that sometimes people dealt with struggles in positive ways, and sometimes in negative ways, stating, "When having problems you tend to try to take it easy with things that are sometimes ok to do and sometimes not so good." Aaliyah went on to explain that a motivation for the character Cassie to use drugs was to make herself feel good and temporarily escape the pain from her difficult life, stating, "Cassie was addicted to drugs because life got hard and it made her feel good getting the pain and struggle off her." Aaliyah thought deeply about the text by making inferences about Cassie's motivations for engaging in drug use. It is possible that Aaliyah had more to contribute to the 1.22.13 blog post because she was more personally vested in the story, thus, resulting in an increase in the use of literary elements. It may be suggested that Aaliyah had less to contribute to the blog post on 10.12.12 because it dealt with issues such as civil rights that she may have struggled to connect with. Thus, Aaliyah appeared to feel more comfortable retelling the story, than eliciting other literary elements.

Samuel's blogs. In Samuel's first blog [12.7.12], he primarily provided a retell of the text, offering some personal critiques. For example, he stated, "Bruno befriended the Jewish boy Schumel and eventually Bruno had to move but instead he snuck in and died with his friend holding his hand." Samuel provided this retelling of events to support his critique of the movie, stating, "The movie was a great way to show the Holocaust mainly because it was from Bruno's point of view." Samuel provided his opinion of the movie, yet, weaved in retellings throughout

his blog entry. Although more sophisticated than Aaliyah's first blog entry which consisted

solely of retellings, Samuel engaged in deeper inferential work in his second blog.

In the second blog [3.6.13], Samuel did not retell, rather he provided some critique,

focusing a large portion of his blog on character development and relationships. On 3.6.13,

Samuel explored why the main character had self-esteem issues, stating, "I think that she (the

mother) is the reason that the narrator has self-esteem issues." Samuel attributed the cause of the

self-esteem issues to be the result of the character's mother and childhood experiences. Samuel

also discussed the main character's boyfriend (Raheem), stating, "I think Raheem needs his

power because of what he sees from his parents which transcends into multiple situations and

accusations." Not only did Samuel understand that Raheem needed power in the story, he also

explored *why* Raheem needed power which was revealed through his abusiveness. Thus, there

was a higher prevalence of inferential work in Samuel's second blog compared to his first.

In looking across both blogs [12.7.12, 3.6.13], Samuel produced literary forms of

critique [see Table 3.4]; however, on 3.6.13 he elicited literary elements with greater complexity

compared to his earlier blog [12.7.12] that consisted of a simplistic retelling and critique of

textual events. This could be attributed to the fact that Samuel's first blog post was primarily

about the holocaust that he may have struggled to connect with. In contrast, Samuel's second

blog [3.6.13] dealt with more provocative issues such as teenage relationships and abuse that

may have sparked higher interest and engagement with the text.

Summary of representative blog sample. In looking across both Aaliyah and Samuel's

blogs, their use of personal connections and discernment of character development and

motivation in their later blogs suggested higher levels of literary interpretation. In the first blog,

these students primarily retold events from the text. In the second blog, both Aaliyah and Samuel harnessed literary elements such as critique and character development to ascribe character motivation in service of personal connections that deepened the level of thinking and sophistication.

These blogs were a platform- a preparation for the whole class discussion that Matt encouraged and supported. The blogging and the talk did not stand alone. Rather, they were mutually supportive- the blog established a place for individual response where students wrote to learn (Britton, 1993), retelling the story and shaping individual thoughts on the context. It prepared them for collaborative meaning making about the focal texts as they built on one another's ideas and opinions about the text. The teacher, Matt played an important role in not just setting up opportunities for these students to talk about the texts in class, but also modeled how to listen attentively and ways to question and build on conversants' ideas. Although teacher and student talk were interdependent, I analyzed teacher and student talk separately in the following sections and then returned to the notion of interdependence in the final discussion. First, I looked at the role of teacher talk moves in supporting and directing student talk. I focused on ratio of teacher and student talk, teacher communicative functions, teacher questioning and teacher interview data. Then, I looked at student talk and focused on student communicative functions, student questioning, student use of intertextual links and student interview data. The above named data categories are explicated in the following sections.

2. **What types of teacher talk moves are employed within and across four teaching cycles of the literacy event?**

   Focal classroom talk and interview data. In the following sections, findings for the ratio of teacher to student talk, teacher communicative functions and teacher questioning are shared. Teacher interview data inform these findings.

   Teacher talk. For the most part, the teacher read the student blogs prior to the small group conversations. In this sense, these blogs informed both student and teacher talk. In looking across the scope of the small group conversations, I examined how the teacher was involved in conversations and unpacked what might have been understood in terms of the relationships of teacher prompts and responses to the patterns of student talk. In doing this, I looked at what role the teacher played in directing and supporting student talk within the small group conversations. In the following sections, I explore the frequency of teacher turns of talk, teacher communicative functions and teacher questioning.

   Ratio of teacher and student talk. When looking at the ratio of teacher and student talk, we clearly see that students made more turns of talk than the teacher. As noted in Table 4.5, this teacher Matt was involved (he made an average of 33% of the turns of talk across all focal days), but unlike traditional teachers who make two thirds of the talk turns, Matt did not dominate class discussions. This was a time for students to converse and listen to each other. Certainly by limiting his turns (and as we shall see by the type of turns he makes), Matt offered opportunities for student talk.

Table 4.5

Ratio of Teacher and Student Turns of Talk

Date	Students & Teacher Talk	Frequency TOT [TOTAL]	Percentage TOT
Cycle 1: 10.12.12 Girls (21 TOT Total)	Students	15	72%
	Teacher	6	29%
Cycle 2: 1.22.13 Girls (133 TOT Total)	Students	79	60%
	Teacher	52	39%
Cycle 3: 12.7.12 Boys (55 TOT Total)	Students	35	64%
	Teacher	20	36%
Cycle 4: 3.6.13 Boys (153 TOT Total)	Students	111	73%
	Teacher	44	29%

Table 4.5 represents student and teacher talk across the four focal talk cycles. We can note that although the students always made more turns of talk than the teacher, the small group discussions in the second cycle were considerably longer for both boys and girls.

In analyzing the prevalence of teacher and student turns of talk, one must take notice that not only was student talk more dominant across all focal days, but the degree to which student talk increased. For example, in the two focal talk samples (they accompany the two focal blogs), the girls' TOTs increased from 15 turns of talk to 79 turns of talk (from 6:24 minutes to 13:09 minutes) in the girls' conversations. Similarly, for the boys' TOTs, the numbers jumped from 35 turns of talk (12.7.12) to 111 turns of talk (3.6.13). These increases in student participation marked student elaboration and engagement. To be sure, the teacher did not contribute as frequently to the conversations because students appeared to be successfully carrying and extending discussion of the topic themselves. An examination of teacher communicative functions across focal talk days sheds light on the teacher's role of scaffolding and directing and the influence of teacher talk on student contributions.

Teacher communicative functions. I analyzed the communicative functions of teacher talk moves in the four focal discussion groups that occurred across the school year (the months of October, December, January and March) to provide deeper understandings of classroom discussion talk patterns. I coded for twelve communicative functions (adapted from Boyd, 2000, see Table 3.5 for definitions and examples). The unit of analysis was a turn of talk (TOT). Teacher turns could have involved more than one communicative function, so when more than one was involved, I coded for the most dominant communicative function. In Table 4.6, I provide an example of coding for a single and dominant teacher communicative function.

In the single TOT, the dominant function was more obvious, demonstrating a request for clarification from the previous student's TOT that was coded as *clarification request*. As seen in the more complex TOT, six teacher questions were employed that provided additional information about the text.

Table 4.6

Single and Dominant Coding of Communicative Functions

Teacher TOTs	Communicative Function
Single communicative function: What do you mean, like who in the movie? (12.7.12, TOT 9)	Clarification Request
Complex communicative function: It's an outside narrator, so it's not told from any one person's point of view. Ok, so you focused in on Byron and then you were kinda talking about how dad is going to send the whole family to a lesson, and you were focusing in on relationships, so you started writing with kinda what I like to call the meat and potatoes of a character, right? Like, trying to figure out character's relationships, and kinda like retelling a little bit but also looking at some motivations. One of the things I think	Dominant communicative function of: Explaining

you girls are ready to focus on is how does setting raise the stakes of the situation? Right? One thing author's do, whenever they're writing a book, is they always want to do something called raising the stake, right? So, this could just be about a family, in any time, and you know the kid and that the one son is, I'll go to Birmingham, so he gets shipped away, but, are the stakes raised because of the setting? Right? How does the setting raise the stakes? Is it just about a family and their son being shipped away, or is it something more serious? Ok? So as you read on, I just want you to look at, how does the setting raise the stakes? Right? How is just not any son being shipped away? How is it different because it's 1963 in Alabama? Ok? Why is Byron angry, is he angry with his family, or is he angry at something else that is a result of the setting? I kinda want you to start looking at how setting affects our characters, how it affects their actions, how it affects their reactions, how it affects their moods. Does that make sense? (10.12.12, TOT 19)	

Furthermore, there were talk moves that encompassed think alouds and modeling. However, the TOT as a whole was coded for the most dominant communicative function: *explaining*. Researchers such as Gee (Gee & Green, 1998) would break TOTs into parts to analyze and code- however, in this study, I wanted to gain an understanding of the broad strokes of communicative functions and then to home in on teacher questioning whereby all questions were coded within a turn.

Following, I reported my findings on teacher communicative functions and patterning throughout the focal talk days. Table 4.7 provides descriptive statistics for the frequency of the top five teacher communicative functions listed from most to least frequent. Definitions and examples of communicative talk functions can be referenced in Table 3.5.

Table 4.7

Teacher Communicative Functions

October 12th [Girls 1] Teacher-6 TOT [6:24]	January 22nd [Girls 2] Teacher-52 TOT [13:09]	December 7th [Boys 1] Teacher-20 TOT [7:39]	March 6th [Boys 2] Teacher-44 TOT [16:36]
Display Questions [33%]	Authentic Questions [29%]	Authentic Questions [25%]	Authentic Questions [27%]
Explaining [33%]	Responses Minimal [19%]	Display Questions [25%]	Responses Minimal [20%]
Authentic Questions [16%]	Display Questions [17%]	Explaining [15%]	Directing [18%]
Directing [16%]	Explaining [10%]	Responses Minimal [15%]	Explaining [11%]
n/a	Directing [10%]	Evaluating [5%]	Clarification Requests [9%]

The patterning across Table 4.7 is notable in that the same communicative functions stay dominant (display questions, authentic questions, responses minimal, explaining, directing) across all four literature cycles, but to varying degrees. The teacher used similar moves across focal days suggesting a relative level of consistency. In the sections following, I analyzed patterning of teacher communicative functions within the focal girls' talk cycles on 10.12.12 and 1.22.13 and the boys' talk cycles on 12.7.12 and 3.6.13. I then synthesized patterning of teacher communicative functions across all focal talk days.

Focal day 1 (girls): 10.12.12- teacher communicative functions. On 10.12.12, teacher talk moves were dominated by both display questions and explaining (both at 33%) followed by authentic questions (16%) and directing (16%). Matt asked questions to which he already knew the answer (display questions). But these questions were contingent on his students' contributions as they sought to build shared understanding and raise the level of conversation. For example, Matt asked, "Does Byron tell the story, does Kenny tell the story, or is there an outside narrator?" (10.12.12, TOT 17). This display question functioned to focus students thinking about the perspective of the narrator. So that when the student (Kayla) responded to Matt's question with "There's an outside narrator"(10.12.12, TOT 18), Matt then followed up

with a teaching point, "it's an outside narrator, so it's not told from any one person's point of view" (10.12.12, TOT 19). Matt verified Kayla's correct response and slid in his definition of an outside narrator.

While Matt only made one third of the turns of talk, when he talked, he asked questions, directing attention to and explaining new concepts to the students. We saw this when Matt directed and explained (dominant coding was explains), "I want you to start looking at how setting affects our characters, how it affects their actions, how it affects their reactions, how it affects their moods" (10.12.12, TOT 19). Here we see Matt was both explaining how setting impacts characters in a story and also providing the language for student discussion. It also made sense that Matt would be explicitly providing literary language and guiding students' conversations towards new understandings through modeling as 10.12.12 was one of the earlier discussions of the academic year.

The third and fourth most frequent teacher communicative functions on 10.12.12 were authentic questioning and directing, both 16%. For example, Matt directed the conversation on 10.12.12, stating, "I am actually just going to sit here and listen to you talk for a while and see what you do and I might jump in or I might just sit back and see what happens, ok, you can start" (TOT 5). Matt's "directing" shed light on his discourse management in that he was listening and guiding toward a particular learning point. When looking at authentic questioning, Matt asked more procedural questions on earlier talk days such as "How's it going" (10.12.12, TOT 1). This line of questioning also aligned with the management of conversation. It is important to note that authentic questions were one of his top five communicative functions (16%) across the four focal talk days. In fact, about half of this teacher's turns were questions (49%) and this is a focal analysis in the next section. These data are consistent with research on classrooms where teacher

questioning is the dominant communicative function (Boyd & Rubin, 2006; Cazden, 2001; Dillon, 1984; Hunkins, 1970; Lee, 2007; Mehan, 1979; Nassaji & Wells, 2000; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991; Wells, 1993).

Focal day 2 (girls): 1.22.13- teacher communicative functions. In the second cycle of girls' conversation on 1.22.13, authentic questioning became the most dominant communicative function at 20%. Responses minimal followed closely at 19% and display questions at 17%. Explaining and directing were both 10%. So again, the same communicative functions, but in this discussion, we can see that authentic questions- those which did not have a predetermined answer, were more frequent than display questions. For example, on 1.22,13, Matt asked, "So what do you think authenticity means?" (TOT 36). He urged students to explore the meaning of authenticity through questioning. Further, he wanted to understand what portions of the text the students considered to be authentic by asking, "And you're saying that part is not authentic?" (TOT 27). Matt was not looking for a right or wrong answer, rather, he wanted students to defend their thinking and further explain their understandings of the text.

Although authentic questioning was more dominant, display questions were still evident across teacher turns of talk. For example, at the end of the conversation on 1.22.13, Matt pushed students to understand that portions of the text read could have been written more authentically by asking, "But what is the author missing to make this more real? What would the author have to include" (TOT 111). Matt was looking for the students to discuss the positive aspects of living in an urban community, which he believed the author left out of the text.

Summary of girls' focal days- teacher communicative functions. Analysis of these two discussions demonstrated a shift in Matt's talk moves. In the October discussion, Matt utilized

display questions and explaining (66%), but in the January discussion, Matt used these same two moves less than half of that (27%). This suggested Matt's talk moves shifted from providing more direct instruction in October, to fostering more natural conversation through authentic questioning in January. While analysis of communicative functions showed Matt pulled from a repertoire of talk functions in both cycles of conversations, it also revealed the varied degree to which he used one talk move over another. In addition to these observations, it must also be noted that Matt's minimal responses jumped from 0% to 19% from October to January. It can be suggested from the analysis of both discussions that Matt was listening and responsive to student contributions.

Focal day 1 (boys): 12.7.12- teacher communicative functions. In the December boys conversation, authentic and display questions were both equally the most dominant teacher talk moves (25% each). Half of Matt's turns of talk were questions and he balanced asking questions with predetermined answers, and with authentic questioning. For example, on 12.7.13, Matt asked an authentic question, stating "so is that true remorse?" (TOT 20), later followed by a display question, "did anyone catch the words used to describe Jews?" (TOT 42) when discussing the perspectives of the Nazi soldiers during Holocaust Germany, as portrayed in the non-fiction text. These turns of talk showed Matt listened to his students' contributions and asked contingent questions to clarify, extend and deepen the level of student conversation.

In this same discussion, explaining and minimal responses were the third and fourth most dominant teacher communicative functions, both at 15% (30% combined). Evaluating came in fifth at 5%. Only in this discussion did evaluation land as one of the top five communicative functions. For example, during the December discussion, Matt disagreed with his students' claims that Nazi soldiers felt remorse during the Holocaust and challenged students to defend

their thinking, stating, "Prove it that he did feel bad" (TOT 17). In this particular instance, Matt disagreed with the students' ideas and challenged their contributions.

Across the three focal discussions thus far, four teacher communicative functions dominated: authentic questions, display questions, explaining and minimal responses (listed in order of frequency). These four teacher talk moves invited and directed through questioning and scaffolded understanding by responding and explaining. However, there was a change in the fourth discussion.

Focal day 2 (boys): 3.6.13- teacher communicative functions. In the boys' March literature cycle, display questions did not fall within the top five communicative functions. Authentic questioning ranked the highest at 27%, minimal responses second at 20% and directing followed at 18%. Explaining was fourth at 11%, followed by clarification requests at 9%.

Summary of boys' focal days- teacher communicative functions. Similar to the shift in teacher talk between the girls' conversations on 10.12.12 and 1.22.13, authentic questions dominated the later discussions. In the case of the girls, there were still some display questions (17%), but in this case, display questions were not existent across teacher talk. The data from these focal discussions showed that Matt shifted towards more authentic questioning as the year progressed, encouraging students to think critically and share their own thoughts and opinions. For example, we see this when Matt posed an authentic question on 3.6.13, stating, "Are you saying he sought her out almost like a predator?" (TOT 85). Matt responded to the students' previous responses by authentically questioning their ideas about the text, wanting to learn more about the students' interpretations.

Summary of both focal days- teacher communicative functions. A summary of findings across the focal talk days showed authentic questioning to be the most dominant talk function (three out of four days overall). Display questions were second, followed by explaining, minimal responses and directing. To be sure, it appeared that Matt's talk practices shifted as the year progressed, but, since the analysis was only four discussions, analysis of more discussions would be needed to make a robust claim. It could be that the topic of the focal texts happened to resonate more with students. But to be sure, there was a shift in teacher communicative functions during these discussions. The largest shift was observable from October to March that highlighted the lack of display questions used at year end. In fact, if we tracked display questions, we would see they became less prevalent as the year progressed. They moved from dominant at 33% in October, to the second most prevalent at 24% in December, to third at 17% in January, to non-existent in March at 0%. Although this is only representative of the focal data, it could be suggested that Matt's use of display questions was indicative of his level of scaffolding from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Meaning, his scaffolding moved from intensive to less intensive as the year progressed. Interestingly, after October, authentic questioning came in as the second most dominant talk function; it was the highest ranking percentage in December, January and March. Minimal responses became the second most prevalent in January (19%) and March (20%). Explaining was the second most dominant in October at 33%, then remained in the top four the following three cycles. One may suggest that the use of explaining, similar to display questions, served as a scaffold for students that deescalated towards the end of the year. It is also important to note across all focal talk days, students dominated the TOTs over the teacher. In October, teacher TOTs were 29%, January

39%, December 36% and March 29%. Although Matt's TOT percentages remained similar, his talk functions shifted as demonstrated through the communicative functions.

From this analysis, it can be gleaned that questioning played the most dominant role in teacher communicative functions throughout the school year. As a result, I determined the need to examine teacher questioning in greater depth. Therefore, in the following sections I explore the frequency, forms and level of contingency in teacher questioning across the focal talk days.

Teacher questioning. Since questioning constituted half of the teacher communicative functions and was the dominant teacher communicative function across the four small group discussions (which was the result of coding one dominant communicative function for each turn of talk) I looked more closely at the teacher's use of questions. The coding process used for the new questioning analysis differed from the coding process used in communicative functions. This time all questions were coded. That is, multiple questions were coded within one TOT. For example, when referencing the complex TOT 19 in Table 4.4, it is evident that multiple questions were asked by the teacher. Thus, using the new questioning analysis, each question in TOT 19 was coded individually.

In the following section, I present findings of the frequency of teacher questioning in comparison to the length of talk. I also report codings for contingency (Boyd & Rubin, 2006) and forms of questioning (Myhill & Dunkin, 2005).

Frequency of teacher questions. In analyzing teacher communicative functions, it became evident that teacher questioning was the dominant talk move (25% average across the four focal discussions). This close look at questioning was to better understand how Matt used questioning to participate and elicit student responses across conversations. In Table 4.8 below, I note the

time spent in each small group discussion, the number and percentage of teacher turns of talk and the number of teacher questions. Finally, because the amount of time spent in discussion varied, I calculated the frequency of teacher questions (how many per second).

Table 4.8

Teacher Questioning

Cycle	Total Length of Talk in Time (min.)	Total # Teacher TOTs/Total TOT (% of total TOT)	Total # [%] Teacher Questions in # TOT (# time)	# Teacher Questions Per Second
10.12.12 Girls (HF)	6:24	6/21 (29%)	11 in 6 TOT (6 min, 24 sec)	1 every 35 sec
1.22.13 Girls (FIC)	13:09	52/133 (39%)	33 in 52 TOT (13 min, 9 sec)	1 every 24 sec
12.7.12 Boys (NF)	7:39	20/55 (36%)	15 in 20 TOT (7 min, 39 sec)	1 every 29 sec
3.6.13 Boys (FIC)	16:36	44/153 (29%)	20 in 44 TOT (16 min, 36 sec	1 every 50 sec

As noted in Table 4.8 above, teacher questions occurred on average once every 34.3 seconds across the four focal data days (range 29-50 seconds). In other words, the teacher was averaging asking two questions every minute. Assuming his questions were contingent on the scope of the talk, this remarkable consistency suggested Matt was listening and guiding through his questions.

Contingency of teacher questioning. Within the speech act of questioning and response, "questioning restricts and directs the nature and scope of the response" (Boyd & Galda, 2011, p.17). A teacher asks a question directing a student response and then in the teacher follow up or "uptake" (Collins, 1982), he or she can further direct and encourage student thinking and elaboration. When this third turn occurs, the teacher can directly build on what students have contributed, this would be contingent questioning- questions that are grounded in the scope of

previous turns of talk (Boyd & Rubin, 2006). My initial analysis of Matt's questions suggested

they were in service of furthering student responses and extending their thinking so I examined

his questions according to the characteristics of contingent questions. To do this, I analyzed each

question individually for contingency- so the unit of analysis was the individual question not the

turn of talk (as with communicative functions). In fact, as Table 4.9 displays, there could be

several teacher questions in one turn of talk. Descriptive statistics were reported for teacher

turns of talk, questions and contingent questions.

Table 4.9

Contingent Teacher Questions

Cycle	Total Length of Talk in Time (min.)	Total # Teacher TOTs	Total # Teacher Questions	Total # Teacher Contingent Questions	% Teacher Contingent Questions
10.12.12 Girls (HF)	6:24	6	11	10	91%
1.22.13 Girls (FIC)	13:09	52	33	25	76%
12.7.12 Boys (NF)	7:39	20	15	13	87%
3.6.13 Boys (FIC)	16:36	44	20	17	85%

Results displayed in Table 4.9 clearly illustrated that this teacher's questions were

contingently based in student contributions. Teacher questions were contingent an average 85%

across the four days (range 76%-91%). For example, on 3.6.13, Samuel discussed the

relationship between two main characters from a short text, arguing that Raheem (the main

character's boyfriend) took advantage of his girlfriend. In response, Matt contingently asked a

question to push Samuel's understanding further, stating, "Are you saying he sought her out

almost like a predator?"(3.6.13, TOT 85). This turn of talk not only demonstrated Matt listening

to student contributions, it also showcased his ability to introduce new literary content (such as

character motivation) through conversations. The teaching of new content was derived and embedded in student contributions that gave students a sense of ownership and empowerment in learning. We see this in the excerpt below. The girls discussed drug use in urban and suburban environments and whether the story they read was an authentic interpretation of real life. Matt incorporated their discussions and contributions in the following TOTs:

Exchange 4.1

Jahia TOT 98:   Yeah I mean there are going to be some [drug addicts] in suburban and rural areas, but like, in the urban setting, there are going to be more crack heads than ever because it's that

Aaliyah TOT 99:   Population type?

Jahia TOT 100:   Yeah

Matt TOT 101:   So what you have done is this [starts to draw diagram] you said, you've taken this issue of drug addiction right? And you said it exists in an urban area, and then Aaliyah, you said, couldn't it exist in suburban? Right? Instead of thinking of it this way, ok, what if we thought of it this way? We have an urban area, there's drug addiction mentioned in the story, but what's missing? (1.22.13)

Matt's revoicing of student ideas illustrated to students that he had been listening. Statements such as, so what you have done is this…" acknowledged their thinking as he then took up his students' ideas and crafted it into a teaching point. Matt pushed the girls to think about what was missing in the author's portrayal of an urban environment through questioning.

In a similar example from the October discussion, Matt built upon student contributions about a historical fiction novel to craft a teaching point at the end of a small group conversation. Here we see Matt's final teaching point at the culmination of the small group discussion:

Exchange 4.2

Kayla TOT 8:	I feel like the dad, or where the dad come from, I think he's a good man, because most people would like, they would like bypass all of it, and like try and fix it on their own and not try to send them somewhere so they can actually learn how to work in life, but their dad, he sends Byron down south so he can learn how to deal with the real world because the south is in a crisis right now, so he's gonna go ahead and see what they are going to do
Tanysha TOT 9:	I agree with Kayla because I think that Byron, being a delinquent, a juvenile delinquent, he thinks that he could carry himself, he don't need anybody else to help him
Jahia TOT 10:	On the other hand, Kenneth doesn't understand, Kenneth doesn't understand because, um, he's not at the point where he cares…he cares what it would be like without him (Byron), because somewhere in his sadness they are sending Byron away, he doesn't care about why, he just cares about Byron leaving
Matt TOT 19:	So you focused in on Byron and then you were kinda talking about how dad is going to send the whole family to a lesson, and you were focusing in on relationships, so you started writing with kinda what I like to call the

meat and potatoes of a character, right? Like, trying to figure out

characters' relationships, and kinda retelling a little bit but also looking at

some motivations. One of the things I think you girls are ready to focus

on is how does the setting raise the stakes of the situation? (10.12.12).

Matt selectively revoiced student comments about plot, character relationships and

motivations and directed them to consider these in relation to setting, specifically the time period

of the civil rights movement. Through contingent questions he pushed student thinking and

articulation of their understandings.

Summary of contingent teacher questioning. Overall, across the four focal days, an

average of 85% of Matt's questions were contingent. This high level of contingency paralleled

with Matt's continuous willingness to tinker with his own practice in an effort to improve

learning for students. Further, it demonstrated his willingness to listen and value student

contributions and also his ability to use contingency as an instructional tool to push student

exploration and understanding forward. According to Boyd & Galda (2011), "unscripted

contingent questioning is formulated in the moment, it acts as scaffolding for students as they

talk their way towards greater understanding that is both educationally and personally relevant"

(p.18). Thus, this contingency demonstrated Matt's ability to be responsive in the moment, while

also building coherence and connectivity across student conversations.

Teacher forms of questioning. In addition to understanding the frequency, types and

contingency of teacher questions, I wanted to better understand these questions as speculation,

factual or procedural (Myhill & Dunkin's, 2005). I coded each individual question using this

framework, examples are included in Table 3.6 and results are displayed in Table 4.10.

These results clearly detailed the speculative nature of Matt's questioning across focal

cycles (42%-63%). This speaks to the authentic and educational nature of the talk, as speculative

questions encouraged students to engage in critical thinking and provide their own

interpretations.

Table 4.10

Myhill & Dunkin's Teacher Questioning Forms

Cycle	Total Length of Talk in Time (min.)	Total # [%] Teacher Questions	Factual Raw # [%]	Speculative Raw # [%]	Process Raw # [%]	Procedural Raw # [%]	Rhetorical Clarification Raw # [%]
10.12.12	6:24	11	18% [2]	63% [7]	0% [0]	9% [1]	9% [1]
1.22.13	13:09	33	9% [3]	42% [14]	36% [12]	6% [2]	6% [2]
12.7.12	7:39	15	13% [2]	60% [9]	20% [3]	0% [0]	6% [1]
3.6.13	16:36	20	0% [0]	50% [10]	35% [7]	5% [1]	10% [2]

A closer look at Matt's speculative forms of questioning showed that he mostly asked

questions that required no pre-determined answer. These findings aligned with those for

communicative functions (authentic questioning was the most prominent talk function 3 out of

the 4 days) and questions to characterize Matt's talk as meaningful, purposeful and powerful in

that he granted students interpretative authority. Further, authentic questioning aligned nicely

with both speculative and process forms of questioning, in that they elicited critical, independent

thinking, in an effort to create rich and meaningful learning experiences for students. For

example, during the boys' conversation on 3.6.13, Matt states:

You were talking earlier, I just want to go back to something, you were talking earlier about how he falls in the footsteps of his dad in a way, she follows in the footsteps of her mom, alright, so they both have fallen into their parents footsteps, how do you think the two of them ended up together? [3.6.13, TOT 69].

This TOT was coded for authentic questioning, speculative questioning and contingent questioning. Not only was Matt contingent in the sense that he used previous student contributions to drive the question, he also asked a question that required no predetermined answer, inviting imaginings, opinions, hypotheses, and ideas. Matt was not asking a question that required a yes or no answer; instead, he invited students to engage in a sense of inquiry and collaborative thinking.

Further triangulations of codings can be seen in the October discussion. This was the only focal day authentic questioning was not the dominant communicative function. Instead, display questions (33%) and explaining (33%) dominated. This aligned with findings from the Myhill & Dunkin's questioning analysis. In the October discussion, factual (18%) and procedural (9%) questions were most dominant, yet, this was not the case for the other three focal talk days. Thus, separate codings illustrated that in the October discussion, Matt's patterning of questioning elicited more pre-determined answers than the other three focal talk days. Perhaps this was because the conversation took place earlier in the school year. For example, procedural questioning pertained to the management and organization of a lesson, thus, earlier in the year, Matt may have intervened more with the management of student talk. In later conversations, students may have gained greater control of peer conversations, thus, procedural questions may not have been as necessary. In earlier small group discussions, Matt's questioning appeared to be more rigid, as he guided students towards specific learning outcomes. This may

suggest that questions that required a predetermined answer were more necessary in the beginning of the year to better scaffold the students.   Interestingly, factual and procedural questioning percentages decreased across the year, just as explaining and display questions had in teacher communicative functions. This also supports the notion that scaffolding elicited as support in the beginning of the year was indeed temporary, and decreased as the year progressed. Lastly, it is important to note that in this same October discussion, Matt's questions were contingent at the highest percentage (91%) across all focal days. This finding is important because it shows that Matt is contingently listening and guiding his students in an effort to extend student understandings.

Summary of teacher questioning. By coding teacher questioning in several ways, I better understood nuances of dominant teacher questioning moves. For Matt, and like most teachers, the question was his move of choice- it was present in half of his turns of talk. Yet, Matt's questions were tightly contingent, building on and extending student contributions. Matt's questions were mostly authentic, with some display questions weaved throughout. Unlike many teachers, Matt asked questions not previously known by students- facilitating inquiry and exploration of ideas through conversations. Myhill and Dunkin's questioning framework elucidated numerous instructional functions demonstrating Matt's questioning as purposeful, intentional and contingent. Matt primarily asked speculative and process based questions that engendered critical thinking, agency and autonomy in student talk.

Having a deeper understanding of the types of teacher talk moves employed within and across the focal days provided a better understanding of the teacher talk shifts throughout the school year. In the following section, I explore the ways Matt's interview responses demonstrate an awareness and intentionality in teaching practices over the course of the school year.

a. In what ways does this teacher demonstrate awareness and intentionality in teaching practices throughout the course of the school year?

Teacher interview data. In previous sections of this chapter, I explored the role of teacher talk moves within and across iterations of the focal literacy event. In doing this, I homed in on teacher questioning (contingency and forms) and teacher communicative functions. From these data, I was able to glean understandings across teaching practices throughout the year. In an effort to understand these shifts on a deeper level, I closely reviewed teacher interviews (4 teacher interviews totaling 25 minutes) that provided insight into Matt's awareness, intentionality and self-described purposes behind his instructional moves within and across the literacy event. The interviews revealed Matt's teaching shifts as planful and deliberate, effectively positioning students as primary knowers while also remaining intentional, contingent and purposeful in the teaching of new content across the school year. In analyzing teacher responses, I developed a list of themes that arose from the interviews: class culture, talk prompts, contingent questioning, exploratory talk, intentionality, text selection and varied repertoire. Student interview responses also supported these themes.

Class community. It is evident in Matt's interviews as he continually self-critiques his instructional practices, that he is, indeed a reflective educator. In Matt's first interview (10.24.12), he reflected on his students' progress, particularly because he taught some of his eighth grade students in the past in sixth grade. Matt expressed frustration because he felt the level of student work in 6th grade was better than 8th grade. When asked how the year was going thus far, Matt shared, "Not great, I had this group in 6th, I think they actually handed in better work in 6th grade than they do in 8th grade…but it's October and I'm remembering them in June of 6th grade" (10.24.12). In addition to recognizing that it was only October, Matt also

recognized in his past classrooms that he had never engaged in books clubs this early in the year that he named as a potential reason why he had not observed higher levels of talk from his students in October. Matt stated, "I've never done it (book clubs) as early as October, so I might be being over critical, but it did not go well, but it was October" (10.24.12). Interestingly, later in the year, Matt reflected on his October interview, stating, "I'm wondering if talk structures look different in 6th and different in 8th, like is there a different talk structure in an eighth grade classroom?" (3.26.13). Matt wondered, considering the age, do talk structures look different with eighth grade students? He did not necessarily arrive at an answer for this question, rather he was reflective, continually finding ways to not only improve his instruction, but also the classroom community, and thereby enhance learning experiences for his students.

Matt also shared that he had more opportunities for literacy instruction in 6th grade because his students were with him all day. Matt lamented, "I only have them for two periods and I have to stay sacred to writing workshop, so really its 45 minutes, which is so little time compared to 6th grade" (10.24.12). The schedule in 6th grade was not departmentalized, unlike his eighth grade classroom. Matt believed not only having more time instructional time with students, but also having increased opportunities to build relationships, influenced the volume and quality of student talk. It can be suggested that Matt appreciated the value of classroom culture and understood that it is shaped, nurtured and developed across time.

Talk prompts and contingency. In earlier focal talk days (10.12.12 and 12.7.12), transcripts revealed that Matt encouraged the use of talk prompts amongst his students in an effort to raise the level of conversation. Some of these prompts included- "I agree, can you add on? I disagree." Interestingly, as the year progressed, Matt recognized that the prompts may not have been as beneficial as he initially thought. Matt stated in his March interview, "the prompts

are killing them…its inauthentic" (3.26.13). Later in his June interview, he states, "sometimes they try to sound academic and it doesn't flow" (6.5.13). Matt felt the prompts in many ways stifled student conversation and he wanted to move his students away from the prompts to speak more freely. Interestingly, when looking across both teacher and student talk on focal days, it was evident that the length of talk extended in later conversations. For example, the length and frequency of TOTs during the girls' conversations increased from 6:24 minutes- 15 TOT (10.12.12) to 13:09 minutes-79 TOT (1.22.13). More significantly, the boys increased the length and frequency of TOTs from 7:39 minutes- 35 TOT (12.7.12) to 16:36 minutes- 111 TOT (3.6.13). This connected with Matt's interview statements in that academic prompts were initially impeding student talk. On the earlier talk days in both the girls' (10.12.12) and boys' (12.7.12) groups, the texts and conversations were focused on more academic content such as the civil rights movement and the holocaust. In later conversations, it could be argued that academic prompt usage decreased because students were reading short urban texts and discussing provocative issues such as drug use and teenage relationships. Thus, as a result, students were able to speak more freely, and student conversation became more frequent and extensive. Matt recognized that the talk prompts he previously taught his students were no longer sufficient, thus, he altered his teaching practices in an effort to improve conversation amongst students.

As observed in Matt's interview responses regarding prompting, it was evident that he was reflective when studying his own instructional practices. Perhaps Matt's use of contingent questioning related with this notion, in the sense that he understood teaching to be quite powerful when derived from the responses of students.

Questioning and exploratory talk. Another observable way Matt attempted to improve student conversations was through his use of why questions. These types of questions invited

exploratory talk- where students engaged critically and constructively with each other's ideas in an effort to grapple with and arrive at new understandings through a process of interthinking (Mercer, 2008). Exploratory talk does not simply happen. It is a productive outcome of a teaching and learning stance that values the process for getting the answer and of talking to learn through considering alternative perspectives and connections. Thus, Matt elicited the use of why questions to deepen the level of exploratory talk. For example, in Matt's March interview (3.26.13), he recognized the content of conversations earlier in the year remained surface level, and thus, the level of talk had to be raised. In an effort to alter his instruction, Matt explained how he pushed his students to use why questions. To do this, he would often go around and whisper in students ears, not wanting to disrupt the conversation. While doing this, he prompted the students to talk about why, which he believed to spark more powerful conversation. Matt explained, "If you start asking a lot of why questions, it will lead to more debate" (3.26.13). For example, on 1.22.13, Matt questioned Aaliyah's claim regarding a character's motivation to use drugs:

Exchange 4.3

Aaliyah TOT 74:   O yes because life was too hard when she um, she first she started

                    after high school and she was real smart, but then when she got on

                    her own like, it was like too many challenges coming her way that

                     she couldn't handle it

Matt TOT 75:   What do you mean on her own?

Aaliyah TOT 76:   She was by herself, she was doing everyone on her own, she was

                    independent

Matt TOT 77:   Why?

Jahia TOT 78:   I think her mother

Matt posed a why question which resulted in Jahia joining the conversation. The group grappled with the character's motivation to use drugs through exploratory talk, therefore interthinking together to arrive at a deeper understanding. Thus, Matt understood the value of debate and group exploration of ideas, in that he used exploratory talk as a means for students to "interthink" (Mercer, 2002) and collaborate together.

Interestingly, when reviewing student interviews at the end of the year, many of the students noticed shifts in Matt's teaching, specifically his use of questioning and exploratory talk. In Samuel's June interview, he comments on Matt's use of questioning, "He asked specific questions to help make us think…he would like put little questions in silence to whoever wasn't talking, he did most of the talking toward the end of the small group conversations" (6.3.13). Samuel not only recognized that questioning was pertinent to Matt's teaching, he also understood the majority of his contributions came at the end of each small group conversation. The relevance of timing in Matt's contributions was notable, because he often would close conversations with a teaching point, derived from student contributions.

Samuel also understood the purpose behind Matt's questioning was to push the students to think. This connected with Matt's purpose of employing why questions and eliciting the use of reasoning words through exploratory talk. It is powerful that not only was Matt aware and reflective of his teaching stance on exploratory talk, but his students were as well. This was a testament to the classroom culture Matt created and nurtured over the course of the school year.

Intentionality: teacher talk moves. In Matt's final June interview (6.5.13), he reflected on his use of talk moves throughout the year. Throughout the year long student conversations, Matt believed his teaching not only addressed academic content, but also the art of talking as well. For example, in Matt's June interview he states, "They have trouble with listening…they talk over each other a lot, so I notice sometimes things get missed in conversation" (6.5.13). Matt recognized that although his students were eighth graders, they still needed to be coached on talk moves such as listening. Although skills such as listening had little to do with the literary content pertaining to the texts, Matt still deemed it necessary to coach students on how to collaborate, listen and grow intellectually as a group.

In Matt's June interview, he discussed **the intentionality** behind his contributions during student conversations. He stated, "If someone is really in left field, I'll let it go for a little bit, but then if I realize it's going nowhere, I will jump in" (6.5.13). This insight made evident that Matt would sometimes enter conversations to re-focus the group. In other instances, he inserted himself to question and teach. This is demonstrated through his use of communicative functions-authentic questioning and explaining (teaching) ranked within the top five talk functions across all focal days. In other occurrences, Matt contributed to conversations out of curiosity, engagement and overall enjoyment. For example, Matt explained, "Sometimes I get really into a conversation and insert myself and sometimes I kinda forget that I'm the teacher and I'm not teaching and I'm just really into it. Then there are other times I kind of insert myself and it's more to correct and question" (6.5.13). Regardless of the purpose of Matt's contributions, his talk moves were not employed at random; rather, they served multiple functions with intentionality (Boyd, 2012). Matt was purposeful in his contributions, and understood the reasons as to why he scaffolded students in particular directions during conversations.

Interestingly, these intentional instructional moves were noticed and appreciated by the students as well.

Student talk about teacher intentionality. Shifts in teacher talk moves were observed by student participants. For example, in the final June student interviews, many students expressed that they understood Matt's teaching shifted from the beginning to the end of the year. Kayla states in her June interview, "Sometimes he would let us go off and he wouldn't say anything…he used to butt into our conversations, he did it less at the end of the year, he wanted us to come up with more of the questions on our own" (6.3.13). Thaizon also noticed a shift, stating, "he changed towards the end like, um he asked less questions, and just changed…he sorta stayed back a little bit and let us talk and made sure we were on point still" (6.4.13). Both students understood that Matt in some ways, backed away from their conversation towards the end because he expected students to ask more questions and employ varying talk moves. This was evident in the increase in student TOTs as the year progresses, and also in the use of student questioning and communicative functions. Student questioning as a whole increased in both later conversations (1.22.13, 3.6.13), as well as authentic questioning. This suggests that the intentionality behind Matt's talk moves influenced the outcomes of student contributions. These findings will be explicated further in the paper when student talk moves are discussed across focal days.

Overall, the students understood Matt was intentionally pushing for deeper, higher level conversations throughout the year. In Benjamin's June interview, he states, "He (Matt) put in different things to try and make the conversation go further" (6.4.13). Aaliyah also states, "When we didn't know what to say, he like threw something in there to help us out…like he was throwing key words or a prompt to help us think" (6.5.13). Both Aaliyah and Benjamin

understood Matt was scaffolding the students to think deeper about texts and was doing so by eliciting specific language and talk moves during the conversation. For example, during the 3.6.13 conversation, Matt listened to the students' debate what characters held power in the story. From their responses, he pushed them to think about physical and mental power. Matt explained, "Look at the idea of who has physical power, and what gives it to them, and who has mental power and what gives it to them" (3.6.13). He then proceeded to explain the potential roles of manipulation and insecurities in mental power. Matt scaffolded the students to think deeper about power by introducing the concept of both physical and mental power. Further, he elicited more cognitively challenging thoughts from students when speaking about power, modeling and explicating terms such as physical power, mental power, manipulation and insecurities. Matt tactfully explained new concepts to students, while also questioning and pushing them to think further about a concept during and following the conversation.

To summarize, Matt's students suggested that Matt's talk practices were purposeful and meaningful throughout the year- but they shifted throughout the year. Matt's purposes differed for when and how he contributed to conversations, however, these decisions were intentional while also contingent on student responses. The intentionality behind Matt's teaching was transparent to students, giving their learning purpose, direction and meaning.

Purposeful text selection: varied repertoire with iPads. Across the school year, Matt was engaged in identifying and enacting ways to engage and motivate students with texts. The thoughtfulness behind his text selections was apparent in the variety of text genres (fiction, non-fiction, historical fiction) and types (digital movies, print, digital texts) he introduced across the year. Students recognized these efforts, stating, "I think he tried to like make us more interested in more books" (Tanysha, 6.3.13). Matt dedicated time to researching titles that were of interest

to his students and went out of his way to purchase additional texts at Barnes and Noble. Throughout the year, Matt spoke frequently about student choice. He recognized that in high school, his students would not always be offered choice in selecting texts; however, he understood conversation was better when students were passionate about a topic (6.5.13). Thus, student text choice was often used as a vehicle to engage students and promote meaningful conversations.

At the end of the year, Matt recognized that the blogging and reading routines were becoming a bit stale for his students. In an effort to boost engagement and improve his own pedagogy, Matt applied for an iPad grant and was awarded iPads for his entire classroom. For the final talk and blogging cycle at year end, Matt decided to approach blogging a bit differently. Instead, he asked students to use the application "Explain Everything" that allowed students to write, draw and import pictures, while voicing over their thinking. Matt felt the student blogs were mostly retellings, thus, he wanted to move into something more interactive. In the final June interviews, students shared their thoughts on the application, stating, "I liked drawing and stuff and you could create your own thing" (Benjamin, 6.4.13). Tanysha shared, "I liked the iPads because it was something new" (6.3.13). As noted from the interviews, students were excited about the process, which sparked engagement amongst his students. The use of iPads transformed the final conversation, in that student written contributions became interactive. Students were able to share their creations during the small group conversations that resulted in more extensive and detailed contributions compared to earlier blog entries. Matt's decision to incorporate iPads in the blogging and talk process suggested his repertoire was varied and evolving, continually meeting the needs of students.

In reflecting on the use of iPads at the end of the year, Matt mentioned that he wanted to use edmodo [a social networking site] instead of blogging in the future to create a more interactional, multimodal, authentic experience for students. He felt that students should have the ability to embed youtube clips and visually support their claims during conversations with iPads. Matt explained, "I do believe in creativity, like you are going to read a bunch of books, then you are going to create a book trailer, then you are going to send that book trailer to the author. I got into a twitter dialogue with Sharon Flake that some of my kids got involved with, Andrew and Thaizon started tweeting her, and she tweeted back to us- that to me is a lot more authentic" (6.5.13). In reflecting on the use of blogging throughout the year, Matt came to the realization that students needed to tap into social media on a deeper, more meaningful level. Further, Matt vehemently believed this work should be continued to be paired with authentic talk experiences. Matt's decision to implement iPads provided further evidence that he continually reflected and revisited his instructional practices and repertoire to ensure he was providing students with meaningful, impactful experiences in the classroom.

Findings thus far have focused on the content of student blogs and the talk and instructional practices of the classroom teacher, Matt. Understanding the foundation of both student blogging and teacher talk allowed for a deeper understanding of constructions of student talk over time. To better understand and unpack how students' contributions build throughout the focal literacy event over the course of the year, student talk data were analyzed for communicative functions, questioning, intertextual links and awareness in talk shifts. The components of this analysis are explicated in the following section.

3. **How do students' reading, writing and talk practices build the focal literacy event both as an individual iteration and over the course of the school year?**

Student talk. Student talk mediates and shapes student learning. Through talk, students are able to collaboratively reason with peers, share the cognitive load and construct meaning with others. Authentic student discourse allows students to take ownership of their learning, and therefore grow both socially and academically. It is necessary to understand all language features working together (both teacher and student talk) to deepen understandings of teaching and learning during this literacy event. Further, it is notable that student talk dominates two thirds of the turns of talk across focal talk days- a pattern that is in contradiction with many classrooms, thus, it is important to understand what students are doing when they talk. The planning of this literacy event, the activity of writing blogs and the roles of teacher talk were in service of supporting and extending student thinking and learning. I analyzed student communicative functions and home in on student questioning, intertextual links, student interview data and reasoning words to further understand the scope and function of student discourse. In the following sections, I explicate these findings and explore students' awareness as demonstrated in student interviews.

Student communicative functions. Similar to analyzing teacher communicative functions, the purpose of analyzing student communicative functions was to more deeply understand the talk functions employed by the students and talk patterning throughout the year. Table 4.11 shows the top five most dominant student communicative functions across each focal day. The unit of analysis was turn of talk-definitions and examples of communicative functions are provided in Table 3.5.

Table 4.11

Student Communicative Functions

October 12th [Girls 1] Student- 15 TOT	January 22nd [Girls 2] Student-79 TOT	December 7th [Boys 1] Student-35 TOT	March 6th [Boys 2] Student-111 TOT
Explaining [40%]	Responses Minimal [42%]	Responses Minimal [34%]	Explaining [34%]
Responses Minimal [33%]	Explaining [24%]	Explaining [32%]	Responses Minimal [31%]
Evaluating [20%]	Authentic Questions [14%]	Responses Extensive [17%]	Responses Extensive [11%]
Responses Extensive [6%]	Responses Extensive [13%]	Evaluating [11%]	Authentic Questions [10%]
n/a	Clarification Requests [5%]	Clarification Requests [6%]	Evaluating [8%]

Across each of the focal discussions, the student dominant communicative function was responding (minimal and extensive- averaging 68% of student talk moves). This was followed by explaining (33%) and evaluating (13%). So while these students made two thirds of the turns- their contributions were shaped by others, both by teacher and students. For example, on 12.7.12, Thaizon explained to his peers that the wording in the non-fiction text they read pushed readers towards certain ideas about the Nazi soldiers, "The article is, the wording of the article pushes you towards the idea that they um, the way that the Nazi's all seen it, well they don't come out and say all the Nazi's that all of them were evil, but the movie personally shows that um, that there are some that might question Hitler" (12.7.12, TOT 8). Thaizon was *explaining* a new line of thinking to his peers, pushing them to think about the author's word choice in influencing the reader to form an opinion about the Nazi soldiers.

In addition to explaining, students also evaluated peer contributions. On 3.6.13, the students and teacher discussed an event from a short text, debating whether or not the main character was physically hit by her boyfriend:

Exchange 4.4

Matt TOT 19:   Can I just stop, when did he actually hit her?

Benjamin TOT 20:   When she started to talk back to him

Andrew TOT 21:   No he didn't he put his hand up

Samuel TOT 22:   No he pulled her earing

Andrew and Samuel challenged both their peers and teacher regarding a key event in the text. In essence, they were evaluating and questioning each other's responses in an effort to deepen their understandings. From both the December and March examples, it can be gleaned that students were responding and listening to others, offering new ideas and insights to conversations as they explained and evaluated the scope of what was being said by individuals and as a collective. The fact that students do the explaining is further highlighted by the finding that teacher explaining only averaged 17% across all focal talk days. Thus, these findings showcased that students elaborated on their ideas and therefore were positioned with interpretative authority.

Note that an important finding was that these students asked questions (an average 12% during January and March focal conversations). Literature on student questioning is limited- it is a sought after talk outcome, but one that is scarce. It was notable that these students not only asked questions, but increased the frequency of questioning in later conversations (1.22.13 and 3.6.13). For example, on 1.22.13, Tanysha asked Aaliyah what she meant by her explanation of a text being inauthentic, stating, "Well you say it's inauthentic because it can be real?" (TOT 56). Tanysha engaged Aaliyah by further exploring the notion of authenticity in texts. On

3.6.13, Samuel posed a question to his peer, stating, "Do you agree with me or do you have a different point of view?" (TOT 92). Similar to Tanysha, Samuel was questioning his peer to further grapple with an idea in an effort to interthink and arrive at new understandings collaboratively. Further analysis homed in on student questioning to better understand the roles and functions in student talk across focal talk days.

Student questioning. The following sections include descriptive statistics and illustrate examples for student questioning, contingency of student questioning, and prevalence of open questions within and across student talk.

Frequency of student questioning. Student questioning marks the potential for students to shape the scope of the talk. When student questions are taken up, they position students to respond- possibly to make judgments and provide thoughts about texts, thereby encouraging other students to ask questions and actively listen. Encouraging students to ask questions enables them to have authority over and engagement in the scope of talk (Aukerman, 2007). Thus, I coded types and contingency of student questions and noted their frequencies across all focal talk days. As with teacher questions, the unit of analysis was the question, not the turn of talk. That is to say, multiple questions existed within one TOT and each question was coded individually.

Displayed in Table 4.12 are data for length of talk across each focal day, frequency of student turns of talk and the frequency and rate of student questions.

Table 4.12

Frequency of Student Questioning

Cycle	Total Length of Talk in Time (min.)	Total # Student TOTs (% of total TOT)	Total # Student Questions	# Student Questions/Total Length of Talk in Time (min.)	# Student Questions Per Second
10.12.12 Girls (HF)	6:24	15 (72%)	0	0/6:24 [384 sec.]	0
1.22.13 Girls (FIC)	13:09	79 (60%)	15	15/13:09 [789 sec.]	1: 52.6 seconds
12.7.12 Boys (NF)	7:39	35 (64%)	2	2/7:39 [429 sec.]	1: 214.5 seconds
3.6.13 Boys (FIC)	16:36	111 (73%)	11	11/16:36 [996 sec.]	1: 90.5 seconds

In two out of the four discussion sessions, these students asked questions. The frequency of student questioning from the first discussion to the second discussion for both groups was of great interest. The girls' group went from no questions in the October focal discussion to one question every 52.6 seconds (15 questions) in the January focal discussion. In the boys' group, questions increased from once every 214 seconds (2 questions) in the December focal discussion to once every 90.5 seconds (11 questions) in March. The overall increase in student questioning may suggest that students demonstrated greater interpretative authority in later conversations and thereby assumed their position as primary knowers (Berry, 1981). The prevalence of open questioning across student TOTs is explored in the following section.

Prevalence of student open questioning. Authentic questioning is a question asked that requests information not already known (by the teacher or student). One can presume that students do not typically ask questions to which they already know the answer (Boyd, 2014, JLR, revise and resubmit). However, we can code as to whether a student question is "open." That is to say, when a student asks a question, they are seeking information and the form of the question indicates a willingness to accept more than one possible answer as a response. This is especially

of note when students are posing questions to their peers. These data are unusual in that students

do not typically ask questions of each other. Codings for open questioning suggested questions

were being posed in an effort to inquire and push student understandings forward. We see from

the communicative functions findings in the girls' (1.22.13) and boys' (3.6.13) second cycles of

conversations, authentic questioning was in the top five communicative functions. This

contrasted with earlier talk cycles on 10.12.12 and 12.7.13, when authentic questioning was not

evident, at 0%. This was further evidence that these students were more comfortable and

willing to take risks. In these later focal conversations (1.22.13 and 3.6.13), students began to

question other students in an effort to extend understandings about the texts. For example, on

1.22.13, Aaliyah's question challenges Jahia to further think about her reasoning in her blog:

> No, you said um, it's about how a girl has an addiction who can barely notice her real self
>
> because she behind all that crack, and this is a good example of an urban story. And what
>
> I thought was that didn't really make sense because your saying that only crack heads
>
> live in an urban setting, so do you not think that there could be drug addicts in um like
>
> rural stuff? [1.22.13, TOT 95].

In the above TOT, Aaliyah challenged Jahia by asking her to clarify the meaning of her blog.

Aaliyah's question was grounded in Jahia's blog contribution indicating she had been thinking

about what she had written and what it meant in terms of representation of her community.

Aaliyah pushed Jahia to consider the implications- did Jahia not think that drug addicts existed in

both urban and suburban settings? Was Jahia in fact perpetuating a negative stereotype of urban

citizens? Aaliyah's question exhibited contingency and responsiveness, while also pushing for

clarification and understanding through peer inquiry. This talk move was similar to a question

Matt would have posed – "Are you saying he sought her out almost like a predator?" (3.6.13,

TOT 85) when pushing students to achieve deeper levels of understanding. This line of

questioning is copied on 3.6.13 when Samuel questioned Thaizon about character relationships:

Exchange 4.5

Samuel TOT 90:   Thaizon I know you have a different view on it because when we

were on the carpet you were saying different things so you must

have a lot of things to say plus this is a group effort so can you say

something please?

Thaizon TOT 91:   Um I think that its sorta a problem, I agree with you on that

Samuel TOT 92:   Do you agree with me or do you have a different point of view?

        Toward the end of the academic year in March, we see students apprenticed into ways of

asking and talking. Samuel recognized Thaizon's uncertainty and explicitly questioned him

further, wanting to know if he agreed with the previous statement or if he had a different point of

view. Samuel was not looking for a specific response; rather, he was promoting a sense of

inquiry amongst his peers. Similar to Aaliyah, Samuel's talk provided evidence that he had been

listening to his peers, and in his contingent response he was seeking to deepen the conversation

through contingent questioning, leading to richer, more sophisticated levels of talk. It might be

suggested that both Aaliyah and Solomon were modeling teacher practices as observed through

Matt's questioning. Thus, it is possible that students attempted to replicate Matt's teaching

moves in later conversations, embodying a sense of autonomy and agency within and across

conversations. In the following section, I explicate the frequency of contingent questions across student talk.

Contingent student questions. When we consider if a question is contingent on what has been previously contributed in the last three utterances (Boyd & Rubin, 2006), we gain a deeper understanding of the level of student listening and responsiveness across student talk. As we see illustrated in Table 4.13 below, contingency of student questions was varied. For example, on 1.22.13, Aaliyah discussed the uses of heroin and posed a question to Matt that was not contingent on a previous response, stating, "What's the injection called?" (TOT 51). However, in a later turn of talk, Tanysha contingently questioned Aaliyah's thoughts on the short text (pertaining to drug addiction) being inauthentic, stating, "Well you say it's inauthentic because it can be real?" (TOT 56). While student questioning was not consistently contingent, it served as inquiry- students were not just asking questions to extend thinking, they were asking questions to open new areas of inquiry and these questions were by definition not expected to be contingent.

Thus, we see that in the January discussion, students demonstrated the lowest percentage of contingent questions (40%) perhaps because they were eager to bring their own ideas on the topic of drug addiction to the group. This compared to other talk days 12.7.12 (100%) and 3.6.13 (82%). But overall student questions were contingent and coherent within the scope of the talk (10.12.12- 0%; 1.22.13- 40%; 12.7.12- 100%; 3.6.13- 82%). This is further evidence that students were listening and actively participating in conversations, demonstrating fluidity, responsiveness and engagement. Further, it suggests the possibility that students were scaffolding each other towards deeper levels of understanding, thereby demonstrating a sense of autonomy and agency within and across focal talk days.

Table 4.13

Contingent Student Questions

Cycle	Total Length of Talk in Time (min.)	Total # Student TOTs	Total # Student Questions	Total # Student Contingent Questions	% Student Contingent Questions
10.12.12 Girls (HF)	6:24	15	0	0	0% (no student questions were asked)
1.22.13 Girls (FIC)	13:09	79	15	6	40%
12.7.12 Boys (NF)	7:39	35	2	2	100%
3.6.13 Boys (FIC)	16:36	111	11	9	82%

We see displayed in Table 4.13 that student questions were varied in their contingency. This is notable because students were varied in their talk repertoire, asking more questions later in the school year (3.6.13). This is in contrast to-perhaps complimentary to- teacher questioning (which demonstrated greater consistency in contingency but shifted from display to more authentic questions across the year). To be sure, there was a mutuality of teacher and student talk and the teacher was responsive to and directive of the student talk.

Summary of teacher and student questioning. Overall, teacher questions were contingent and authentic, remaining consistent across focal talk days. Student questions did not demonstrate the same consistency and frequency in contingency. It may be suggested that a consistent pattern of teacher questioning was elicited throughout the school year, whereas students grew and evolved in their talk practices as a result of teacher instruction, or perhaps in an effort to replicate teacher talk moves.

Intertextual student connections. In order to glean a deeper understanding of the patterning and nature of the scope of student talk across focal talk days, I looked closely at student intertextual connections. Intertextuality "is not given in a text, but rather is socially constructed" (Bloome and Egan-Robertson, 1993, p.304) as students talk and respond together. This supports the notion that reading is interactional; the teacher is acknowledging and building upon student contributions, making them socially significant based on what students are proposing in the moment. For blogging, the personal, individual responses experienced of the written modality was first experienced and then the social, collective experience of others responding and co-constructing meaning- in this case through talking together about blogs. Consequently, student blogs primarily offered retellings of the text and limited practices of intertextuality. However, intertextual links within and across student talk offered insight as to the ways meaning was socially constructed with others. In the following section, I discuss the findings from analysis of student intertextual links across focal talk days. See Table 3.7 for definitions and examples of the intertextual link framework (Boyd & Maloof, 2000).

Table 4.14, provides the frequency and rate of intertextual codes (Boyd & Maloof, 2000) across student TOTs for each focal data day. As explicated in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.7), the last row in Table 4.14 provides the quantity of TOTs that did not fit within the intertextual framework. On focal days 1.22.13 and 3.6.13, the number of TOTs coded as "minimal response" was notable. This could be attributed to the fact that later student conversations were longer, encompassing an increased quantity of student TOTs, therefore raising the frequency of student (minimal) responses. Because the length of the student discussions varied- and a longer discussion has a potential for more student intertextual links- I report both raw frequencies and rate of frequency for each coding.

Table 4.14

Rate of Student Intertextual links (adapted from Boyd & Maloof, 2000)

Focal Days Total Student TOTs	10.12.12 TOT (S) 15	1.22.13 TOT (S) 79	12.7.12 TOT (S) 35	3.6.13 TOT (S) 111
Total Length of Talk in Time (min.)	6:24 [384 sec.]	13:09 [789 sec.]	7:39 [429 sec.]	16:36 [996 sec.]
# of **Literature Based** TOT	9	30	21	75
Rate: 1 **Literature Based** TOT per second	384/9= 1:42.7 sec.	789/30= 1:26.3 sec.	429/21= 1: 20.4 sec.	996/75= 1: 13.3 sec.
# of **Personal** TOT	1	5	0	2
Rate: 1 **Personal** TOT per second	384/1= 1:384 sec.	789/5= 1:157.8 sec.	429/0= 0	996/2= 1:498 sec.
# of **Classroom Community** TOT	1	8	1	15
Rate: 1 **Classroom Community** TOT per second	384/1= 1:384 sec.	789/8= 1:98.63 sec.	429/1= 1:429 sec.	995/15= 1:66.4 sec.
# of **Language and Culture** TOT	0	0	6	0
Rate: 1 **Language and Culture** TOT per second	384/0= 0	789/0= 0	429/6= 1: 71.5 sec.	996/0= 0
# of **Universal** TOT	0	4	0	0
Rate: 1 **Universal** TOT per second	384/0= 0	789/4= 1:197.3 sec.	429/0= 0	996/0= 0
# of **Minimal Responses** TOT	4	32	7	19
Rate: 1 **Minimal Response** per second	384/4= 1:96 sec.	789/32= 1:24.6 sec.	429/7= 1:61.3 sec.	996/19= 1:52.4 sec.

In the following sections, I discuss the three most prevalent intertextual links (*literature based*, *personal* and *classroom community*) across focal days as calculated in both rate and frequency. I provide student transcript excerpts for each of the above named intertextual links as support. Lastly, I synthesize my findings of student intertextual links across focal talk days and triangulate these findings across student communicative functions and questioning.

Literature based intertextual links. The findings from Table 4.14 show the most dominant intertextual link in terms of raw frequency and rate was *literature based* across all four focal days. The dominance of literature based connections was evidence that discussions were

accountable to the text (Calkins, 2000). For the most part, the longer the discussion, the more

literature based links- 1.22.13 (13:09 minutes-30 literature based TOTs) and 3.6.13 (16:36

minutes- 75 literature based TOTs). The increase in literature based contributions could have

been the result of the use of higher interest texts. As discussed previously in the findings,

students may have been more interested in the texts used on 1.22.13 & 3.6.13 because they dealt

with more provocative issues such as drug use and teenage relations compared to the earliest

focal day (10.12.12) that focused on more academic content such as the civil rights movement.

Although the majority of literature based contributions were found in later conversations

on 1.22.13 and 3.6.13, these patterns were also evident in earlier conversations as well. For

example, on 10.12.12, students were discussing a historical fiction novel that is set during the

civil rights era. The following literature based episode discusses the characters within the text:

10.12.12 Transcript Excerpt: Literature Based Episode

TOT 6. Kayla	I want to start off with um the brother Byron, I think that he feels that he's like too old to deal with all of life's problems, and life is just and he can go through life without thinking about nothing [00:38]
TOT 7. Jahia	I think the dad really realized that, so he had to make that decision, I said, the dad really realized that he had to make that decision of sending him to Alabama because he really cares about him and he wants him to like learn the real world and that life is not all about silly things [00:57]
TOT 8. Kayla	I feel like the dad, or where the dad come from, I think he's a good man, because most people would like, they would like bypass all of it, and like try and fix it on their own and not try to send them somewhere so they can actually learn how to work in life, but their dad, he sends Byron down south so he can learn how to deal with the real world because the south is in a crisis right now, so he's gonna go ahead and see what they are going to do [1:22]
TOT 9. Tanysha	I agree with Kayla because I think that Byron, being a delinquent, a juvenile delinquent, he think that he could carry himself, he don't need anybody else to help him
TOT 10. Jahia	On the other hand, Kenneth doesn't understand, Kenneth doesn't understand because, um, he's not at the point where he cares, what he cares about Byron, but he cares about how it would be like without him, because somewhere in his sadness that they are sending Byron away, that he doesn't care about why, he just cares about how Byron leaving, like on [2:10]

As observed in the above exchange, students referenced the text and shared thoughts and opinions regarding the characters in the text- "I feel like the dad, or where the dad come from, I think he's a good man" (TOT 8). Students also offered perceptions of authorial intent in regards to character representation- "Byron, being a delinquent, a juvenile delinquent, he think that he could carry himself, he don't need anybody else to help him" (TOT 9). In turns 6-10, student contributions were not only derived from the literature, but also built on previous student responses, demonstrating contingency, coherence and connectivity. For example, Kayla and Jahia discussed the character Byron and his father in turns 6 and 7. As a result, the preceding turns of talk (8-10) built upon Kayla and Jahia's contributions, bringing new characters such as Kenneth- "On the other hand, Kenneth doesn't understand" (Jahia, TOT 10) into the discussion.

Classroom community intertextual links. In addition to literature based student connections, students also exhibited personal connections and classroom community links with greater frequency in later conversations (1.22.13 & 3.6.13). This suggests that students made more connections to friends, family, self-experience and identity as the school year progressed- "I'm just saying like it is, not 9 times out of 10 there are teen crack heads, not like that, but there are teens that are addicted to drugs, and not just a stupid drug like weed" (Aaliyah, 1.22.13, TOT 51). Additionally, students were building on the utterances of other members in the class, and inviting their peers into conversations with greater frequency- "Thaizon I know you have a different view on it…so you must have a lot of things to say plus this is a group effort so can you say something please" (Samuel, 3.16.13, TOT 90). As discussed previously, this finding could be attributed to the use of higher interest texts later in the year. It may also be suggested that the evolution of interxtual links may be due to the fact that students were embodying increased

independence and autonomy during conversations and therefore growing as a result of Matt's

ongoing instruction throughout the school year.

Similar to literature based connections, I noticed patterns of classroom community links

across student TOTs. For example, on 1.22.13, a series of student TOTs were classified as links

to the classroom community (TOT 93-100). In the following excerpt, students discussed the

notion of suburban vs. rural environments, and questioned if issues such as drug use were

evident in both areas:

1.22.13 Transcript Excerpt: Classroom Community Links

TOT 93.Aaliyah	I just noticed something, um Jahia and Tanysha stated that
TOT 94. Jahia	[inaudible]
TOT 95.Aaliyah	No, you said um, it's about how a girl has an addiction can barely notice her real self because she behind all that crack, this is a good example of an urban story. And what I thought was that didn't really make sense because your saying that only crack heads live in an urban setting so do you not think that there could be drug addicts in um like rural stuff? [9:55]
TOT 96. Jahia	It can, it was, what I was referring to is that
TOT 97. Kayla	There won't be as many?
TOT 98. Jahia	Yeah I mean there are going to be some in suburban and rural areas, but like, in the urban setting, there are going to be more crack heads than ever because its that
TOT 99.Aaliyah	Population type?
TOT 100. Jahia	Yeah

As observed in this exchange, Aaliyah and Kayla were discussing scope and inviting others'

contributions, questioning others' ideas, building on the ideas of their peers, engaging in

exploratory talk and creating a sense of solidarity amongst the group. Thus, the classroom

community links were made across multiple TOTs and demonstrated collaboration,

responsiveness and interthinking (Mercer, 2008).

Personal intertextual links. In another intertextual exchange on 1.22.13, the student

(Aaliyah) made connections between the text and her own personal life by arguing the text

demonstrated authentic qualities of a setting that paralleled her home life. For example, the text

discussed on 1.22.13 explored the use of drugs in urban environments. The fact that the student

participants lived in urban environments allowed them to make connections with their own lives.

In the following excerpt, Aaliyah discussed the term "authenticity" and debated if the text read

was indeed authentic. Aaliyah explained that there were many teens on drugs using "weed" and

heroin in urban environments:

1.22.13 Transcript Excerpt: Personal Links

TOT 47. Aaliyah	Authenticity is happening in the world, like, we don't know, 9 times out of 10 there is teens that are strung out on drugs, so I mean
TOT 48. Matt	Do you know that or are you just saying a number?
TOT 49. Aaliyah	I know that
TOT 50. Matt	How do you know that
TOT 51. Aaliyah	O no like 9, no, I'm just saying like it is, not 9 times out of 10 there are teen crack heads, not like that, but there is teens that are addicted to drugs, and not just a stupid drug like weed or something, like actually, what's the injection called? (turns to Matt)
TOT 52. Matt	You want to just go for crack for now?
TOT 53. Aaliyah	Heroin

As observed in the above excerpt, Aaliyah used her personal life experiences to generalize and

support her argument that the text read demonstrated authentic qualities of an urban

environment. This suggests that Aaliyah felt safe to share her personal life experiences and also

demonstrated her vulnerability in discussing provocative issues such as drug use. An urban

environment was part of Aaliyah's identity, thus, her personal experiences were fostered and

encouraged throughout the conversation by Matt. Aaliyah's willingness to share her life

demonstrated her ability to take risks. These factors could be attributed to the fact that this

particular conversation took place later in the school year. Further, it can suggested that Matt

created a strong classroom community where students felt free to interpret texts and interthink

(Mercer) together, bridging both academic and personal understandings in an effort to further student understanding.

Summary of intertextual links. Across the four focal discussions, student talk was not simply retelling. Rather, it was rich with intertextual links that connected to literature, classroom community and personal connections.   The prevalence of intertextual links across student TOTs demonstrated the interactional nature of reading in Matt's classroom. Further, it suggested that Matt was successful in creating a socially constructive classroom where students were able to make connections across their lives, world and texts in connection with the academic content being taught. According to Boyd & Maloof (2000), "when students are motivated to articulate connections between new information and their experiences and home culture- engenders the kind of extended talk that promotes communicative competence" (p.178). It could be argued that Matt motivated students in a way that promoted collaboration and cohesiveness, continually pushing students to bridge their home and schools lives and as a result, deepen their understandings of texts. Moreover, intertextual connections were evident throughout the four focal talk days. The intertextual links evolved into more powerful conversational tools as the school year progressed, demonstrated by an increase in frequency and rate. These findings aligned with both student communicative functions and questioning in that student questioning increased on later focal talk days. In the following section, student interviews are triangulated with the findings in an attempt to better understand shifts in student talk.

Student interview data. In reviewing the findings from student communicative functions, questioning and intertextual connections, shifts in student talk throughout the school year were evident. When triangulating these findings with June student interview data, it became apparent that students displayed a sense of awareness regarding their talk, specifically the shifts

in talk practices. Thus, students understood their practices improved over the course of the school year, however, the reasons as to why students believed their talk evolved varied. In the following paragraphs, I provide excerpts from student interviews that demonstrate their awareness of talk shifts over the course of the school year.

Student interview responses. In the final June student interviews, Andrew was asked if he thought the student talk had changed over the course of the school year. Andrew expressed that he believed the small group conversations did indeed change, however, he attributed the transformation to the act of listening. For example, Andrew believed students began listening to each other more in later conversations, stating, "towards the end we all started agreeing and listening to each other" (6.3.13). This finding connected with contingent student questioning in that not only were students asking more questions in later conversations (1.22.13 & 3.6.13), they were also contingently listening and responsive to each other. Further, when analyzing the total percentages of both student communicative functions: *responses minimal* and *responses extensive*, it is clear that both functions maintained a notable presence across each focal day. For example, on 1.22.13, minimal and extensive responses totaled 55% and on 3.6.13, totaled 42%. This demonstrated that students were contingent and responsive to their peers throughout portions of their conversations. Thus, the findings from Andrew's interview data were supported by student questioning and communicative functions.

Andrew was not alone in his views. Another student participant Tanysha believed conversations improved as the year progressed as well. She stated that conversations "changed when we had more interest in the book or passage" (6.3.13). Tanysha explicitly stated that she felt conversations transformed as a result of students reading higher interest texts. This supports previous findings pertaining to dominance of student TOTs, communicative functions and

questioning in that conversations may have improved as a result of text choice. Tanysha also expressed that she felt later discussions improved because students "had views and different perspectives" (6.3.13). Tanysha believed student dialogue evolved as a result of students sharing alternative perspectives. These varying perspectives often sparked debate, leading to higher student engagement towards the end of the school year. Samuel also agreed with Tanysha, stating, "the talk became more interesting because I had more to argue about which made it more interesting" (6.3.13). Samuel appreciated when other students rebutted with contradictory perspectives and thereby supported their thoughts with evidence. For example, on 3.6.13, Samuel invited alternative perspectives during the conversation stating, "do you agree with me or do you have a different point of view?" (TOT 92, 3.6.13). Samuel recognized in his interview that these types of invitations became more evident as the school year progressed, and as a result sparked greater student interest and engagement.

Lastly, Jahia attributed conversational growth to deeper levels of thinking and character work, stating, "in the beginning of the year we just talked about what we blogged….at the end of the year we made it deeper and related it to other characters, and we talked more about what we had realized made us think" (6.3.13). Jahia recognized the conversations in the beginning of the year were surface level compared to the year-end conversations that delved into more complex thinking work.

Summary of student interviews. Overall, as observed in final June interviews, students understood that their talking practices not only evolved, but grew in the process. These findings were supported by previous findings pertaining to student communicative functions and questioning. Anecdotally, the data showed a clear connecting of the language environment as a whole- the students were referencing blogs in their discussions and presumably what was valued

in the talk informed to some degree the writing of the next blog. Showing this interconnectivity is complex and nuanced and a focus on my dissertation in chapter 5.

In the following section I explore the content of both writing and talk modalities through an analysis of student reasoning words (Mercer, 2008). In doing so, I glean a closer examination of the way students grappled with, elaborated on and connected to experiences and ideas. Thus, I am able to better understand the level of student reasoning occurring within and across student blogging and talk.

 a. **How does the content of the digital writing experiences vary from the content of the talking event?**

Comparing scope of blog and talk. I compared the content of the students' blogs and talk by discussing the following: length and scope, communicative functions, questioning, intertextual links and student usage of reasoning words. In this section, I summarize findings reported under blogs and discussion and comment on them in terms of how they compare across student blogging and talk. In doing so, I aim to understand the differences and similarities in the content of the digital writing experience compared to the talking event.

Length and scope. Across the four focal data days, I analyzed a total of 16 student blogs from both boys and girls groups. The average blog word count remained relatively similar across the four focal days (range: 81-107 words; average: 86 words). In an effort to better understand the content of the blogs, various forms of literary elements (Table 3.4) were used as measures of coding within a representative sample (4 student blogs [total] for 2 students across 4 focal data days).

The scope of the content of the blogs included various forms of literary elements, which were taken up to a greater degree by both groups in the later focal blogs (personal connections, character motivation and development). While I can conclude the influence of discussion about these blogs as casual, it seems reasonable to assume that students were being apprenticed into ways of responding to text. Evidence for this includes the repertoire of teacher talk moves (authentic questions, display questions, explaining) elicited across the four focal talk days. To be sure, analysis suggests greater student involvement in terms of engagement (more quantity and more questions and connections) and inquiry (student questions).

The platform for the scope of the discussions was the blog. Students wrote to express their thinking and read each other's blogs. This was in preparation for the discussion. The function of the two activities appeared complimentary- in support of each other. It would appear that students understood the purpose of the blog was to ready them for conversation. This was further evidenced through student interview responses discussed previously in chapter 4.

The length of small group conversations increased across the four focal days and ranged from 6:24 minutes to 16:36 minutes perhaps due to the particular texts (genre and scope). The text genres discussed in earlier cycles (10.12.12 and 12.7.12) focused more on academic content pertaining to historical fiction and non-fiction texts based on historical events, whereas later cycles (1.22.13 and 3.6.13) discussed more provocative issues such as urban drug use and teenage relationships. It may also be suggested that later conversations (1.22.13 and 3.6.13) were more extensive due to the nature of content and students' ability to make personal connections with texts. This was also rehearsed in the blogs. Thus, the observed changes in both student talk and blogs on later focal days (specific to length and scope) were perhaps the result of increased engagement around text choice, or, a result of Matt's teaching throughout the school

year. In addition to understanding the scope and length of student talk and blogs, I also explicate

my findings pertaining to student communicative functions and questioning in the following

sections.

Communicative functions. Across the four focal talk days, student responding (minimal

and extensive) were the most dominant communicative functions, followed by explaining and

evaluating. The consistent use of these communicative functions suggested students offered new

insights and ideas to conversations, while also being responsive and listening to others'

contributions. Further, the fact that students were explaining suggested students were

elaborating on their ideas and were positioned with interpretative authority. An additional

finding in student communicative functions revealed an increased use of student questioning in

later conversations (1.22.13 and 3.6.13). The rise in questioning warranted further analysis, thus,

in the following section I report my findings on the frequency of student questioning.

Questioning. Student questioning was not consistent across focal talk days. Student

questioning ranged from 0-15 questions, with a higher frequency and rate of questioning

occurring on later talk days (1.22.13 and 3.6.13). Further, continent questioning fluctuated

throughout the year, ranging from 0-100%. From these findings, it may be suggested that

students grew and evolved in their talk practices (eliciting more questions) as a result of teacher

instruction or perhaps in an effort to replicate teacher talk moves. To delve deeper into the

content of student talk, I analyzed the intertextual links within and across focal talk days.

Intertextual links. Findings revealed the most dominant student intertextual links across

the four focal days to be literature based links, classroom community links and personal links.

As evidenced from the increase in frequency and rate of intertextual links on later focal days

(1.22.13 and 3.6.13) it can be suggested that the use of intertextual links evolved into more powerful conversational tools as the school year progressed. Overall, the use of intertextual links revealed the interactional nature of reading in Matt's classroom that allowed students to bridge connections from their personal lives to the academic content being taught in the classroom. This introduces the notion of exploratory talk and its potential within small group conversations to extend student thinking as compared to the more finite nature of student blogging. In the following section, I discuss students' use of reasoning words within and across writing and talk modalities.

Students' use of reasoning words. Having analyzed the scope and length of student blogging and talk (communicative functions, questioning and intertextual links), I aimed to compare the content of the blogging and talking event. To do this, I coded for the students' use of reasoning words (Mercer, 2008) across both writing and talk modalities. The analysis of reasoning words acted as a comparative measure when analyzing the similarities and differences in content across blogging and talk events, specifically the level of reasoning occurring in both talk and writing modalities across focal data days. The purpose of studying student reasoning word usage allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the flexibility and exploratory facets of language elicited. According to Mercer (2002), students use exploratory talk as a means to interthink as they collaboratively and publicly explore new knowledge and concepts. Thus, the use of reasoning words demonstrates students are more open to grapple with talk and explore alternative ways of thinking. In Table 4.15, I provide the frequency of reasoning word usage in both student talk and blogs across focal data days. Reference Table 3.8 for definitions and examples of reasoning words derived from student blogging and talk data.

Table 4.15

Student Reasoning Word Usage Across Talk and Blogs

Cycle	Total Length of Talk (# Words)	Total # Student Reasoning Words (RW) in Talk	# Student RW in Talk Per Word	Average Length of Blogs (# Words)	Total # of Student Reasoning Words (RW) in Blogs	Average Student RW Usage Per Blog	# Student RW in Blog Per Word
10.12.12 Girls (HF)	1,117	84	84/1117= **1:13.3 words**	83	23	23/4= 5.75	5.75/83= **1:14.4 words**
1.22.13 Girls (FIC)	2,130	134	134/2130= **1:16 words**	81	30	30/4= 7.5	7.5/81= **1:10.8 words**
12.7.12 Boys (NF)	1,314	104	104/1,314= **1:12 words**	107	51	51/4= 12.8	12.8/107= **1:8.4 words**
3.6.13 Boys (FIC)	3,165	311	311/3165= **1:10 words**	83	64	64/4= 16	16/83= **1:5.2 words**

Blogging. As observed in the above table, the use of student reasoning words in blogging ranged from 23-64 words. The least frequent rate of reasoning word usage occurred on focal day 10.12.12 (1: 14 words) and the most frequent occurred on focal day 3.6.13 (1:5 words). This growth paralleled the students' use of literary elements in blogging in that higher levels of literary interpretation (personal connections, character development and motivation) were elicited on later focal days (1.22.13 and 3.6.13). Therefore, this finding suggests that the use of reasoning words on later focal dates indicated higher levels of exploratory reasoning, potentially connecting to the increase in students' use of literary elements in blogging.

Talk. Homing in on student talk, it was evident that the difference in the use of reasoning words across each focal day was substantial (84 words on 10.12.12 to 311 words on 3.6.13). In

fact, with each later date, the quantity of reasoning words increased (84, 104, 134, 311), with the most notable increase occurring from 1.22.13 (134) to 3.6.13 (311). The rate of reasoning word usage ranged from (1:10 words- 1:16 words). The highest rate of student reasoning usage was on the latest focal data day (3.6.13- 1:10 words). This connects with an increase in both student questioning and intertextual links (literature based, classroom community and personal) potentially suggesting higher levels of exploratory talk and reasoning.

Blogging and talk. In looking at Table 4.15, it is clear there were more reasoning words used in the talk than there were in the writing of the blog. For example, on 10.12.12, the earliest focal data day studied, the reasoning word differential between the blogging and talk was 61 words. On 3.6.13, the reasoning word differential between blogging and talk increased to 247 words. However, when looking at the rate of reasoning word usage across the blog and talk, it was evident there was a greater differential on 1.22.13 (1:10 words in blog- 1:16 words in talk) and 3.6.13 (1:5 words in blog- 1:10 words in talk), with a higher rate of reasoning word usage occurring in the blog. Therefore, the overall frequency and rate of reasoning word usage increased in both blogging and talk as the year progressed, yet, the rate of reasoning word usage appeared to be higher in the blogs when compared to the talk. This finding could be attributed to the extensive length of the talk, compared to the more condensed word usage and therefore more concentrated use of reasoning words in the blog.

Summary of student reasoning words. The findings show an increase in reasoning word usage in both the blogging and talk as the school year progresses. As proposed previously, the increase in reasoning words on later dates could be the result of the exposure to teaching that occurred throughout the year. Thus, it's possible that the increase in reasoning words, initially modeled by the teacher, was appropriated by the students and implemented in their talk and

writing with greater frequency. These findings are important in that students demonstrated higher levels of reasoning in both writing and conversations that took place later in the year. This supports earlier findings pertaining to an increase in literary elements in the blog, and also an increase in questioning and intertextual connections as demonstrated in student talk. Thus, multiple data points support the notion that student talk shifted and therefore improved as the school year progressed.

Although the rate of reasoning word usage in the students' blogs was higher than the talk, the frequency of reasoning word usage was not. Thus, when triangulating multiple data points (literary elements, student questioning, intertextual connections) it was evident that deeper levels of reasoning occurred in the talk compared to the blog across all focal days. The use of reasoning words served as a marker for exploratory talk that demonstrated a classroom culture of safeness and risk taking. Thus, the small group conversations allowed for collective meaning making and exploratory talk, compared to the individual nature of the blog that often consisted of retellings of the text. Therefore, it can be proposed that the blog activity was deprived notions of flexibility, contingency and talk supports from the teacher. It can be argued that although blogging served a useful purpose in grounding and focusing small group conversations, it could not provide the same level of richness and instruction as the talk. Without the talk, student understandings would have remained unchartered, unchallenged and stagnate, thus, stifling future student learning.

Summary of findings. For the purposes of this study, I felt compelled to research the relationship between speaking and writing in an 8th grade classroom, specifically in conjunction with multimodal compositions such as blogging. The overarching research inquiry sought to

unpack and examine teacher and student practices that made up this literacy-oracy event. Specifically this study examined:

1. What is the scope of the content of student blogs across four teaching cycles across the school year?
2. What types of teacher talk moves are employed within and across four teaching cycles of the literacy event?
   a. How does this teacher demonstrate awareness and intentionality in teaching practices throughout the course of the school year?
3. How do students' reading, writing and talk practices build the focal literacy event both as an individual iteration and over the course of the school year?
   a. How does the content of the digital writing experiences vary from the content of the talking event?

The data collected for this study unearthed key findings that addressed the above research questions:

Student blogging. The findings from the blogs revealed that students primarily retold events from the text earlier in the school year, however, as the year progressed, students harnessed literary elements such as critique and character development to ascribe character motivation in service of personal connections that deepened the level of thinking and sophistication. It is possible that the growth in content in the blogs, as evidenced from students' use of literary elements, is a result of teaching through talk throughout the school year. A larger sample of blogs would need to be analyzed in order to concretely make this claim.

Teacher talk. In analyzing teacher talk, findings showed authentic questioning to be the most dominant teacher communicative function. Display questions were second, followed by explaining, minimal responses and directing. The largest shift in teacher communicative functions was observable from October to March that highlighted the lack of display questions

used at year end-moved from most dominant in October to non-existent in March. Although this is only representative of the focal data, it could be suggested that Matt's use of display questions and explaining was indicative of his level of scaffolding from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Meaning, his scaffolding moved from intensive to less intensive as the year progressed.

In analyzing teacher communicative functions, Matt's frequent use of questioning became evident. Matt asked about two questions every minute (knowing the high level of contingency), this remarkable consistency suggested Matt was listening and guiding through his questions. Furthermore, when analyzing the forms of questioning, Matt's use of speculative forms of questioning showed that he mostly asked questions that required no pre-determined answer. These findings aligned with Matt's use of authentic questioning.

In triangulating data from teacher communicative functions and questioning with teacher and student interview responses, it became evident that both the teacher and students understood that Matt demonstrated intentionality in his talk moves. Furthermore, Matt showcased high levels of contingency in his interview responses, specifically when discussing the implementation of ipads in his classroom.

Student talk. Across each of the focal discussions, the dominant student communicative function was responding (minimal and extensive). This was followed by explaining and evaluating. Student questioning was not prevalent earlier in the school year, however, increased on later focal days (1.22.13 & 3.6.13). The overall increase in student questioning may suggest students demonstrated greater interpretative authority in later conversations, perhaps replicating teacher talk moves. Interestingly, student questions were varied in their contingency- just as

students were varied in their talk repertoire, asking more questions later in the school year. This is in contrast to teacher questioning that demonstrated greater consistency in contingency but shifted from display to more authentic questions across the year.

Lastly, student talk was not simply retelling like many of the blogs written earlier in the school year. Instead, talk was rich with intertextual links that connected to literature, classroom community and personal connections that increased as the school year progressed. Students demonstrated awareness of shifts in their own talk as demonstrated through interview responses. Further, an analysis of reasoning words across both student talk and blogs revealed there were more reasoning words used in the talk than there were in the blog, however, there was a higher rate of reasoning words in the blog. Both frequency and rate increased in blogging and talk as the school year progressed.

The findings from this study inform greater discussion concerning the field of research pertaining to the speaking-writing connection, specifically the blending of dialogic and multimodal-digital practices. In the following section, I explore various discussion points and themes which arose from this study. The themes derived from this study resist the current trend of scripted programming in current day education and provide insight for future research studies.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In the midst of pressures set forth by teacher evaluation plans and the Common Core Standards (2011), teachers have the ability to be decision makers, and create meaningful, dialogic learning experiences for their students. However, to do so takes purpose, gumption and courage. Adopting a dialogic stance (Boyd & Markarian, 2011) that embraces listening and contingent teaching practice that builds on student motivations and intentions for work to be done around text, fosters a community of risk taking. Thus, the act of listening to, building upon, and furthering student intentions and contributions can be harnessed through the use of multimodal practices involving technology. Teachers who employ an instructional repertoire that includes New Literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011) must be empowered to move beyond scripted ways of teaching, and instead, infuse multimodal and dialogic practices in an effort to enrich current educational methods.

Despite pressures placed on Matt by school administrators and state curriculum leaders to improve standardized test scores, he made the decision to be a risk taker. In doing so, Matt embraced multimodal and dialogic spaces in his classroom. These spaces were nurtured in large part because of his willingness to listen and encourage student talk to harness student intentions and work to align them to various curriculum initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards (2011). We see this as Matt set up opportunities and supports for his students to experience discussion around high-interest, multiple genre texts. He understood that discussions don't just happen. So the literacy event that was the focus of the study evolved in ways to build on what his students were interested in (in terms of technology and content) and provided the physical space, technological access, and dialogic spaces for this to happen.

Matt supported the notion of writing about reading as a tool to aid students in understanding texts on a deeper level. He was a longtime proponent and experienced practitioner of writing workshop models. Matt was highly interested in using blogging as a tool to write about reading and was intrigued with how writing could be used to support conversations about choice texts in the classroom. Thus, he embarked on a journey of learning in an effort to create meaningful learning experiences for his students that infused both dialogic and multimodal practices. This is significant considering Matt taught in a low-income, urban school with a 97% African American student population with 85% of students receiving free and reduced lunches (U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Further, three quarters of the student population read below grade level and struggled to score proficient on state standardized tests. Thus, under these pressures, Matt was not afforded the same flexibility and instructional freedom as teachers from higher performing, affluent schools, yet, he maintained a classroom space which embodied autonomy, choice and meaning.

Matt understood and valued the overall importance of classroom talk. In Matt's final interview in June, he put it this way, "talk is, and actually it's up there [*points to chart on wall*], its collaboration, I have a bunch of people with question marks over their head and on top it's a light bulb [*referring to chart*]. Like, you come together with a question, and you search for an answer together, but you learn through dialogue" (6.5.13). For Matt, the learning experiences and opportunities for growth afforded by talk could not be replicated in other modalities. He set up and sanctioned opportunities for his students to "interthink" (Mercer, 2002) for, "when we come together in groups, we create something better" (Matt, 6.5.13). We see this manifest in the literacy-oracy event. The individual work of reading is the platform for initial blogging which is then the platform for the group talk. It can be assumed that the talk together, the inter-thinking

then informs the continued reading and blogging and talk. Learning is accretive (Boyd & Galda, 2012) and is collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful (Alexander, 2006).

This study is conducted and understood from the perspective that language is inherently dialogic and multimodal and must be understood situated in institutional, cultural and historical contexts. In analyzing the broad scope of language, a focus of this study was to better understand how teachers implemented multimodal, dialogic practices in their classroom and also, how talk and writing worked together, and what ways, if any, the speaking-writing connections of blogging informed class discussions and impacted student learning. I wanted to make transparent what teacher and student practices made up this literacy-oracy event? What was the scope of the content of the blogs? How did the teacher set up and support this event and how aware was he of his practices- particularly his talk moves? And how did student reading, writing and talk practices inform individual iterations – and the literacy-oracy event as a whole? My findings point to three overarching themes. First, interconnectivity. Teaching and learning decisions and practices do not stand alone. In this classroom, blogs were used as a tool to write and think about carefully selected texts, and these blogs were the platform for classroom discussion. Second, dialogic stance. The repertoire of teacher talk is in service of promoting student engagement, reasoning and elaboration. Students talking, listening and responding to patterns of classroom talk- they learn to feel safe and take risks in their talk and thinking as consistent patterns are experienced across the school year. Third, awareness and intentionality. There is purposefulness and awareness of decision-making by both teacher and student. In interviews, this teacher affirmed his planfulness and intentionality behind responsive, in the moment teaching decisions embraced within dialogic spaces. Students expressed awareness of teacher

moves to support their learning and also increased engagement and vested interest in this literacy event. These three themes provide a framework for discussion of this study.

Embracing Interconnectivity: Blogging as an Opportunity to Support Comprehension and Reasoning through Talk

When students read in Matt's classroom, he encouraged them to use artifacts such as post-its and readers' notebooks to take notes and in turn drive small group conversations about books they were reading. Students were expected to record their thoughts, however, they were given the freedom to represent their thinking through visual or written representations. In the 2012-2013 school year, Matt recognized the need for more interactive, technological tools for learning, and embraced the use of blogging as a space for students to respond to literature. Matt understood that many of the students did not have access to technology or the internet at home, and recognized the need for students to be exposed to mediums such as blogging- students' blogged about texts during the school day on classroom computers that were stationed in the room. Noting the success of this practice as evidenced by increase in student engagement, Matt was awarded an iPad grant for his classroom at the end of the school year. For many students, this was their first opportunity to work with technology of this kind. The iPads offered students a different medium to demonstrate their thoughts about the readings. In the last literature cycle (not a focal cycle for analysis but part of a larger data bank) the students' blogged on their iPads. Such responsiveness to his students was again evident as Matt made technological tools available, and harnessed their use in educationally relevant and purposeful ways. Further, this demonstrated a deep level of reflection as Matt continually revisited his instructional moves to engage students and push learning forward. Matt viewed blogging and the use of technology as a tool to be harnessed in service of individual and collective learning.

Blogging: an individual and collective endeavor. Different to writing in paper form, blogging provided a public venue for students to share ideas with their peers and teacher. It also allowed for an interactional space where students could respond to each other's ideas in an open forum. But this was something to be apprenticed into. As represented in the findings, student participants rarely responded in writing to others' blog postings unless asked to do so. Students understood blogging was a public forum, yet, failed to embrace the notion of blogging as a collaborative space. But this understanding was emerging. In the year end interviews, Thaizon shared that he thought the blogs were helpful because they allowed him and his peers to read the ideas of others- "it helped to look at each other's blogs and what we thought about the book or topic" (6.4.13). Jahia also agreed that the blogs made student writing more visible, explaining that she preferred blogs over writing in a notebook because blogging was something different that allowed them to "read other people's blogs" (6.3.13). Thus, students acknowledged the benefits of blogging as a public forum in their ability to read others' ideas, however, they struggled to understand the interactional and collaborative possibilities within the act of blogging.

Blogging is then both an individual and collective endeavor. In a way, blogging activated inner speech Vygotsky (1978) in students, an exploratory talking to learn (Barnes, Britton and Torbe, 1990). Students are able to extend understandings and create new meanings by writing about literature, without first having vocalized their thoughts. Within the realm of blogging, writing moves from a private entity, to a public and collaborative forum that becomes increasingly dialogic. The internalization process occurs through mediated processes that occur internally and externally. When students take ownership of an activity such as blogging, they transform and interpret words for their own individual purposes. In analyzing blogs through a

sociocultural lens, it is plausible to view blogs as mediated tools that students can transform, interpret and use for literacy learning. But the act of blogging in this classroom did not stand alone. It was a response to independent reading and a preparation for the class discussion. Reading, writing, speaking and listening were interdependent and interconnected.

Blogging: purpose and content. Within the focal literacy event, student blogging served two purposes. The first was to provide students an opportunity to process the content of the unit based texts through writing. The second was to provide students with a framework for student talk during the small group conversations. Matt read student blogs on a weekly basis, however, he rarely participated as a writer. Instead, Matt acted as facilitator, creating and organizing chat spaces with the change of each new unit. He did not provide students with specific prompts, assignments or restrictions, instead, students were asked to "share their thoughts" about the text. Because this was in the context of schooling, and perhaps because students understand that Matt set things up in relation to school learning, many student responses reflected the content of the unit without being prompted to do so. However, many blogs consisted of retellings of the texts. Later in the year some blogs began to move away from retellings and encompass literary elements such as personal connections, critique, inference and character development. But while the blogs evolved in this language and scope of the content, the blogs did not necessarily change in length. The four focal literature cycles of the literacy event made transparent shifts across the year. Greater incidence of literary interpretation (personal connections, critique, inference and character development) paralleled greater incidence of student reasoning words suggesting higher levels of exploratory reasoning in the blogs further into the school year. Perhaps the talk supported this shift. Perhaps Matt's instruction of the task shaped this. Perhaps overall teaching and learning in Matt's class informed this. But the blogging moved to include more schooling

language and content. To be sure, there was a level of reciprocity that existed among modalities across time.

     Reciprocity between blogging and talk. In understanding the role of blogging, one must also look closely at discourse and the ways in that the two modalities influenced each other throughout the focal literacy event. The blogs allowed students to engage in a process of "writing to think" (Britton, 1993; Rubin, 1990) in that students used writing as a vehicle to process information that would eventually be developed through conversation. Without the blogs, conversation may not have been grounded within a particular set of ideas or purpose. Aaliyah found purpose in blogging before talk, stating, "it gave us something to think about, so like if no one had anything to say (in conversation), then we could start with our original blog, then everyone could build off it" (6.5.13). Aaliyah understood the blogs grounded the conversations, acting as a foundation to be built upon through talk. Kayla shared a similar understanding of blogging, stating, "we could read off what people said and have a stronger conversation off that" (6.3.13). Kayla too understood the blogs acted as a starting point for the discussion that eventually evolved into stronger conversation. Thus, the blogs served as a springboard for the talk, guiding and anchoring the content of the conversations. Blogging entries informed the practices of flexibility, contingency and talk supports from the teacher, thereby lacking the same level of richness as the talk.   This thinking extends current research (Davis & McGrail, 2009; Zawlinski, 2009) within the field of blogging, showing that blogging has far greater potential when accompanied with talk in dialogic spaces (Thein et. al , 2010).

     Within this study, it appeared a level of reciprocity existed between both writing and talk modalities. Both elements enhanced each other. This supports previous research pertaining to the speaking- writing connection that attests writing only seems to work if talk works with it

(Rivard and Straw, 1999). This is also in connection with studies on blogging in that little research has been conducted on the role of blogging within dialogic environments. Thus, the findings from this study revealed that writing, or multimodal forms of writing such as blogging, were greatly enhanced when used in conjunction with talk. Without the talk, student understandings would have remained unchartered, unchallenged and stagnate, stifling further understandings. In the following section I explicate the significance of teacher and student talk within this study.

Dialogic Spaces: A Movement Towards Inquiry and Exploration

In this study, Matt approaches teaching and learning from a dialogic stance, creating space for both inquiry and exploration. This supports the notion that dialogic environments create opportunities for student growth by harnessing varied strategies and talk structures in service of a dialogic stance (Boyd & Markarian, 2011). Thus, a dialogic approach is not prescribed, rather, it is versatile, contingent and responsive to student contributions (Boyd & Rubin, 2006; Boyd, 2012). The notion of dialogic inquiry is evident across both student and teacher talk in this study. Unlike many classrooms that embody monologic approaches to teaching (Barnes, Britton, Torbe, 1990; Cazden, 2001; Dillon, 1984; Mehan, 1979; Wells, 2006), this study found that students dominated teacher talk across focal talk days. Not only was student talk more prevalent, it also increased in frequency as the school year progressed. This data suggests Matt created a classroom environment where students felt safe to take risks and participate in conversations without fear of failure.

In analyzing student talk, specifically communicative functions, it became evident that student responding (minimal and extensive) were the most dominant across focal talk days. This finding suggests students offered new insights and ideas to conversations, while also listening

and being responsive to others. Further, students' engaged in explaining more frequently across their talk than the classroom teacher. This data suggests students were not only explaining their ideas and elaborating on concepts, but were also positioned with interpretative authority. Thus, students in Matt's classroom were empowered to be risk-takers throughout the small group conversations, collectively pushing student understanding forward (Alexander, 2006; Boyd & Galda, 2011; Nystrand et. al, 1997; Wells, 2001).

This study also highlights the less researched role of student questioning. We see through the explication of four literature cycles across the school year an increase in student questioning. Students' use of contingent questions fluctuated, and open questioning only became prevalent as the school year progressed. Regardless of the inconsistencies, the fact that students were posing questions is an important finding considering past research (Myhill & Dunkin, 2005) discovered pupils rarely asked questions for themselves. Further, numerous research studies (Dillion, 1988; Alexander, 1992; Yuskel, 2014) discovered students were provided with few opportunities to ask questions, and when they did, they were often blocked or marginalized as result of teacher dominated discourse. Thus, the findings from this study reveal the importance of student questioning in that it signifies autonomy, engagement and learning. It also further evidence that Matt's classroom embodied a dialogic stance, exemplifying notions of collectiveness, supportiveness and risk taking (Alexander, 2005) within and across student talk.

To add to our understanding of the student talk in his classroom, in addition to analyzing student communicative functions and questioning, student intertextual links were also analyzed across focal talk days. Students' most prevalent intertextual links were literature, community and personal connections. As the school year progressed, the frequency of student proposed connections increased. So more student talk, more student questions, more student connections

across the four focal literature cycles. These students were learning and enacting what it meant to learn within this literacy-oracy event. It is possible that these increases were indicative of the classroom teacher relinquishing control of small group discussions, noticing students were able to successfully carry on conversations with less support. This claim is supported through the teacher's use of communicative functions.

In analyzing teacher communicative functions, we see Matt wielding authentic questioning, responding minimally, directing with display questions and explaining and directing. As the year progressed, both display questions and explaining decreased in frequency. This decrease aligns with the increase in frequency in student talk. Matt pulled certain scaffolds away that may have been more necessary earlier in the year (explaining and display questions) and this gradual release of responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) enabled students to be more successful carrying on conversations independently in later months.

Most consistent across focal talk days was Matt's use of authentic and contingent questions. Myhill & Dunkin's (2005) questioning framework demonstrated Matt's questioning as purposeful, intentional and consistent in that he primarily asked speculative and process based questions that engendered critical thinking, agency and autonomy. This defies the evaluative IRE talk pattern (Mehan, 1979) and instead highlights the potential for "teacher uptake" (Collins, 1982). The notion of uptake encourages the continuation and extension of conversation through questioning. Matt's use of contingent questioning took student thinking into account and pushed it further, promoting deeper levels of inquiry and thought. Instead of stifling student conversation, Matt continued to open it- encouraging future exchanges as evidenced through the types of questions asked (authentic, speculative, process). Further, Matt's frequent use of contingent questioning validated student contributions and extended student thinking that

resulted in shared interpretative authority (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Boyd & Devennie, 2009). Thus, to honor student responses and link them to content is truly a pedagogical skill that not only resonates with students, but also creates opportunities for internalization of learning in meaningful ways. Throughout Matt's teaching, contingent questioning "acts as scaffolding for students as they talk their way toward greater understanding that is both educationally and personally relevant" (Boyd & Galda, 2011). Matt's ability to listen and be responsive in his teaching creates a sense of relevance for students and allows for meaningful learning of new content. Thus, Matt is "leading from behind" (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992) in that he builds off student contributions, while also making connections to the academic content. It can be suggested that Matt wields questioning for differing purposes earlier in the year to provide increased support and scaffolding. Thus, questioning can be viewed as an instructional tool, and is used more judiciously as an instructional support in response to student agency and autonomy in later conversations.

The high level of contingency in teacher talk demonstrates Matt's ability to be responsive in the moment, while also building coherence and connectivity across student conversations. This finding also parallels Matt's continuous willingness to tinker with his own practice in an effort to improve learning for students. In the following section, I discuss Matt's awareness, intentionality and purposefulness behind his instruction decisions. Further, I also explicate student awareness of Matt's instructional process.

Awareness, Intentionality and Purposefulness

Across one literacy event, classroom participants experience and practice a range of types of talk- recitation, explanation, exploratory, discussion, as teachers purposefully and

collaboratively build on content, skills and the ideas of others. Although dialogic teaching is varied, flexible and contingent on a teacher's repertoire, it is also intentional and purposeful. The classroom teacher, Matt, provided instruction that was contingent on student contributions, yet, also maintained awareness of his teaching practices. As a result, Matt's instructional decisions were planful and informed. Interestingly, students' shared similar awareness of Matt's instructional decisions throughout the school year as demonstrated in their year-end interviews.

Throughout the school year, Matt continually reflected on ways to engage and motivate students with texts. The thoughtfulness behind his text selections was apparent in the variety of text genres he selected (fiction, non-fiction, historical fiction) and types (digital movies, print, digital texts). Students were aware of these efforts, stating, "I think he tried to like make us more interested in more books" (Tanysha, 6.3.13). The time Matt dedicated towards text selection was intentional in that he believed students should have some choice in selecting texts in an effort to spark engagement and meaningful conversations. In order to do this, Matt had a pulse on student engagement and was aware of his students' interests. Further, the students knew that Matt valued their opinions regarding texts, in that he often asked their opinions and honored their requests by seeking out new books at Barnes and Noble. By doing this, Matt purposefully granted students interpretive authority with the intent that students would take ownership of blogging and small group conversations and participate in rich and meaningful discourse. This supports previous findings in that conversations on later days were improved because the texts chosen by students dealt with more provocative, teenage issues such as drug use and relationships.

Matt was aware of his successes and failures when reflecting on instructional decisions throughout the school year. One element of Matt's teaching that he began to question at the end

of the year was the blogging process in his classroom. Matt came to the realization that students

were becoming bored with the blogging process. This lack of interest was partially due to the

fact that blogging was isolated to a desktop computer and had to be printed out on paper to

reference during discussion. When awarded the iPad grant in May, Matt altered the blogging

process and instead asked students to use the application "Explain Everything" that allowed

students to use audio and visual elements to record their thinking about a text. Students could

then use their iPad during small group conversations to share what they created. As a result,

student engagement peaked, and conversations became more interactive. When asked about

"Explain Everything" students expressed positive feedback, stating, "I liked drawing and stuff

and you could create your own thing" (Benjamin, 6.4.13) and "I liked the iPads because it was

something new" (Tanysha, 6.3.13). Matt's decision to incorporate iPads demonstrated his varied

and evolving repertoire that demonstrated flexibility and contingency in meeting the needs of his

students. Further, Matt had a pulse on his students and understood the need for change, thus,

making a purposeful decision to alter his practice to the overall benefit of his students.

In the year-end interview, Matt reflected on the use of iPads in his classroom and came to

the realization that students needed to tap into social media on a deeper, more meaningful level.

Thus, he shared possibilities for next year to use social networking sites such as "edmodo" to

create more interactional and authentic experiences for students. Matt believed students should

have the ability to visually support written claims through other multimodal venues. This

finding is important considering past research found students were rarely given the opportunity

to use digital literacies for school learning (Blondell and Miller, 2012) and instead, experienced a

stark contrast between the literacies used at home and at school (Freire & Macedo, 1987;

Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Thus, instead of narrowly constraining where students gathered

and shared knowledge, Matt understood his students needed multiple routes of participation through varying contexts. In Matt's final June interview, he states, "I do believe in creativity, like you are going to read a bunch of books, then you are going to create a book trailer, then you are going to send that book trailer to the author. I got into a twitter dialogue with Sharon Flake that some of my kids go involved with, Andrew and Thaizon started tweeting her, and she tweeted back at us- that to me is a lot more authentic" (6.5.13). Matt's reflective comments demonstrate his awareness of student engagement, and also his intentionality and planfulness for next year. Matt is not afraid to tinker with his instructional repertoire to ensure students are provided with meaningful and impactful experiences to prepare them for 21st century learning.

Multimodal practices must be approached with intention and purpose. The key player throughout the learning process is the teacher, in that they shape both planned and enacted learning opportunities. If children are empowered to take ownership of their learning, classroom experiences become increasingly social, purposeful and meaningful (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Thus, dialogic practices are in many ways a critical component within multimodal experiences. Interestingly, Matt understands this concept quite well, stating "I think talk is a tool in the end product, and talk is also the means, like, I think that when you are going to create something, there needs to be collaboration behind it, and with the collaboration, you need to know how to talk and listen" (6.5.13).   We see that Matt believes any type of multimodal work students engage with in the classroom must be paired with authentic talk experiences in an effort to provide students with collaborative and meaningful opportunities.

To be sure, Matt demonstrated a deep level of awareness and intentionality in his instructional decisions pertaining to blogging and other multimodal practices. He understood the role of talk in his classroom. Throughout the school year, Matt was very aware of his discourse

and was intentional in eliciting particular talk moves. For example, Matt was purposeful in when and how he contributed to, and restrained from participating in conversations. Matt's instructional talk was in service of informing, guiding and curating student responses. In Matt's final June interview, he explained some of the reasons why he inserted himself into student conversations. For example, in some instances he sensed the conversation was going off track, stating, "if someone is really in left field, I'll let it go for a little bit, but then if I realize it's going nowhere, I will jump in" (6.5.13). This insight makes evident that Matt would sometimes enter conversations to re-focus the group. In other occurrences, Matt contributed to conversations out of curiosity, engagement and overall enjoyment, stating, "sometimes I get really into the conversation and insert myself and I kinda forget that I'm the teacher and I'm not teaching and I'm just really into it" (6.5.13). This statement demonstrates Matt's passion and engagement with the process, and also his ability to share interpretive authority with his students. Lastly, Matt inserted himself to question and teach, stating, "there are other times I insert myself and it's more to correct and question" (6.5.13). This is demonstrated through his use of communicative functions- authentic questioning and explaining (teaching) ranked within the top five talk functions across all focal days. Specifically, Matt understood the importance of questioning, explaining, "if you start asking a lot of why questions, it will lead to more debate" (3.26.13). Matt understood the value of debate and group exploration of ideas, thus, he promoted exploratory talk as a means for students to co-construct meaning together.

In addition to questioning, Matt also understood the importance of inserting himself to teach, to build on those teachable moments that can make learning relevant and meaningful. Matt recognized that students often needed to be coached on their talk, stating, "they have trouble with listening…they talk over each other a lot, so I notice sometimes things get missed in

conversation" (6.5.13). In this particular instance, Matt understood his students struggled with listening, and that he would at times interject with comments such as, "hold on, hold on, let him go on" (TOT 126, 3.6.13) and "but listen, listen, listen to him" (TOT 129, 3.613) to ensure students were heard in the conversation. Matt was aware of his interjections and understood that students needed coaching on the act of talk, stating, "I think sometimes I actually teach more into the content, and I actually think they need more help with talk" (6.5.13). In connection with this, Matt recognized that his students frequently attempted to use academic prompts that he taught earlier in the year such as, "I agree, Can you add on?, I disagree" throughout small group conversations. As the school year progressed, Matt felt the prompts were inhibiting the flow of conversation, stating, "the prompts are killing them…its inauthentic" (3.26.13). Later in his June interview he stated, "sometimes they try to sound academic but it doesn't flow" (6.5.13). Matt recognized that the talk prompts he previously taught were no longer needed or sufficient and were in fact stifling student conversation. As a result, Matt explained to his students that he wanted them to avoid using prompts, and instead speak more freely as they would when talking with friends or at home in an effort to increase the richness and depth of conversation. Matt's intention in doing this was also to link home experiences with academic content. This intention was supported by the way Matt would close small group discussions with a teaching point. The teaching points were consistently derived from student contributions, yet, contained relevant academic content. Thus, the teaching point bridged student contributions with the overall academic purpose, demonstrating Matt's understanding of teaching to be quite powerful when derived from student responses. Thus, Matt's ability to be contingent and responsive in the moment allowed him to build coherence and connectivity across student conversations.

In analyzing interview data, it became evident that not only was Matt aware of his teaching moves as demonstrated though his explanations of intentionality and purposefulness, but the students were as well. Students such as Benjamin were aware of Matt's talk moves, stating, "he (Matt) put in different things to try and make the conversation go further" (6.4.13). Aaliyah shared similar thoughts to Benjamin in her interview, stating, "when we didn't know what to say, he like threw something in there to help us out…like he was throwing key words or a prompt to help us think" (6.5.13). Both Aaliyah and Benjamin understood Matt was scaffolding students to think deeper about texts, eliciting specific language and talk moves throughout small group conversations. In addition to these understandings, students also recognized Matt's teaching practices shifted as the school year progressed. It can be gleaned from the data that Matt's teaching practices shifted in many ways as a result of his reflection and desire to enhance instructional experiences for students. In the final June interviews, many students expressed that they understood his intentions, stating, "sometimes he would let us go off and he wouldn't say anything…he used to butt into our conversations, he did it less at the year, he wanted us to come up with questions on our own" (Kayla, 6.3.13). Thaizon also noticed the shift, stating, "he changed towards the end like, um he asked less questions, and just changed…he sorta stayed back a little bit and let us talk and made sure we were still on point still" (6.4.13). Both student comments showcase that students understood Matt was flexible and intentional in his teaching, in that his overall purpose was to push for deeper, meaningful conversations as the school year progressed.

Numerous researchers (Boyd & Galda, 2011; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Nystrand et. al, 1997) would argue effective teachers are not only responsive to student contributions, but also planful and intentional in their teaching. Dialogic instruction

should be derived from teacher goals, yet, maintain a balance of contingency and purposefulness in instructional intent. In Matt's classroom, his daily lessons and thematic based units acted as the "intended curriculum" and the contingent, in the moment teaching represented the "actual curriculum" (Cazden, 2001). The task of anchoring academic content and instruction in student responses was not an easy task. It was one that required skill, understanding, foresight and pedagogical intent. From the findings, it can be gleaned that Matt consistently executed this skill in his ability to be responsive, purposeful, contingent, planful and intentional in his teaching. Thus, Matt's talk moves are not employed at random; rather, they serve multiple functions with intentionality. He understood when and how to deviate and pull from his instructional repertoire in an effort to be responsive and contingent to student responses, thereby facilitating and expanding student thinking. Thus, Matt's teaching practices are impactful, accretive, and evolving. It can be suggested from interactions such as these that Matt embodies a dialogic stance that embraces a repertoire of collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful teaching moves (Alexander, 2006).

Limitations

There are three limitations in this study. The first is the researcher's relationship to the focal participants and research site, the second is the depth and types of data collected, and the third is the selective analysis of student blogs. These limitations are explicated in the following sections.

The data for this study was collected in the same school in which I am employed. Thus, having known and worked with the focal teacher provided me a deeper level of familiarity that could be considered both a benefit and disadvantage. A strength of this study is that I am an

insider. The focal participants were comfortable having me in the classroom and I had a deeper understanding of the context of the school, specifically the curriculum and bureaucratic changes impacting the school culture. This strength can also be a limitation in that my very closeness to the situation, colors what I see and how I see it. In part, that is why I employed the systemic methodology and rigor of classroom discourse analysis to render transparent the talk moves of the teacher and students.

Significant amounts of data were collected across this year-long ethnographic case study. Through a sociocultural discourse analysis, I applied both macro and micro methods to establish an understanding of the broad scope of the data, as well as where to focus in and gain a deeper understanding through micro analysis. This micro- analysis involved four purposefully selected focal data days. This allowed deeper analysis that was then recontextualized in the larger data bank. However, not having transcribed and analyzed the entire data bank could be viewed as a limitation.   It is my intention to return to the data bank, specifically, to transcribe and analyze all teacher and student talk.   In doing so, I will better understand the talk patterns, and document possible student growth and learning occurring across the school year. I am interested in taking a closer look at the ways in teacher talk influenced student talk and potentially narrow down the types of talk moves that had the most impact on student learning and overall growth.

In focusing on the blog data, I was able to gain a broad understanding of the length and depth of student blogs. Unfortunately, the content analysis of the blogs was limited to anecdotal notes and a representative sample. Therefore, the claims made in this study were derived from a limited representation. For future studies, it is my intention to analyze all student blogs in regards to content to better understand the level of student reasoning and understanding. This analysis will also allow me to make more informed claims regarding the growth of student

writing, and also, better understand how the talk may have influenced the blogs. For example, it would be of particular interest to analyze the data to see if any themes or concepts discussed in previous conversations were evident in later student writing. Further, there were also some student blogs where students responded to each other's postings as a result of the request from the teacher. Coding student responses to blogs would provide more information on the interactive nature of blogging and also what ways, if any, it replicates student and teacher talk.

As a case study, the data collected for this study emanate from one school and one classroom. Within this school, the student population was not necessarily diverse. It was an urban school with a 97% African American student population. In recognizing this limitation, these data need to be in conversation with data been collected across various schools and classrooms to represent a greater population of educators and students, preferably varied in socio-economic status and race.

Implications

This study contributes to the body of research on dialogic teaching. It adds to this by: 1.) researching the role of classroom talk and including a focus on student talk, specifically student questioning, 2.) exploring the role of multimodal activities such as blogging in dialogic spaces, 3.) revealing how writing (as a precursor to talk) can inform and enhance discourse practices and 4.) examining how digital-multimodal and dialogic practices inherently resist standardized, scripted programs. Lastly, the research for this study is unique in that it was conducted in a low-income, urban school.

1. Classroom talk: a focus on student talk and questioning. As documented in multiple ways throughout the findings, it is clear Matt embraces a dialogic stance in his

classroom. Analysis of classroom talk (student and teacher communicative functions and questioning) led to numerous findings, one of which being the students' use of questioning and their overall awareness of teaching practices. Past studies focusing on dialogic practices have often centered on teacher talk, with student talk analyzed only as a byproduct. Consequently, this study placed an equal emphasis of both teacher and student talk. Specifically, the analysis focused on students' use of questioning, and the reasons as to why and how these questions were elicited. The results from this study provide some insight into student questioning, however, further research focusing on student questioning and student talk as a whole is needed. In conjunction with analyzing student talk, it would also be interesting to further analyze student awareness and understanding of a dialogic stance. This area of research has yet to be explored. Thus, both the analysis of student talk and students' awareness of teacher stance would add a rich layer to the field of dialogism.

2. Classroom blogging in a dialogic space. In conducting the literature review for this study, it became evident that limited research existed on student educational blogging. Past research provided insight into the pragmatics of blogging (Davis & McGrail, 2009; Oravec, 2002; Zawilinski, 2009) and the ways to analyze blogs and measure reading comprehension (Coiro, 2003; Bartlett-Bragg, 2003; Thein, Oldakowski & Sloan, 2010; Tse, Yuen, Loh, Lam & Wai Ng, 2010; West, 2008). Although the studies named above provided insight into the field of blogging, few studies specifically addressed the role of blogging within dialogic classroom spaces. Few researchers (Davis & McGrail, 2009; Thein et. al, 2010; Zawlinski, 2009) mentioned the importance of collaboration and talk within the act of blogging.   Thein et. al (2010) understood the study of blogging and talk as a necessary area of research and believed that if students were provided spaces to discuss texts after blogging, it would lead to a shared,

deeper understanding of texts amongst students. Although these pieces of literature acknowledged the potential for talk within blogging, no studies analyzed the possibilities of blogging as a precursor to student conversation- specifically how blogs can facilitate discussion and collaboration (Wang & Hsua, 2008). Further, few studies explored the role of blogging within literature responses in urban school settings (Costello, 2010). Therefore, in an attempt to close the gap in literature, the findings from my study reveal the benefits of blogging in response to literature, and also the potential for this modality when paired with talk in an urban school environment. The findings therefore raise more questions and increase curiosity within this unchartered field of study. Thus, it is clear that further research is needed within the field of blogging, specifically in response to texts read and in conjunction with talk.

3. Writing informing talk. Overall, this study reveals the benefits of the speaking-writing connection, specifically the use of blogging and talk in response to texts. In reviewing past studies, (Rafoth & Rubin, 1992; Rubin, 1987; Rubin & Dodd, 1987; Rubin & Kantor, 1984), it is clear there is a gap in the literature pertaining to the speaking-writing connection (Belcher & Hirvela, 2008; Mason, 2001; Rivard and Straw, 2000). Thus, this study highlights the potential for dialogic and multimodal spaces to be used in conjunction with each other. The findings from this study reveal the need for further research within the realm of dialogism, specifically in regards to the relationship between oral language and writing in an effort to expand current understandings in the field.

4. Culture of resistance: scripted programs. In a desire to raise test scores and teach to the Common Core State Standards (2011), many schools are turning towards scripted programs to solve their educational qualms. Urban schools are often the first to fall victim to standardized measures due to struggling academic performance and failing test scores. More successful

suburban, affluent schools are often afforded greater autonomy and agency in their curriculum choices, experiencing less pressure than struggling, urban schools. As a result, much research pertaining to dialogic and multimodal-digital practices has been conducted in suburban, affluent school environments. Although this work is important in all school settings, its successes are even more crucial in struggling, urban schools. Due to the rarity of instructional freedom within these schools, research pertaining to dialogic teaching and multimodal-digital practices is sparse, yet, critical. The teaching analyzed in this study was not scripted; rather, it was contingent, purposeful and meaningful, derived from student contributions and aligned with teacher goals. Matt was a teacher that embraced risk taking regardless of the pressures placed on him- particularly the adverse situations he encountered in an urban school environment. As a result, he created a classroom community of risk takers, taking ownership of their learning through dialogic, multimodal practices. It is with that reason that this particular study holds value, demonstrating the successes of dialogic-multimodal instruction in an urban school setting, while also meeting varying curriculum mandates. Thus, this study contributes to the culture of resistance against standardized curriculum and instead highlights alternative avenues of learning in urban classrooms. Studies such as these must be embarked upon and shared with others in the educational community, specifically administrators and greater bureaucracies in an effort to resist standardized curriculum.

Conclusion

In the current era of education, standardized tests, teacher evaluation plans and top-down curriculum mandates weigh heavily on both teachers and students. As a result, many teachers are forced to teach to the test, and for many educators, scripted curriculum has become the dominant form of instruction (Dresser, 2012; MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen & Palma, 2004; cf

Boyd & Smytnek-Gworak, 2012). Teacher choice and autonomy continues to dwindle due to the increasing pressure to abide to greater bureaucratic mandates.

Due to the dominance of teacher centered talk structures (and a prevalence of the scripted nature of classroom instruction in the school district that this school is a part), authentic classroom talk experiences are often marginalized. Yet, there are teachers such as Matt, teachers who are purposeful in their planning to ensure lessons align with Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2011), yet also use student contributions to contingently build on what students know. As evidenced through the data, Matt aligned his thematic based units around the CCSS, while also revisiting and revising instructional decisions to meet the needs of students in an effort to push student understanding forward.

Teachers such as Matt have proven that educators have the ability to be decision makers and create meaningful experiences for students. In this study we see that Matt is an educator who has embraced dialogism, listening and building on student contributions, fostering a sense of risk taking, while also aligning with greater educational purposes. Further, Matt is a teacher who employs an instructional repertoire that infuses both multimodal and dialogic practices, understanding the evolving skills of 21st century learners.

As we move forward, it is imperative that a continued stream of research be embarked upon pertaining to dialogic and multimodal practices, particularly when used in conjunction with each other. These successes must be explored and shared with the educational community in an effort to fight the trend of scripted, regimented curriculums with the understanding that they are not in the best interest of our students. Teaching that affords students meaningful opportunities to connect home and school literacies, while also aligning student contributions to educational

content, requires flexibility, pedagogy and intentionality. Educators must explore these practices in classrooms without fear of failure in an effort to enrich our current educational existence and thereby challenge the status quo.

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Appendix A (Student Interest Survey)

Name:_____

1) In what grade did you come to Westminster?

2) Do you have brothers or sisters? If so, how many?

3) What is your favorite activity?

4) What is your least favorite activity?

5) What is your favorite school subject?

6) Have you been involved (or are you hoping to become involved) in any school activities (clubs, sports, etc.)? If so, which ones?

Section II: Please complete the sentences below.

7) On the weekends I like to . . .

8) Someone I admire is _____ because…

9) If I could go anywhere for a day, I would go . . .

10) I learn the most when the teacher . . .

11) I don't like it when teachers . . .

12) I don't like it when I'm asked to . . .

13) After Westminster, I will probably…

14) My ideal job would be . . .

End Year Student Reflection Sheet (Appendix B)

1. What are your overall thoughts about the blogging and talk experience this year?

2. Did blogging help you in your small group discussions? Please explain why or why not.

3. Did the small group discussions help you with blogging? Please explain why or why not.

4. In your opinion, did the blogging or talk change throughout the year?

5. Is there anything you would change about this experience if you were to do it again?

6. What did you learn from this experience?

7. Any other thoughts or suggestions about the blogging and talk experience?