# THE APPRENTICE-TEACHING PROJECT:

# AGENCY AMONG SCHOOL-IDENTIFIED “STRUGGLING” READERS

# IN A

# CROSS-AGE READING INTERVENTION

Margaret Boling Mullin

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Education,
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Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Doctoral Committee

______________________________
Mitzi Lewison, Ph.D., Chairperson

______________________________
Christine Leland, Ed.D.

______________________________
Martha Nyikos, Ph.D.

______________________________
Kathryn Engebretson, Ph.D.

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Margaret Boling Mullin

This dissertation is

dedicated to

Mike,

cheerleader – who knew when to nudge and when to let me be,

cook – always ready with a pot of chili or frozen lasagna,

tree – to shelter me and push me upward,

and steadfast, loving companion.

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Margaret Boling Mullin

THE APPRENTICE-TEACHING PROJECT:

AGENCY AMONG SCHOOL-IDENTIFIED "STRUGGLING" READERS IN A CROSS-AGE READING INTERVENTION

In this qualitative study, I sought to open a space where previously marginalized fifth and sixth graders – those identified for remedial reading classes – could become agents of their own reading. Rather than using mandated or scripted reading programs, I co-created an apprentice program with my intermediate students by which they became teachers of reading to first graders. My teacher researcher stance allowed me to explore agentic acts among the students involved and identify classroom conditions which supported school-productive literacy.

The Apprentice-Teaching Project drew on sociocultural perspectives of literacy, apprenticeship theory, and a view of agency which connects students' agentic actions with the various identities they enacted. Data, including field notes, audio and video recordings, and student work, were analyzed using a combination of thematic and narrative methods.

In their roles as apprentice-teachers, participants learned new Discourses and remade their identities from school-identified "struggling" readers to Readers and Teachers, thereby joining the "literacy club." In general they exerted school-productive agency when confronted with difficult reading tasks, rather than remaining marginalized from school literacy communities.

I argue that students marginalized by the teaching practices fostered by recent educational policy initiatives are best served by knowledgeable, professional teachers

who are free to create *responsive curricula* in light of needs observed among students. I further argue that the educational community needs to examine the ways we have approached the teaching of metacognitive reading strategies. The apprentice-teachers did not take up these strategies as tools to deepen their understanding; instead, they perceived the strategies as “tasks” to be done after reading. Furthermore, to foster *engaged reading*, this study demonstrated the efficacy of a curriculum that provides students with *voice* and *choice* in selecting texts and a *socially-interactive environment* in which to construct meanings around those texts.

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Mitzi Lewison, Ph.D., Chairperson

______________________________
Christine Leland, Ed.D.

______________________________
Martha Nyikos, Ph.D.

______________________________
Kathryn Engebretson, Ph.D.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

*[The Project] was tight because my little first grader knew what [the book] was. She knew what she was reading. It was tight.*

*-Aureesha, Round 1 Debrief*

In this teacher research study I sought to open up a space where fifth and sixth grade students who had previously been marginalized by their placement in Title I (see glossary) remedial reading classes could become agents of their own reading and learning. In addition to using a mandated reading intervention program, I co-created a curriculum with my students in which they became *apprentice-teachers* of reading to younger students. Specifically, the apprentice-teachers planned and conducted lessons with small groups of first graders and engaged in ongoing professional development and reflection about reading, their lessons, and themselves as readers. This chapter's epigraph provides one indication of the efficacy of the project.

This study grew out of my own experiences and interest in working with students who have been assigned to remedial reading classes. During four years as a middle school reading specialist, I had opportunities to create curricula from the ground up, finding ways to support less proficient readers in their content-area classes and developing intensive reading classes to address their individual needs. Later, in a different school-district and at a time informed by different governmental mandates, I worked with intermediate-aged students who struggled with reading. In contrast to my years as a middle school teacher, I was told to use a published reading program, one which scripted the comments I was to make, the texts to use, and the response activities

to assign. Not surprisingly, I saw different results among the middle-school students with whom I co-created learning activities and the intermediate students with whom I used a packaged program. As I progressed through my doctoral studies, I began to question my assumptions and those on which prepackaged programs were based. I wanted to explore the differences among the students' responses in a more systematic way, leading to the development of a teacher research project in which I again worked with students to design their curriculum.

The Apprentice-Teaching Project and this study draw on a sociocultural view of literacy (Gee, 1996; Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007), apprenticeship theory (Gee, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991), and a view of agency which connects students' agentic actions with the various identities they may enact (Moje & Lewis, 2007). Proponents of apprenticeship theory argue that people in apprentice-mentor relationships experience shifts in identity which correspond with the learning of new Discourses as they become legitimate participants in communities of practice. In this project, the study's participants, acting as apprentice-teachers, learned new ways of engaging in school-based literacy practices, rather than remaining outsiders who had previously been marginalized from school-based literacy communities.

**An Overview of *The Apprentice-Teaching Project***

During the school year in which this study took place, I was a Title I reading teacher of students who were school-identified as "struggling" readers. In October, I began talking with my fifth and sixth graders about the possibility of working as reading teachers of first grade students. Nearly all the potential *apprentice-teachers* had had prior "buddy reading" experiences, and they were amenable to this idea. In their earlier

experiences, though, they had completed little preparation prior to their reading meetings with their younger partners. In this case, I envisioned that they would plan, rehearse, and reflect on their teaching experiences. To prepare for their lessons, apprentice-teachers visited the library and perused my collection of books to choose those they felt would be of interest to their students. In addition, they discussed whether the topics in potential books would be appropriate for first graders, engaged in authentic use of strategies to make sense of the books they'd chosen, and read a wide range of books multiple times.

The Apprentice-Teaching Project was interwoven with, or perhaps more accurately, sandwiched between lessons from our mandated curriculum and test preparation activities, and soon developed a fairly predictable routine. Most apprentice-teachers were able to teach their first grade students seven times, resulting in seven "rounds" of activities. Each round comprised a preparation and professional development phase of three to five sessions, the first grade lesson, and a closure and reflecting phase of one or two classes. During both the preparatory and closure phases, I taught mini-lessons (see glossary), modeled reading behaviors, and provided the apprentice-teachers with time to plan and rehearse their lessons.

Most of our preparation and debriefing activities occurred during our regularly scheduled Title I classes, meaning that I generally worked with the apprentice-teachers in groups of four at different times of the day. However, for the convenience of the first grade teacher, I arranged for all the groups of apprentice-teachers to come at a single time on the days that they taught their first grade students. For example, for the third round, the apprentice-teachers all came to my classroom at 1:30 p.m. and conducted lessons with

their first grade students from 1:45 – 2:15; there were 37 students (13 apprentice-teachers and 24 first graders) and two teachers gathered together at that time.

## Purpose of the Study

The overarching goal of the study was to begin to understand what could happen when "struggling" readers are positioned as experts. In analyzing the data, I asked, *In what ways were participants able to exert agency?* and *What classroom conditions supported school-productive agentic actions?* Through my observations of the apprentice-teachers' actions and the comments they made, I sought to understand their sense of agency and the perspectives they held on their teaching and reading experiences. I hoped that a close look at the participants' sense of agency and the classroom conditions that led to teacher-defined positive or resistive agentic actions would shed light on teaching practices and curricula that would lead to more school-productive agentic actions on the part of previously marginalized students.

## Need for and Significance of the Study

In the last fifteen years, we have seen an unprecedented call to reform public education. This "clarion cry" has been led by corporate interests who are making record profits on curriculum materials and testing products (Garan, 2004; Ravitch, 2013). Teachers have been demonized, and the social inequities and income imbalance among school districts have largely been ignored. What follows is a discussion of the major governmental initiatives which have formed the stepping stones of these "reform" efforts and various critiques of these initiatives.

**Governmental Influences on Reading Instruction**

Four significant initiatives have strongly impacted the educational climate in the last two decades; these are The National Reading Panel Report (NRP; Panel, 2000), the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; *No Child Left Behind Act*, 2001), the Race to the Top competition ("Race to the Top," 2009), and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (Core, 2014a). The release of the National Reading Panel Report (NRP) in 2000 began the process of change by narrowing the focus of reading instruction and assessment to just five areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary instruction. The changes continued in 2001 with the passage of NCLB, which required schools "to establish high-quality, comprehensive reading instruction…based on solid scientific research" as defined by the NRP (*No Child Left Behind Act*, 2001). According to the NRP (2000), "high-quality" reading instruction is identified through "rigorous research [that meets specified] methodological standards," i.e. studies that used "experimental or quasi-experimental" (p. 5) methods.

A third initiative that strongly influenced reading instruction came in 2009 when the Obama Administration announced the Race to the Top competition. The states' grant applications to the U.S. Department of Education were scored according to criteria which included increased numbers of standardized tests, links between students' test scores and the evaluation and compensation of teachers, and provisions to close or "turn-around" low-performing schools ("Race to the Top," 2009). An additional component of Race to the Top was the requirement that states adopt academic standards that ensured that students would be "college and career ready," generally accepted to be the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), leading us to a discussion of the fourth major factor impacting

the educational climate in recent years. The Common Core established 10 English/language arts standards that high school students should know and be able to demonstrate. These standards were backward-mapped from high school to kindergarten with specific knowledge and skill proficiencies assigned to each grade level.

**Concerns Arising from These Influences**

Though this study was conducted prior to the Race to the Top mandates and the implementation of the CCSS, the results continue to be relevant. Advocates of these initiatives argue that our educational system is broken, and that NCLB, Race to the Top, and the CCSS were intended to close achievement gaps across racial and socioeconomic categories. However, many critics argue that these initiatives do little to address a root cause of these gaps: poverty. At 23%, the United States has the second highest rate of child poverty among economically advanced countries, as compared to just 5.4% in Finland and 3% in Denmark (Krashen, 2011). In addition to failing to address poverty, these initiatives have also had negative effects on reading instruction.

**De-professionalizing teachers.** NCLB, Race to the Top, and the CCSS, all focus on students' scores on standardized tests, thus traditional college-based teacher education programs and teachers' level of education have been de-emphasized, with the result that teachers have been de-professionalized. Ravitch (2010) makes the case that teachers have been de-professionalized in her discussion of a meta-analysis (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2004) which concluded that the variables most important for students' learning were their test scores and teachers' experience. Therefore, the authors argue, states should pay less attention to teachers' credentials and more attention to the results they obtained (Hanushek & Rivkin, as cited in Ravitch, 2010, p. 181). Highly trained teachers who can

respond to students' interests and needs while also differentiating for various learning styles have become less sought after. Instead, teachers who can follow a script and follow mandated programs with "fidelity" have become more attractive (Garan, 2004). In summary, teachers have been increasingly "treated as technicians in charge of increasing their students' scores on high-stakes tests, often at the expense of helping develop students as agents in charge of their own learning" (Ritchie, Harris, Kraeger, & Proctor, 2012). This study confronts the de-professionalization of teachers as it explores the ways in which the ability to co-create a *responsive curriculum* is crucial to the development of classroom conditions which support school-sanctioned agentic behaviors on the part of students.

**Developmentally inappropriate and narrowing curriculum.** Though NCLB didn't specify particular instructional strategies or content, the high-stakes nature of the concomitant standardized tests exerted overt pressure on schools and school personnel to adapt the curriculum in order to increase students' scores (Graham & Neu, 2004; J. V. Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001). Specifically, the elementary curriculum narrowed, focusing more on the tested subjects of reading and math and less on non-tested subjects such as social studies, science, and the arts (Meier & Wood, 2004; Strauss, 2013). The CCSS also face criticism: while the backward-mapped design may appear elegant, no provision has been made for engaging students in learning of interest to them and some of the grade-level benchmarks have been critiqued for being developmentally inappropriate. For example, some have argued that the Standards are inappropriate for preschool-aged children and that the math standards push children into abstract reasoning too quickly (Ravitch, 2014). Finally, the exemplar texts suggested by the CCSS

(generally “classics”) at appropriate levels of “complexity and rigor” are being used as curriculum guides, to the exclusion of newer and more culturally relevant young adult literature. This study finds that students’ voice and choice in selecting texts are crucial for the support of productive agentic actions, suggesting that requiring specific texts may be counterproductive.

**The dearth of sociocultural literacy practices.** While the de-professionalization of teachers and the narrowing of the curriculum are both troublesome, more worrisome is the dearth of sociocultural literacy practices (see glossary) found in the curriculum emerging in the context of NCLB, Race to the Top, and the CCSS. The format of the tests required by both NCLB and the CCSS privileges views of reading (see glossary) which emphasize the use of letter-sound relations to identify words and exclude readers’ social knowledge when constructing meaning from texts. This *word-based* view of learning dictates that knowledge to be learned be broken down into discrete, testable skills. In contrast, the sociocultural and ideological perspectives (Street, 1992) view learning “not primarily as a mental act, but as a social act, dependent on interaction among people” (Lewis & Kettner, 2004, p. 119), a view complemented by Gee’s assertion (1996, 1999a) that learning consists of shifts in socially-situated identities. The current educational climate does not attend to society’s need for students to develop a personal interest in becoming the “kind of person” who uses the social practices required by the CCSS or the habits of school-based literacy. I argue that the teaching promoted by these initiatives doesn’t lead to real learning. Passing high-stakes tests in which “students can, without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines” (Core, 2014c) doesn’t provide evidence that the student can use the

knowledge in a life setting. For true learning to have occurred, the individual needs to have become "the kind of person" (Gee, 1996, 2004b) who uses literate social practices for his or her own purposes. While this study focuses on school-based literacy practices, and thus doesn't include "life settings," the students were able to choose and use literacy practices that helped them improve their reading and teaching, leading to more effective interactions with their first-grade students. In addition to the students' voice and choice, in this study I find that opportunities for socially-interactive environments (sociocultural literacy practices) are an important element of classrooms which foster school-productive agentic actions.

**Addressing These Concerns**

In the context of Race to the Top and the CCSS, students may learn the mechanics of reading but fail to identify themselves as readers; in short, they may choose not to engage in reading activities. This problem is amplified when students do not feel successful with school-based literacy tasks. Much of the literature about instructional interventions for struggling readers views students as deficient; that is students' difficulties with school-based literacy practices have been attributed to cognitive or processing issues inherent in the individual. O'Brien, Beach, and Scharber (2007) explain that in many research studies, "adolescents who struggle are defined almost exclusively in terms of their competence with a limited range of tasks related to reading print" (p. 52).

This study of The Apprentice-Teaching Project fills several gaps in the current literature. First, this project views learning from a sociocultural perspective and supports the work of Dudley-Marling and Paugh (2004), who "reject deficit models that

pathologize struggling readers by situating learning problems *in [their] heads*" (p. vi); instead they contend that teachers need to choose instruction that works for individual children at particular moments of their lives. In addition, they suggest that teachers need to "revalue readers" (p. 91) and begin "with the assumption that all children are, indeed, smart" (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004, p. 101). Their ideas are consistent with those of O'Brien et al. (2007) who suggest that struggling students need opportunities to "redefine [their] competence [by transforming] negative perceptions of [their] abilities" (p. 53) and Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, and Mueller (2001) who argue that "[t]eachers must begin to create 'literacy apprenticeships' [which engage] students in meaningful and complex literary practices" (p. 5). Second, this study focuses attention on the tutors' learning, rather than the tutees,' filling a gap in the meta-analysis of cross-age tutoring projects conducted by Roscoe and Chi (2007). Finally, Ahearn (2001) suggests that a "fruitful direction for future research may be to begin to distinguish among types of agency – oppositional agency, complicit agency, agency of power, agency of intention, etc." (p. 130). The apprentice-teachers in this study performed as experts, trusted to teach reading to younger students and working as my apprentices. In exploring their work as reading teachers, their shifting use of literacy practices, and the types of agency they exerted, this study begins to address these gaps in the current research literature.

As a result of this study, literacy educators and theorists will have a better understanding of the impact of an apprentice-teaching intervention on the literacy identities of previously marginalized youth, leading to more effective methods for teaching students who aren't performing well on school-based literacy tasks. I argue that students marginalized by the teaching practices fostered by the previously outlined

government initiatives are best served by a professional teacher who is free to co-create a *responsive curriculum* in light of the needs that she observes among her students. Such a curriculum would provide students with both *voice* and *choice* in selecting texts and a *social environment* in which to construct meanings around those texts. In addition, I argue that we need to examine and change the ways in which teachers have approached the use of metacognitive reading strategies (see glossary). These changes will lead to classroom conditions which foster more school-productive agentic actions, including highly engaged reading, on the part of previously marginalized students.

**Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation has twelve chapters, of which seven are findings chapters. Two of these chapters explore individual rounds of the project, two explore major themes that cross all seven rounds, and three present mini-case studies of focal students. In this first chapter I have provided a context for the study, including four major policy initiatives which have strongly influenced reading instruction in the United States in the past decade-and-a-half. I also discussed the need for and significance of the study.

In the next chapter I explore the field of research that informs the theoretical framework for this study and develop a working definition of learner agency. I first discuss *sociocultural* and *word-based* perspectives on literacy and explain why I reject *autonomous* models. Next I provide an overview of *apprenticeship theory* and place other cross-age tutoring projects within the context of apprenticeship theory. Finally I highlight others' definitions of *agency* and use those to construct the definition that informs this study.

Chapter Three is the first of two chapters discussing the research methodology used in this study. I begin with a discussion of *teacher research*, my progression from teacher to teacher researcher, and a brief definition of *responsive curriculum* as I use the term in this dissertation. I then introduce Oakdale Elementary, the site of this study; describe the general organization of The Apprentice-Teaching Project and the components of each round; and describe the curricular constraints which influenced the development of the project. I conclude the chapter by describing the methods used for selecting participants and narrowing that group to six focal students; I then introducing the focal apprentice-teachers.

Chapter Four is a continuation of the methodology and contains the traditional research sections: research questions, tools for collecting data, and techniques for analyzing it. I close the chapter with a discussion of the verification procedures, trustworthiness, and limitations of the study.

Chapter Five introduces The Apprentice-Teaching Project by describing the three phases – preparing, teaching, and debriefing – of Round One. I reflect on the round through my lens as a teacher researcher and close with a discussion in which I link the findings to the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter Two. The data for all the data chapters consists of field notes, audio recordings, summaries of those recordings, and student work.

In Chapter Six I present the first of three mini-case studies and describe the impact of the project on Salenia. In addition to field notes, audio recordings and summaries, and student work, the data include information from beginning and ending

individual reading inventories, interviews, and transmediation projects (see glossary) and narratives completed at the conclusion of the school year.

Chapter Seven describes the second round of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, providing the reader with an understanding of the evolution of the project and the ways in which I adjusted the curriculum to respond to various factors.

Chapter Eight comprises a mini-case study of Billy, a student for whom I initially thought the project didn't work.

Chapter Nine explores the learners' use (or lack thereof) of metacognitive reading strategies (see glossary), a topic which arose in every round of the project.

Chapter Ten presents a mini-case study of DeVontay, a student whose experiences shed light on the ways one's social identities can influence the forms agency exhibited in various contexts.

Chapter Eleven unpacks factors that fostered engaged reading and school-productive agency on the part of the apprentice-teachers.

Chapter Twelve links the findings of this study with the current educational context and previous research literature. I explore pedagogical implications for students who have been marginalized from the "literacy club" (F. Smith, 2006).

There are four appendices in this dissertation. Appendix A contains a glossary of terms used in the course of the dissertation. Appendix B provides a sample constructed narrative (part of the data analysis process), labels to indicate where the data for each part of the narrative originated, and samples of those documents. Appendix C provides an overview of the seven rounds of the Project, and Appendix D contains explicit answers to the research questions.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*I think it was a good idea, reading to the little first graders 'cause one day when they get older, they're going to look up to us. They look up to us right now.*

*-DeVontay, Round 1 Debrief*

*I think the little kids like having people read to them.*

*-Salenia, Round 1 Debrief*

During one apprentice-teaching lesson, DeVontay tossed a ball in the air while other apprentice-teachers wrote their reflections about the previous day's first grade lesson. On another occasion Alyssa appeared in my room near the end of the school day, told me about a book she saw mentioned in her reading anthology, wondered if her first grade student might enjoy it, and asked if I could get a copy. These two apprentice-teachers were demonstrating agency in different forms. They both chose their own actions, but the actions were perceived very differently by me, their teacher. DeVontay seemed to be resisting school-assigned literacy tasks, while Alyssa seemed to be actively participating. When planning The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I attempted to create situations in which students were able to develop a greater sense of agency over their own reading and learning by giving them opportunities to control at least one school-based literacy situation. Likewise, I hoped they would begin to assume "reader" identities, rather than "not-a-reader" identities. As the epigraphs for this chapter indicate, DeVontay and Salenia were both developing an awareness of other possible identities – "role model" and "teacher" – as early as the first round of the project.

In this chapter, I discuss the three major theoretical foundations of this study: a sociocultural view of literacy, apprenticeship theory, and agency (and the irrevocably entwined notion of identity). I begin with a literature review about each of these three topics and then develop a definition of agency that will provide a framework for the remainder of this dissertation. I close with a brief summation.

## Sociocultural Views of Literacy

While few would argue about whether students should develop high reading skills, schools driven by their students' achievement on high-stakes standardized tests often promote particular views of reading. A review of the literature on literacy and on struggling and marginalized readers reveals two broad perspectives; one view emphasizes word reading, while the other emphasizes meaning-making on the basis of readers' social and cultural experiences. The labels used to describe these two perspectives vary. One model is often referred to as a decoding or analytic view of reading (Franzak, 2006); those holding this perspective generally contend that reading begins with the correct decoding (see glossary) of written text to the spoken word. Cartwright (2006) cites Gough and his colleagues by describing a "simple view of reading," suggesting that "skilled reading is the product of two processes, decoding… and language comprehension" (p. 628). This perspective has also been referred to as the autonomous model (see glossary; Street, 1992) which "conceptualizes literacy in technical terms, treating it as independent of social context" (Morrell, 2004, p. 32). Hicks (2002) argues that people working from this perspective believe that "children approach literacy practices as autonomous reasoners who then individually construct knowledge about literacy practices" (p. 15). I will call this view a *word-based* perspective (see glossary) of

reading to contrast it with the *sociocultural* (Franzak, 2006; Gee, 1996) or meaning-based view of reading (see glossary).

**Sociocultural Versus Word-based Perspectives on Literacy**

The *sociocultural* perspective is based on the premise that “meaning in language is tied to people’s experiences of situated action in the material and social world” (Gee, 2001, p. 715). Franzak (2006) concurred, describing the sociocultural paradigm as one which views reading “not as a stand-alone practice, but rather one embedded in socially situated identity and activity” (p. 221). As Gee (1999b) explained, the sociocultural view of literacy draws on the work from a number of fields including situated cognition (Lave & Wenger, 1991), cultural models (Holland & Quinn, 1987), and the New Literacy Studies (Gee, 1999b; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; Street, 1992). In a seminal work of New Literacy Studies (NLS), Street (1992) suggested the use of the terms “autonomous” and “ideological” (see glossary) to refer to different perspectives of reading. He used the term autonomous to refer to the decoding or analytic model because “it represents itself as though it isn’t a position located ideologically [but] as though it is just natural” (Street, 1992, p. 36), though the term “ideological” doesn’t directly correspond to the sociocultural perspective of reading. Instead, Street (1992) argued that *all* reading models are ideological, because this term “signals very precisely that there are always contests over the meaning and the use of literacy practices; that those contests are always embedded in power relations of some kind” (p. 36).

In my experience, the sociocultural paradigm offers significant advantages over other views of literacy. I follow Lewis et al. (2007) who explain that they turned to the sociocultural paradigm because they “were dissatisfied with the purely cognitive or

behavioral explanations of how people use and learn reading and writing" (p. 2). Though scholars following the New Literacy Studies do examine literacy practices in the context of power, Lewis et al. argue that "*most* sociocultural research and theory does not attend closely to the issues of power, identity, and agency that they articulate in [their] own work (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 2; italics added). This study provides one perspective on the ways in which addressing issues of power and school-ascribed identities can effect changes in participants' forms of agency.

The autonomous and ideological views of reading are especially important when examining school curricula, particularly in light of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, the Race to the Top funding program, and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Many standardized tests are constructed with the assumption that if children can decode the words on the test, they will be able to understand the concepts in a reading passage or comprehension question; in short, psychometricians work from a word-based view of reading. In contrast, those working from a sociocultural view believe that the interest of a child has in a topic, her level of background knowledge, and her familiarity with the situations described all play a role in her construction of meaning while reading. Likewise, the sociocultural perspective recognizes that most school-reading requires a knowledge of "academic language," which differs from everyday language in vocabulary, syntax, and discourse (Gee, 2004b, pp. 18, 19). A final point to consider with regard to the various views of reading is that those working from a word-based perspective are much more likely to believe that there is just one correct answer, while those working from a sociocultural perspective are more

willing to believe that different people might choose different correct answers, depending on their own experiences.

**Rejecting Autonomous Views of Literacy**

In this study of the apprentice-teachers, the identities they took up, and the ways in which they exerted agency during the various phases of the project, I follow the New Literacy Studies (NLS) scholars in rejecting the autonomous model of reading. Morrell (2004) argues that the NLS scholars critique autonomous models of literacy because they fail to "incorporate social and cultural contexts as well as the power relations inherent in literacy practices;" in contrast, the ideological models offer frameworks that can replace those "in which psychological and culturally narrow approaches predominated" (p. 32). The NLS scholars have demonstrated that "what it means to be literate is a highly variable, deeply contextual affair" (Campano & Damico, 2007, p. 222), because reading and writing make the most sense when studied in the context of social, cultural, historical, political, and economic practices (Gee, 1999b, p. 180). Finally, as Luke (2005) argues, "across the work of the 'New Literacy Studies' is one generational, cultural and ultimately political response: an abiding commitment to literacy as a means of social transformation" (p. xiii).

The autonomous view of reading was pervasive in the test-driven Title I school in which The Apprentice-Teaching Project took place. However, this study privileges the sociocultural views of literacy primarily because my prior experiences with marginalized youth led me to believe that becoming a literate person required more than simply "reading the words." The students' views of literacies and the various related social and cultural practices were more important than their ability to "say words." Therefore, I

attempted to create a space based on the sociocultural view in which the apprentice-teachers could develop and use a variety of literacy practices in a social context that was meaningful to them. Through The Apprentice-Teaching Project, students were invited to form a community of learners in which they participated in authentic and purposeful school-based literacy tasks.

## Apprenticeship Theory

### An Overview of Apprenticeship Theory

Struggling readers are often at a disadvantage when trying to master school-based literacy practices, in part because such practices may not be included in their primary Discourse – the form of language they practice at home. These students may have had primary school experiences in which they learned to "read in the sense of decoding vernacular language that is written down" (Gee, 2004b, p. 19), i.e. written language that closely matched spoken language. However, as they reached the intermediate grades, they were unable to "read the early versions of the academic variety of language they see in books" (Gee, 2004b, p. 19). As Gee (1996) points out, "individuals who have not been socialized into the discourse practices that constitute mainstream school-based literacy must eventually be socialized into them if they are ever to acquire them" (p. 65). The challenge though, is providing an environment in which children can both learn about and acquire these practices.

**Three models of learning.** Krashen (1981), in his acquisition-learning hypothesis explains that there is a difference between learning in an informal setting and learning in a school-based setting. When learning informally, one acquires new information and internalizes it in the subconscious. However, when learning formally, especially in school

settings, one is more conscious, bringing cognitive attention to bear. This distinction was originally made when examining the process of learning new languages. The *acquisition model* would apply to babies, who typically *acquire* their first language, as do many people having full immersion experiences; however most school-based instruction in new languages focuses on direct instruction, and thus the *learning model*.

Gee (2004b) posits a third process of learning, the *cultural process model*. He argues that acquiring one's first language is extremely common; very few children fail to learn a language with sufficient skill to participate in society. Learning physics on the other hand is relatively uncommon, requires overt instruction, and indeed, requires ongoing participation with other physicists. Gee (2004b) refers to this third model a "cultural process," because there are "some things that are so important to a cultural group that the [members] ensure that everyone who needs to learns them" (p. 11). He goes on to argue that this process is crucial if one is to really learn and be able to use new information. Continuing with his example of physicists, he says that absorbing new information is not enough. Learners who wish to become physicists are most successful when working as part of a community, interacting with and using new information, and "taking on the emerging identity of being a physicist" (p. 13).

In The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I sought to create an environment in which the intermediate students developed a sense of membership in a group in which the cultural processes involved reading and writing for the purpose of teaching. Building on Gee's example of becoming a physicist, the apprentice-teachers received overt instruction in teaching reading, worked as members of a community of apprentice-reading-teachers, and used new information and skills in authentic teaching tasks with younger students.

#### Apprenticeship as a vehicle for learning in the cultural process model.

Several scholars have suggested that *apprenticeship* be used to facilitate the learning and acquisition of school-based literacies (Gee, 1996, 2004a; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Morrell, 2004). Morrell (2004) says that authentic learning "involve[s] apprenticeship...and legitimate participation in relevant sociocultural activity" (p. 4). Gee (1996) further asserts that for acquisition to occur, students must be involved "in a master-apprentice relationship in a Discourse wherein the teacher scaffolds the students' growing abilities [to participate in] that Discourse, through demonstrating her mastery and supporting theirs" (p. 145). He elaborates, saying "classrooms must constitute active apprenticeships in academic social practices" (p. 147). Johnston (2004) explains that apprenticeship is a particularly valuable means of learning the literacy practices of a particular Discourse because "when people are being apprenticed into an activity of any sort, they have to figure out the key features of the activity and their significance" (p. 11). When designing The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I built on Gee's notion of learning as a cultural process by attempting to create an environment in which the apprentice-teachers and I worked together in master/apprentice roles to figure out what the Discourse of teaching could look and sound like for fifth and sixth graders when working with first graders. Likewise, the apprenticeship into the new Discourse of teaching led to the redefinition of their existing Discourses as school-identified "struggling" or "reluctant" readers.

### Cross-Age Tutoring Projects: Apprenticeship in Action

Studies of reading interventions involving cross-age tutoring projects have occurred relatively frequently in the past two decades, beginning with Labbo & Teale in 1990 and continuing to Topping in 2011. These projects involved multiple age

configurations, including high school athletes tutoring first and second graders (Juel, 1991), ninth grade struggling readers tutoring second and third graders (Patterson & Elliott, 2006), sixth grade students from a remedial reading class tutoring kindergarteners (Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1993/1994), and fifth graders tutoring first graders (Heath & Mangiola, 1991).

**A meta-analysis of peer-tutoring programs.** It is helpful first to look at a meta-analysis of peer-tutoring programs conducted by Roscoe and Chi (2007). The researchers began by examining whether peer or cross-age tutoring was efficacious for the tutors. They report that “researchers have shown positive outcomes for tutors from underprivileged backgrounds and/or living in urban areas” and that “effects were larger in programs that gave students more autonomy (e.g. self-selected goals)” (p. 538). In addition, they found that “training tutors to use strategies based on constructivist theories of learning…[led] to impressive gains, compared to less trained tutors” (p. 538). Roscoe and Chi (2007) also attempted to understand how tutor learning occurred during peer tutoring situations. They hypothesized that tutors learned from questioning and explaining and found that these cognitive tasks supported tutors through “reflective knowledge-building” (p. 552). However, when tutors engaged in “knowledge-telling” activities, tutor gains were lower. The authors concluded that reflective knowledge building contributed to tutors’ academic growth because the tutors were required to 1) “metacognitively” reflect on their own expertise and comprehension (see glossary) and 2) constructively build upon their prior knowledge by “generating inferences, integrating ideas across topics and domains, and repairing errors” (p. 541). As suggested by Roscoe and Chi (2007), when developing The Apprentice-Teaching Project I intentionally

created opportunities for the apprentice-teachers to assume more autonomy as the project evolved. The participants in this project did less "questioning and explaining" of content than Roscoe and Chi might have found efficacious; however, the apprentice-teachers did engage in "reflective knowledge building" during the post-teaching discussions about their reading, writing, and teaching practices.

**Studies that differed from The Apprentice-Teaching Project.** A number of existing studies involved projects or research methods that were quite different from The Apprentice-Teaching Project. Two studies focused on the reading gains of the tutees (Friedland & Truscott, 2005; Hattie, 2006), while several other studies were primarily quantitative and examined tutors' change in reading achievement according to standardized tests (S. V. Davenport, Arnold, & Lassmann, 2004; Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson, & Watts, 1997; Topping, Miller, Thurston, McGavock, & Conlin, 2011). In contrast, Wright and Cleary (2006) conducted a quantitative study that focused primarily on word recognition and oral fluency, simply measuring the change in number of words read correctly by the tutors. Van Keer and Vanderlinde (2010) studied tutors' awareness and self-reported use of metacognitive reading strategies (see glossary) using quantitative analysis of pre- and post-assessments. Finally, two other projects involved tutors who were significantly older – high school or college – than the fifth and sixth grade tutors involved in The Apprentice-Teaching Project (Friedland & Truscott, 2005; Juel, 1991).

The types of teaching activities engaged in by the tutors in other cross-age tutoring projects also varied. Nearly every program reviewed included some form of read aloud by the tutor to the tutee and a subsequent discussion of the book. Beyond the read aloud, extension activities varied and became more common as tutors became more

comfortable with their teaching responsibilities. Know / Want to Know / Learned (KWL) charts (see glossary; Jacobson et al., 2001), story maps (see glossary; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1993/1994), and writing about favorite parts of stories (Patterson & Elliott, 2006) all provided ways for students of both ages to explore the ideas in the text. In addition, art, learning games, and vocabulary activities were included in some lessons. The tutors' degree of teaching flexibility also varied widely. Thrope and Wood (2000) described a project where the adult staff selected all texts and activities, merely telling the tutors what to do. In contrast, Juel (1991), Leland and Fitzpatrick (1993/1994), Jacobson et al. (2001), and Patterson and Elliott (2006) all described programs in which the staff designed frameworks for the tutors but gave them great leeway in selecting materials and choosing individual approaches according to their perception of the tutees' needs. These projects also evolved over time, with tutors assuming more decision-making as they became more confident. Elements of many of these projects were later incorporated into The Apprentice-Teaching Project as I responded to the participants' interests and needs. I discuss four particularly influential cross-age tutoring projects in the next section.

**Studies of projects similar to The Apprentice-Teaching Project.** Four programs that were very similar to The Apprentice-Teaching Project included Heath and Mangiola (1991), Juel (1991), Jacobson et al. (2001) and Patterson and Elliott (2006). Each of these focused programs involved tutors who were identified as "struggling" and the collected data focused primarily on the tutors' growth, rather than the tutees.' The organizers of these programs shared a commitment to helping tutors grow as teachers and readers through thoughtful consideration of each tutoring session. In addition to the time that the tutors spent with their tutees, they also met with adult mentors to learn positive

teaching techniques, hone their own reading skills, and reflect on ways to improve future teaching.

Understanding the design framework of previous cross-age tutoring programs was crucial as I developed The Apprentice-Teaching Project. I knew that I wanted a project that was based around the reading of “real” books, and that I’d want the apprentice-teachers to have significant say about what they did with their younger students. Likewise, I knew the project would evolve over time. Rather than a process in which I, as the researcher, developed a pre-existing framework for the first grade lessons and followed the same format each time, I expected the content of the lessons to change as the apprentice-teachers made suggestions and grew in their own skills. In this sense, my role as a teacher researcher allowed the curriculum that I used with the apprentice-teachers to be responsive to their needs and interests.

Reading published articles and book chapters about other cross-age projects affirmed the direction I had taken in my initial planning. Many prior projects created conditions that were similar to those in The Apprentice-Teaching Project; however, this project has some marked differences. Rather than using standardized data to measure the program’s impact on the tutees’ or tutors’ reading achievement, I intentionally created situations in which I could gather qualitative data from the apprentice-teachers’ comments and actions. Some data was in the form of anecdotes about critical incidents (Patton, 2002), some in the form of discussions among the apprentice-teachers and me, and some in the form of field notes taken during the various phases of the project. The data goes beyond the tutors’ enjoyment of the project, self-reports about benefits of working with younger students, and the efficacy of the project. Instead, I sought to make

stronger connections to the existing research on agency and identity by asking a series of questions. In what ways did the tutors take on the Discourse of Reader? Teacher? In what ways did the apprentice-teachers (tutors) begin to exert more school-sanctioned agency? I also sought to make connections to the body of research about teacher research. In what ways was being a researcher efficacious for the development of a responsive curriculum? How did being a researcher impact my teaching moves with the apprentice-teachers?

## Agency and Identities

### Developing a Definition of Agency

The fifth and sixth graders who became apprentice-teachers in this project had been identified by the school as "struggling" readers. Several had been retained in prior grades, and all had been involved in reading interventions for most of their school careers. In this study, I sought to understand the identities they had built around school-based literacy practices and the forms of agency they exerted. Likewise, I wondered what impact the apprentice-teaching activities might have on those identities. In light of the assertion by McCarthey and Moje (2002) that *identity* shapes "how humans make sense of the world and their experiences in it" (p. 228), I argue that it is important to examine the reading identities assumed by children and youth who struggle with school-based literacy practices. In addition, I follow Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) in linking agency with identity. They contend that when people "develop more or less conscious conceptions of themselves as actors in *socially and culturally constructed worlds*," their identities permit them to have "at least a modicum of agency or control over their own behavior" (p. 40). Thus, agency and peoples' situated identities become the third leg in the theoretical framework for this study.

**Questions regarding agency.** Ahearn (2001), in a review of ways the term agency has been used and described in recent decades, began with a very simple definition that agency is "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112). She conceded that this definition "leaves many details unspecified" (p. 112) and suggested a number of questions to consider, several of which were relevant for this study. First, must agency be individual, or can it belong to groups as well? Following Wertsch, Tulviste, and Hagstrom (1993), I hold that agency can belong to groups, because it "extends beyond the skin," that is, it "is the property of dyads and other small groups" (p. 337). I discuss this further in the next major section in which I develop the working definition of agency that guided this study.

A second question from Ahearn (2001) requires more elaboration. She wondered whether agency "must be conscious, intentional, or effective" (p. 113)? In considering this question, I argue that each of these three words must be unpacked. Consciousness and intentionality seem to be related. When DeVontay tossed a ball rather than writing a reflective journal entry, as he'd been instructed to do, was he showing agency? Was he conscious and intentional about his goals? Analysis of his actions through a lens of African-American masculinity may show that he was enacting a "cool dude" persona, rather than that of a "compliant-student." Was that his conscious intention, or were those interpretations that I, as a white, middle-class teacher and college researcher brought to bear? This brings us to a discussion of Ahearn's use of the word "effective." I argue that "effective" is a value-laden term. By what (and whose) measure would effectiveness be defined? As the classroom teacher who assigned DeVontay to write reflectively, I would not describe his behavior as effective. However, if he was consciously trying to avoid

writing, or intentionally trying to gain credit with his peers by entertaining them, he may have been effective.

**Forms of agency.** In her review, Ahearn (2001) also explored agency as free will (p. 114) and as resistance (p. 115). In discussing agency as free will, she noted that philosophers in the field of action theory contend that agency requires "some sort of concomitant mental state, such as 'intentionality'" (p. 114), while some historians believe that only certain people, "Great Men" for example, have agency. Ahearn (2001) critiques the "agency as free will" paradigm, saying that this autonomous view ignores "the social nature of agency and the pervasive influence of culture on human intentions, beliefs, and actions" (p. 114). In a study such as The Apprentice-Teaching Project, situated in an elementary school, the culture of school and the power relations enacted among students and between students and teachers have considerable influence on the extent to which students have (or don't have) free will. At the very least, when a student's exercise of free will falls considerably outside school norms, there could be negative repercussions. This brings us to a discussion of agency as resistance.

Agency as a synonym for resistance is a common paradigm among some anthropologists and many feminist theorists. Ahearn (2001) asserted that, "according to many feminist theorists, in order to demonstrate agency, a person must resist the patriarchal status quo" (p. 115). However, she went on to caution that agency should not be reduced solely to resistance and that opposition is but one form of agency. I concur with this position, recognizing that there are many ways in which students may engage or disengage with school-sanctioned literacy practices. At the beginning of this chapter, I illustrated this concept with an example of DeVontay tossing a ball instead of writing, i.e.

showing resistance. In contrast, the other apprentice-teacher, Alyssa, made a special trip to my room to discuss a book she thought her first grade students would enjoy. Her agentic action took the form of thinking like a teacher even when not actively participating in the apprentice-teaching class.

**Others' definitions of agency.** Moving beyond Ahearn's (2001) review, other scholars have added to our understanding of agency. Wertsch et al. (1993) offered that the "irreducible description of agency is the individual(s)-operating-with-mediational-means" (p. 346). More recently, Moje and Lewis (2007) argued that agency is "the *strategic* making and remaking of [identities]…as embedded within relations of power" (p. 18) and Lewis et al. (2007) further defined the word *strategic* as "a way of positioning oneself so as to allow for new ways of being, new identities" (p. 5).

### My Working Definition of Agency

As became clear in the discussion of identities and agency above, these terms are inextricably intertwined. In the section that follows, I outline the working definition of agency that I've used as a framework for analyzing the data generated during The Apprentice-Teaching Project. Though McCarthey and Moje (2002) argue that the "construct of identity needs to be pushed and reshaped to include a focus on agency" (p. 234), I am actually attempting to flip this perspective by considering the concept of identities within the framework of agency. I am proposing that we could consider *identity* to comprise *whom one is* while *agency* considers *what one does*.

Drawing on the theorists discussed above, I understand *agency* to mean the ways in which social actors functioning within *situated sociocultural contexts* (Holland et al., 1998), which inherently include *structures of power* (Moje & Lewis, 2007), position

themselves strategically to allow for the "*making and remaking" of identities* (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 18) through the use of *mediational tools* (Wertsch et al., 1993), [which might include Discourses (Gee, 1996) and cultural artifacts (Holland et al., 1998)]; agency is performed in varied *forms* and with varied short and long-term *consequences*.

In the following sections, I discuss each major component of my definition of agency: 1) situated, sociocultural contexts, 2) structures of power, 3) identities, 4) mediational tools, and 5) forms and consequences of agency.

**Situated sociocultural contexts.** Gutierrez (2007) reminded us that a "sociocultural view helps us conceive of literacy practices as part of a toolkit that is socially and culturally shaped as individuals participate" in a variety of activities and contexts (p. 116). In this study, I view the situated context as a series of nested and interlocking circles (see Figure 2.1), in which the participants used literacy practices in different ways and for different purposes. At the heart of both the diagram and our community is Room 25 ("my" classroom). When not working with me in Room 25, the apprentice-teachers were also members of three different homerooms, which are represented by the next series of circles. Likewise, we were all members of the Oakdale school community, a Title I school. Finally, the participants in this study were members of two distinct neighborhoods in a large Midwestern city. All lines in the diagram are dotted, indicating the ways in which the contexts were fluid and porous.

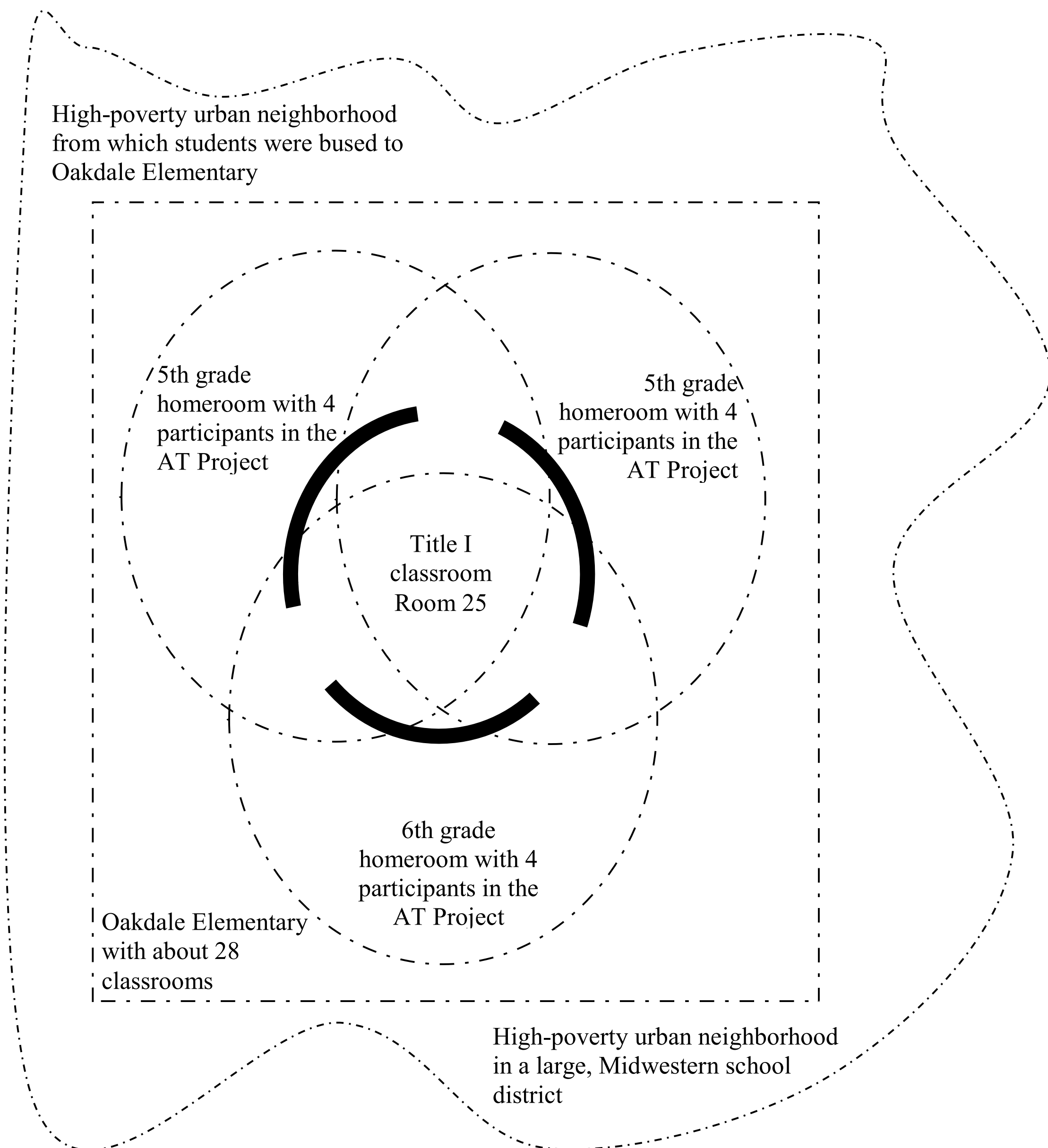


**Figure 2.1 The Situated Sociocultural Context of The Apprentice-Teaching Project**

While all participants were members of the larger school community, the literacy and cultural practices varied across the nested contexts within the school. The three different homeroom teachers with whom the apprentice-teachers spent the majority of their day each held different views about teaching and had different levels of experience.

The individual students were perceived differently by their teachers, and this impacted their classroom experience. Likewise, even in Room 25, the students participated in different types of literacy events and enacted a variety of Discourses, at times with a degree of conflict. When we used the mandated curriculum, the students engaged in the Discourse of Remedial Student; when we were in periods of intense preparation for the three rounds of high-stakes standardized testing, the students became Test Practicers; when we were in a round of apprentice-teaching, the students enacted the Discourse of Teaching. Likewise, I enacted different Discourses, depending on the activity underway. These included Disciplinarian, Testing Coach, Mentor Teacher, and Researcher. When examining each participant's agency, it is important to note the ways in which cultural and social practices were shaped by and in turn shaped our interactions.

**Structures of power.** It is impossible to avoid a discussion of power when considering life in a classroom, and I wish to make two points here. First, I approach the concept of power from a Foucauldian (1978/1990, 1980) perspective; power is dispersed, and can be accessed by all members of a community at different times and in different ways. Lewis (2001) explained that "power relations are dynamic and shifting," because power "emanates not from one dominant source, but from disparate points at all levels of social systems and hierarchies" (p. 95). Indeed, because "power circulates,...it can be held by different people at different moments" (Dixon, 2010, p. 4). In a school setting, it is easy to assume that the teacher ostensibly holds the power; however, even a brief observation in a classroom will reveal that it is possible for students to exert power in myriad ways. On some occasions, students' use of power corresponds with the teacher's intentions; on other occasions, students' use of power is subversive. As Dixon (2010)

reminds us “teachers do not hold power all the time” (p. 4). I opened this chapter with a description of DeVontay tossing a ball in the air when other apprentice-teachers were writing reflections about our recent first grade lesson. While I could cajole or bribe DeVontay to write, ultimately, the power to choose his own activity rested with DeVontay. Students may exert power in other ways as well, such as through foot dragging, steadfast refusal to perform a task, or seemingly innocuous comments.

A second point about power is that it is productive, or accomplishes work (Foucault, 1980). Returning to the image of DeVontay tossing the ball, a teacher might argue that he was not accomplishing work, i.e. the assigned written reflection. However, from DeVontay’s perspective, the ball-tossing could have been accomplishing one of several tasks: avoiding writing, or demonstrating to his peers that he was in charge, among others. Related to the idea that power accomplishes work is the notion that when power moves freely, new practices can develop. Lewis et al. (2007) explained that the circulation of power “afford[s] degrees of agency that resist structural constraints, and at times, lead to transformative practices” (p. 4). In The Apprentice-Teaching Project, students who had previously been given little power over their learning activities were now expected to exert more agency and control over the curriculum – the selection of reading materials, preparation of lessons, and reflections on ways to improve lessons. Thus they had opportunities to transform the literacy practices they used.

***Positionality as related to power***. Positionality is a key concept related to the overall discussion of agency; it can be especially important when considering the situated context and power relations that influence students’ school identities. Murrell (2007) defined *positionality* as “a role identity assumed by, or ascribed to, an individual” (p. 88),

while Holland et al. (1998) reminded us that people "look at the world from the positions into which they are persistently cast" (p. 44). This is crucial, given Bartlett's (2005) argument that positionality "signifies one's understanding of his or her position in systems of power, hierarchy, or affiliation" (p. 3) and Murrell's (2007) reminder that sometimes there is a "tension between individuals' representations of self and the ascriptions made by wider society" (p. 37). This tension can have significant repercussions, given that Holland et al. (1998) go on to argue that when children are "persistently cast" into positions of struggling learners or marginalized "others," they may "silence themselves within the figured world of school" (p. 132), and Alvermann's (2001) contention that in many cases "schools actively arrange for some adolescents to take up, or inhabit, the position of struggling reader" (p. 683).

This study examined the influence that repositioning "struggling" readers as reading experts had on the forms of agency the participants exerted and their identities as readers and learners. Students who were assigned to work in my small groups had been identified by the school as "at risk" on the basis of their standardized test scores and classroom performance. The school's act of requiring them to attend Title I classes positioned these students as incapable and in need of remedial work. Though I was not allowed to abandon the curriculum mandated in my school's Title I plan, I sought, through this study, to reposition my students as experts – individuals who knew something about reading and were capable of teaching younger students. Through this repositioning, I hoped that the apprentice-teachers would exert their power in ways that were more productive in terms of their school-defined literacy practices.

**Identities.** Drawing on Gee, Johnston (2004) explained that "as children are involved in classroom interactions, they build and try on different identities" (p. 23), which he defined as "coming to see in ourselves the characteristics of particular categories (and roles) of people and developing a sense of what it feels like to be that sort of person and belong in certain social spaces" (p. 23). Holland et al. (1998) also argued that people have multiple identities which are mediated by the situations in which they find themselves. For example, they said "...identities are lived in and through activity and so must be conceptualized as they develop in social practice" (p. 5). Furthermore, identities are "a key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them" (p. 5). Finally, Holland et al. (1998) said "we conceive persons as composites of many, often contradictory, self-understandings and identities" (p. 8).

Clearly, the notion of identity (or identities) is complex. Working from a sociocultural perspective, Gee (2000/2001) defined identity as "being recognized as a certain 'kind of person' in a given context" (p. 99). Likewise, one's identities are situational, i.e. the identity presented can change over time and from one setting to another. Gee (2005) used the term "socially situated identity" to refer to "the multiple identities we take on in different practices and contexts" (p. 34) and further described "identities" as the "different ways of participating in different sorts of social groups, cultures, and institutions" (p. 1).

Identity is one analytic tool used by researchers in exploring the experiences of struggling readers and marginalized learners. Gee (2000/2001) argued that identity is "an important analytic tool for understanding schools and society, [because exploring] the contextually specific ways in which people act out and recognize identities allows a more

dynamic approach than the sometimes overly general and static trio of 'race, class, and gender'" (p. 99). For example, Alvermann (2001) used the general concept of identity to understand the behaviors of Grady, a ninth grader participating in an after-school media club. When she applied her understanding of identities, she came to realize that her initial assumptions about the reasons underlying Grady's actions were probably inaccurate, supporting Gee's (2000/2001) argument that the use of identity helps educational researchers gain more nuanced understandings of people's actions and behaviors.

While Gee (2000/2001) proposes four views of identity, all occurring simultaneously for a particular individual and reflecting the situated nature of individuals' experiences in a social world, only one is emphasized in this study: Discourse-identity. This refers to the ways in which someone is recognized by the language they use in dialogue and interactions with others. Though individuals might attempt to present themselves in particular ways, others recognize them by the ways they present themselves through language, i.e., their Discourse-identity. Hall (2007) explained that discursive identity "concerns the way in which others view and define us" (p. 133) and used this concept "as a framework for understanding the decisions that struggling readers make with texts" (p. 133). While some perceived the silence of "struggling" readers to indicate a lack of motivation, Hall argued that silence was a discursive tool the readers used to promote particular identities.

For the purposes of this study, I assert that people have multiple identities which are recognized by others in various situations and contexts. Changes in peoples' social identities can represent learning. Likewise, people can make strategic decisions to enable themselves to make new identities in those varied situations. Finally, it is important to

note that while agency can be seen, individuals' identities must be inferred. One tool for inferring identity is an analysis of the Discourse being enacted. In this study I examined the various Discourses used by the apprentice-teachers and hypothesized about the identities they were performing at particular moments. One of the apprentice-teachers, DeVontay, performed many identities as he engaged in the various components of this project. I believe that there is value in exploring the ways in which he showed the Discourses of 'cool dude,' 'angry child,' 'good student,' 'professional teacher,' 'frustrated teacher,' and others. Such analysis may provide a lens for understanding the varied roles of other marginalized readers.

**Mediational tools.** In my working definition, I propose that agency is the making and remaking of *identities* in *situated sociocultural contexts;* one crucial element of any sociocultural context is the wide range of *mediational tools* available to participants. I follow Wertsch et al. (1993) who argued that mediational means are sociocultural in nature because they are a key aspect of human agency, "inherently tied to historical, cultural, and institutional settings" (Wertsch et al., 1993, p. 337). In her study of secondary school reform and the interplay of teacher identity, agency, and context, Lasky (2005) contended that "…agency is always mediated by the interaction between the individual (attributes and inclinations) and the tools and structures of a social setting" (p. 900). Such was also the case during the apprentice-teaching project, as participants exerted agency through a variety of mediational tools. Some were tangible, including picture books (see glossary) and the paraphernalia of school. Others were more abstract, such as the organizational structures of The Apprentice-Teaching Project and the various Discourses used by participants.

***Cultural artifacts as mediational tools.*** Drawing on Vygotsky, Wertsch et al. (1993) listed social languages; various systems for counting, art, writing, and diagrams; and many other signs as examples of mediational means. Sometimes referred to as cultural artifacts, these mediational tools encompass any element of a context which participants can use to accomplish tasks. Holland et al. (1998) argued that cultural artifacts are "part of [our] collectively formed systems of meaning" (p. 36), that they "evoke the worlds to which they were relevant, and position individuals with respect to those worlds" (p. 63). Indeed it is such artifacts' "capacity to shift the perceptual, cognitive, affective, and practical frame of activity that makes [them] so significant in human life" (p. 63). The apprentice-teachers had access to a number of cultural artifacts during this project. These included picture books, which were both self-selected and easier to read than much of what the students were required to read in their homerooms. In addition, the apprentice-teachers used the various paraphernalia of classrooms, such as markers, chart paper, butcher paper, and teaching charts to conduct their lessons with first graders. Video recordings which prompted reflective discussions were yet another artifact that led to transformative practices.

***Discourses as mediational tools***. In considering "big D Discourses" and their role as mediational tools, it is first useful to consider Gee's (1996) ideas about little d and big D discourses. He describes "little d" discourses as the bits and pieces of which language is made up. In contrast, "big D" Discourses are the "ways of being in the world" or activities and associations "which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities" (p. 127). Gee used the concept of an identity kit as a metaphor for a Discourse; the identity kit "comes complete with the appropriate costume and

instructions on how to act, talk, and often write" so that a person can "take on a particular social role that others will recognize" (p. 127). An individual's primary Discourse is the one learned within the home, while secondary Discourses are learned in social institutions beyond the family. It is also important to note that "people are "member[s] of many Discourses, and each Discourse represents one of [their] ever multiple identities" (Gee, 2005, p. ix).

Discourses correspond to different situated identities and refer to "the ways of representing, believing, valuing, and participating" (Rogers, 2004, p. 5) within that group. Likewise, they can "create 'social positions' (perspectives) from which people are 'invited' ('summoned') to speak [and] listen...in...recognizable ways" (Gee, 1996, p. 128). Wertsch et al. (1993) argued that "the process of taking on cognitive authority, and hence responsibility for a task, by actively appropriating others' mediational means is basic to the formation of mediated agency" (p. 349), and that it is possible to see "major changes in performance…through 're-mediation,' that is by reequipping people with new mediational means" (p. 349-350). Furthermore, a new Discourse can allow people to mediate new ways of "enact[ing] certain sorts of socially situated identit[ies]" (Gee, 2004a, p. 40). In the Apprentice-Teacher Project, various Discourses, including those of Teacher, Student, Learner, Leader, Reader and Resistant Student, were used by the participants. Thus, these Discourses became both mediational tools and markers of identities being "made and remade" by the apprentice-teachers.

**Forms and consequences of agency.** While a strong sense of agency is usually seen as a prerequisite to academic success, students exert agency in a variety of ways, of which some are perceived positively and others negatively. Likewise, it is important to

note that whether an action is judged positively or negatively depends on the audience, and there is nearly always more than one audience for any agentic action. In schools, the audience consists of adults (including teachers, staff, and parents) and classmates (some of whom are friends while others aren't). When adults discuss student agency and classify it as positive or negative, they generally judge the actions according to whether the student is engaging in the teacher's and school's agenda of academic engagement. Forms of agency which are seen as positive in schools include an upright body posture, participation in class discussion, and asking for help when needed. Negative, or resistive, forms of agency are often identified by teachers and schools could include foot dragging, eye rolling, or doodling. While school personnel might label such agentic moves as negative, a student's classmates might perceive them positively.

***Consequences.*** Exerting agency, that is making or remaking identities, will always have consequences for individuals and the groups within which they are performing. Likewise, various forms of agency will have different consequences, both short and long term, for students; those consequences will vary according to the audience and the ways agentic acts have been perceived. For some students the school-identities that they perform might conflict with their social-identities, and they "may risk positioning themselves in dangerous ways" (McCarthey & Moje, 2002, p. 233). For example, if a position assumed by the student is perceived negatively by a teacher, the student may be penalized in terms of academic success or school privileges; in contrast, if the agentic action is perceived negatively by school peers, the student may be ostracized or teased by those peers.

At the beginning of this chapter, I described a time Alyssa visited my classroom to ask me about a book that she'd heard of and wondered about using during a first grade lesson. This is an act of agency that I, as the teacher, perceived positively indeed. I noted that Alyssa had been demonstrating "teacherly behavior" by thinking of her first grade students at times outside our normal lessons together. This led to positive consequences for Alyssa when I gave her more freedom to visit the library or come to my room at unscheduled times. It is also important to note that while we don't know how her peers perceived this action, she did make a point of initiating this discussion at a time when her classmates weren't present.

**Closing Thoughts**

Ahearn (2001) suggested that "we may have to think of the ways in which agency is constituted by the norms, practices, institutions, and discourses through which it is made available" (p. 115, citing Lalu, 2000, pp. 50-51) and that "a nuanced understanding of the multiplicity of motivations behind all human actions should be at the core of our definition of agency" (p. 116). In this study, I follow Ahearn's suggestion that "researchers should focus on…different ways in which agency is socioculturally mediated in particular times and places (p. 122).

I believe learning is a social event which draws on the cultural practices of the people involved; such social and cultural practices result in socially situated identities for the people involved in particular communities of practice. Gee (2004a) supported this notion, defining learning "as changing patterns of participation in specific social practices" (p. 38; citing Lave & Wenger, 2001). He went on to say that since changes in a person's patterns of participation in social practices "constitute changes in socially

situated identities..., learning is change in a socially situated identity" (p. 38). In summary, it is my contention that the development of an environment in which "struggling" readers could become successful apprentice-teachers of reading enabled them to become "legitimate peripheral participants" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) of school literacy practices and the "kinds of people" (Gee, 2000/2001) who chose to engage in literacy events, leading to the assumption of identities as readers and teachers.

In this chapter, I've provided an overview of three major theoretical foundations which support the project: a *sociocultural view* of literacy, *apprenticeship theory* (and a discussion of ways in which other cross-age tutoring projects use apprenticeship theory), and *agency*. The high-stakes accountability environment in my school strongly emphasized reading comprehension for the purposes of passing tests. In contrast, The Apprentice-Teaching Project privileges sociocultural learning theory and draws on apprenticeship as a vehicle for literacy learning in a framework meaningful to most participants. In the course of defining agency, I discussed *structures of power* and the related concept of *positionality*. This project shifted the position of participants from "struggling" reader, which is inherently a low-status position, to "expert," a much higher status, and the study explored the ways in which this shift in position influenced the forms of agency exerted and identities enacted by the apprentice-teachers. Likewise, I sought to understand how classroom conditions impacted the participants' engagement with school-based literacy practices.

In the next chapter I discuss my evolution from being a teacher to being a teacher researcher and the ways in which teacher research impacted this study. In addition, I introduce the context of the project, including the school, demographics, and curricular

expectations of the Title I program in which I taught. Finally, I introduce the focal students of the project.

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE APPRENTICE-TEACHING PROJECT IN THE CONTEXT OF OAKDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*The [picture of the book on my transmediation] stands for what I'm about to read, and [teachers] don't have to use just textbooks. [Kids read] a book that they like, and not a book that the teacher chose for them.*

*-Aureesha, Transmediation Narrative*

The Apprentice-Teaching Project is essentially a cross-age tutoring or buddy reading project in which school-identified "struggling" readers became teachers of reading for first graders in lieu of their traditional "reading intervention" class. In this chapter I describe The Apprentice-Teaching Project and how it was a natural product of my growth from teacher to critical teacher researcher and curriculum developer. In addition, I describe how the project fit within the context of Oakdale Elementary School.

## Teacher Research, Curriculum Development, and The Apprentice-Teaching Project

### Evolving from a Teacher to a Teacher Researcher

As a teacher working exclusively with students who had been labeled by the school as "struggling" and "poor" readers, I often wondered what book, experience, or activity would magically cause my students my students to choose to become readers. I turned a critical eye on my own and my school's practices. I found that my teaching naturally evolved into the dual roles of teacher and researcher, and one aspect of teacher research is reading professional literature. Thus, I began to read about environments that had engaged other students in their learning.

Johnston (2004) asserted that teachers need to "arrange for children to tell many literacy stories in which they are the successful protagonists" (p. 31), while Peter Murrell (2007) argued that "accomplished teaching in diverse settings is less a matter of putting curriculum content across to learners, but rather more a matter of creating a social and cultural environment where this knowledge-in-use is distributed among participants and put to use by common purposeful activity" (p. 53). One environment in which knowledge-in-use can be "distributed among participants" (Murrell, 2007, p. 53) is one in which adolescents become apprentices of an experienced teacher. In such relationships, the mentor/teacher can scaffold and nurture the emerging abilities of the apprentice/student (Gee, 1996), thus creating opportunities for them to become "successful protagonists" (Johnston, 2004, p. 31) – individuals who use reading and writing for authentic purposes while receiving on-the-spot feedback and support. In my journey to find more engaging learning structures, I naturally progressed from reading about and trying different techniques to taking notes and becoming more consistent in how I reflected on the impact of my pedagogical decisions on my students' learning. In turn, I began to seek out more information on teacher research and apprenticeship models.

**Teacher Research: An Intervention and a Tool to Understand Classroom Life**

Patricia Johnston (1992) described teacher research as a process which frames activities of the classroom and serves as a particular type of intervention in both the teaching process and the lives of students and their families (p. 32). This structure has been used in various contexts. For example, Campano (2007), in his work with migrant and immigrant students, served as a fifth grade teacher and doctoral researcher, and

Morrell (2004) took on the combined roles in a critical ethnography which provided two summer seminars and a high school class for high school participants.

Teacher research can be an important tool for understanding classroom life more clearly. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) argued that “teacher researchers are uniquely positioned to provide” an insider’s perspective that “makes visible the ways that students and teachers together construct knowledge and curriculum” (p. 43). Likewise, Burton and Seidl (2005) argued that traditional, quantitative research “failed to make visible the rich complexity of classroom life as children and adults experience it” (p. 195). They go on to argue that “theorizing, when defined as the articulation and critical examination of directly experienced phenomena leading to increased understanding…, is at the very center of doing research as a classroom teacher” (p. 198).

A teacher researcher’s stance can be explicitly about intervention; in this model, the researcher is also the primary teacher working with the youthful participants in the study. In one such study, Alvermann (2001) facilitated an after-school media club to learn about the identities and positioning of high schoolers who struggled with school-based literacies; in the course of the study, students had increased access to computers, reference materials, and instructional support. While assuming the stance of outside observers, O'Brien et al. (2007) conducted a mixed-methods study of ways middle school students used multiple and non-traditional literacies in their Read 180 classroom. Compton-Lilly (2007a, 2007b) and Rogers (2002, 2004) both used a combination of interviewing, participant observation, and tutoring to gain data for their studies. In offering tutoring to the participants, the researchers provided tools that were intended to help participants be more successful in their GED and elementary classrooms.

In each of the preceding examples, whether the researchers were in formal teaching positions or not, the studies served the dual functions of teaching the students and shedding light on classroom experiences. During The Apprentice-Teacher Project, I also assumed these dual roles of teaching and researching. The fifth and sixth grade "struggling" readers found authentic reasons to improve their own reading because they knew their first grade students would be looking up to and judging them. Thus, the Project was an intervention that also provided multiple opportunities for me to gain insights into the ways the activities opened avenues for increased agency and more productive school-based identities of the participants.

**The Apprentice-Teaching Project as Responsive Curriculum**

In the most basic terms, curriculum can be described as a *course of study* (Wiles & Bondi, 1993, p. 9), though a more helpful definition might be that curriculum is "the centerpiece of educational activity. It includes the formal, overt knowledge that is central to the activities of teaching, as well as more tacit, subliminal messages…that foster the inculcation of particular values, attitudes, and dispositions" (Beyer & Liston, 1996, p. xv). These two traditional definitions don't sufficiently describe the curriculum I envisioned for The Apprentice-Teaching Project. As discussed in Chapter Two, the reading tutors in some cross-age tutoring projects were provided with prepared materials and an established lesson structure, while other projects were driven by a framework that gave the tutors more flexibility. When designing this project, I sought to work with the apprentice-teachers to co-construct both a framework for the first-grade lessons, and to develop other aspects of the curriculum, such as the texts used and the response activities.

This chapter's epigraph demonstrates the importance Aureesha placed on the apprentice-teachers' role in choosing texts.

I use the term *responsive curriculum* to describe The Apprentice-Teaching Project's process of curricular development; as Short and Burke (1991) explained, this type of curriculum development is a "shared process of teachers and students working together through negotiation" (p. 4). Our curriculum needed to encompass at least three areas: activities and techniques that would help my students improve their own reading, activities that would help them prepare for their teaching activities with first graders, and activities that would facilitate reflection about their teaching and reading. It is worth noting that while I developed the initial curriculum, I recognized that the apprentice-teachers would assume a larger role in planning as the project evolved; I observed their actions, and flexibly responded as their needs and interests shifted. Likewise, as the project progressed, I responded to mandates from the school and district administration. Thus, while I was the Title I reading teacher, I was also a responsive curriculum developer who ensured that my "experiences and understandings about learning…and students" worked in concert with the knowledge the apprentice-teachers brought regarding "their own interests, experiences, and understandings" (Short & Burke, 1991).

**The Apprentice-Teaching Project as a Critical Teacher Research Study**

Much that I was asked to do as an interventionist in a high-poverty, Title I school raised questions in my mind about efficacy of our instructional practices, and I came to understand that a critical lens would be needed as I pursued my multiple roles of teaching, developing curriculum, and researching. My experiences supported Cochran-Smith and Lytle's assertion that practitioner-research can be used to take on of issues of

equity, engagement, and agency (2009, p. 7), and Blackburn and Clark's (2007) argument that "literacy research for political action and social justice demands methodologies that foreground the immediate, and largely self-defined needs, of local research participants and backgrounds the 'needs' of researchers" (p. 4). I began to read further about approaching my research from a critical stance and to design my study so that it could "engage and benefit those who are marginalized in society" (Morrell, 2004, p. 42). I believe that research should achieve at least two goals. First, it should disrupt previously held assumptions, and second, it should make a difference in the lives of the participants. In light of my desire to foreground needs of the participants, I concluded that it would be possible to view research as an intervention. Indeed, it was impossible to see research as anything but an intervention, given that the very presence of a researcher impacts the participants and context in some way.

In my nearly 20 years of teaching, I grew from a teacher to a curriculum developer and teacher researcher, and gradually conceived of The Apprentice-Teaching Project – a critical, teacher research study. I used the multiple roles of teacher, curriculum developer, and researcher to create a space in which fifth and sixth graders were invited to take on new identities as readers and teachers through their work with first grade students. As a teacher, I was responsible for creating an environment in which the students could try on new ways of being (Gee, 1996); as a curriculum developer, I facilitated an evolving intervention framework within which the apprentice-teachers could plan and deliver lessons; as a researcher, I focused on collecting data which could shed light on the shifting identities and acts of agency the students performed during the

various phases of the project, and was in a strong position to explore the impact on and experiences of the apprentice-teachers.

In the next sections, I describe the demographics of Oakdale Elementary (pseudonym), give an overview of organization of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, and contrast the apprentice-teaching curriculum with the mandated Title I curriculum at Oakdale.

## Oakdale Elementary and the Curricular Context

### Oakdale Elementary School

This study took place at Oakdale Elementary, a school just outside the urban core of a major Midwestern city. Approximately 78% of the student body qualified for free or reduced-price lunches, and the student body had the following racial and ethnic breakdown: 13% of the students were identified as African-American, 5% Hispanic, 3% multiracial, and 78% White (*Oakdale Elementary School: Strategic and continuous school improvement plan*, 2008).

### An Overview of the Structure of The Apprentice-Teaching Project

Most apprentice-teachers taught seven lessons with first graders, with each lesson preceded by preparatory activities and followed by debriefing and reflection activities. I refer to a "round" as all activities related to a single first grade lesson, and there were seven rounds. While there were differences across the seven rounds as the curriculum evolved and apprentice-teachers became more confident, there was a common structure that unified the rounds.

**Preparing for each lesson.** The preparatory lessons and activities typically comprised two to three days during which the apprentice-teachers selected and rehearsed

books to read to the first graders. The fifth and sixth graders in The Apprentice Teaching Project came from three different homerooms and I generally conducted their intervention groups at different times during the day. Therefore, their preparation lessons also occurred separately. Each of the three groups had four students in it, allowing focused instruction for their 45 minute period. When preparing for first grade lessons, I invited the apprentice-teachers to suggest specific books, general themes, or broad topics around which to organize their lessons. In addition, as the project progressed, we negotiated the activities that would accompany the read aloud. Finally, I planned discussions that might be described as *professional development* to help the apprentice-teachers consider their role as teachers of reading and of first grade students. During these lessons and activities, I constantly felt the tension among my roles of mentor, reading teacher, curriculum developer, and researcher.

**Teaching each lesson.** After working for several days in separate groups to prepare for their lessons, the three groups of apprentice-teachers came together at a single time to teach their first graders. To increase the sense of continuity and to foster relationship-building among apprentice-teachers and students, the first grade teacher and I tried to keep the groups of first graders consistent. However, every round of apprentice-teaching invariably saw some shifts in the groups to adjust for absences or the enrollment and withdrawal of first graders. We began the year with eight apprentice-teachers (two groups), but added a third group after Winter Break, with the result that there were generally 13 apprentice-teachers. Our partner class of first graders averaged about 23 students, meaning that each apprentice-teacher typically taught two first graders, but occasionally had just one or as many as three in his or her group.

Teacher read aloud was at the heart of every apprentice-teaching lesson, with the older students reading their rehearsed books to the first graders. As the apprentice-teachers became more confident, they added additional activities to the lessons. For example, in Round Two, apprentice-teachers planned questions and predictions for strategic spots in their chosen stories, thus adding a "think aloud" component (Wilhelm, 2008) to the lesson. By Round Four I felt I needed to be more explicit about the use of literary language, and many apprentice-teachers wanted to incorporate art, so we made graffiti boards (see glossary) on which the apprentice-teachers and first graders made images that represented their stories' main ideas and themes. I include more details about the lessons in subsequent chapters.

**Bringing closure to each lesson.** We brought closure to each round of apprentice-teaching with at least one and sometimes two periods of conversation about how the lessons had gone, what the apprentice-teachers might do differently next time, and what they had learned about teaching and reading. I often refer to these days as "debriefing" or "follow-up" conversations. The debriefing "lessons" used a variety of different techniques. I initially envisioned that students would write a journal entry about each teaching experience, but this was often an unproductive use of time. The apprentice-teachers' written responses ranged from non-existent to superficial, with occasional glimpses of true insight. More useful indicators of the apprentice-teachers' thinking came through structured and unstructured group discussions, one-on-one interviews, conversations while watching video segments of the apprentice teachers working with first graders, and a reflection and feedback strategy called "Three Pluses and a Wish" (see glossary).

The apprentice-teachers brought up some common themes and questions after nearly every lesson. These included, “What can/should I do when I finish reading my book(s)?” “What makes a good read aloud lesson?” “What can I do if the kids are ‘bad’?” After several lessons, I also prompted the apprentice-teachers to consider the difference between reading aloud and reading aloud to teach.

When I originally conceived of this project for my dissertation research, I embedded the debriefing days primarily to gain data about the apprentice-teachers’ views of themselves as readers and teachers. In short, I assumed this was something the participants would do so that I could increase my corpus of data. I began wondering about the role of the debriefing discussions as early as Round One, when I wrote,

> I’m struggling with the role of teacher as compared to the researcher. Is [the debriefing] conversation part of the apprenticeship process or is it simply data gathering? If I do this project again, in what ways will these debriefing conversations be important? Does it make a difference that I record them? In what ways will revisiting this data help me be a better teacher, rather than simply having the recordings available for my research? (11/20/08, Debriefing Field Notes 5N, p. 2).

In retrospect, and perhaps unsurprisingly, some of the most interesting learning conversations and creative teaching activities occurred during the debriefing days. For example, during Round Five I video recorded segments of the first grade lessons and then asked the apprentice-teachers to watch this video during the debriefing discussion. This is a common professional development strategy for practicing teachers, and I wanted to see what insights the apprentice-teachers would have about themselves as readers and

teachers. Not surprisingly, it was after watching these recordings that Aureesha and Salenia engaged in an extremely powerful discussion about the importance of interesting texts and student choice in promoting reading.

**The Curricular Context: A Mandated Curriculum and Standardized Testing**

At the time of this project, I was a Title I reading teacher responsible for conducting small-group intervention lessons with students who had been identified by the school as "at risk" or as "poor" readers. Title I is a federally-funded program authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, originally enacted in 1965, and renamed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) with the 2001 reauthorization; this program is intended to provide supplemental funds to schools with high numbers of children who qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Schools that receive Title funds are required to submit detailed plans explaining how they will identify students for additional services, what supplemental instruction will be offered, and how student growth will be assessed. Students who receive supplemental support through Title I are expected to make more than one year's growth according to standardized measures. For third through sixth grades, the Oakdale Title I plan indicated that teachers were to use the *Soar to Success* program (see glossary; Cooper, 1999) from Houghton-Mifflin. Because The Apprentice-Teaching Project was not included in our school's Title I Plan, I had to receive permission from my building principal and the district Title I coordinator to implement this project.

**The *Soar to Success* curriculum.** The *Soar to Success* program (Cooper, 1999) is based on the four metacognitive strategies espoused by the reciprocal teaching model (see glossary; Palincsar & Brown, 1986); these are predicting, questioning, clarifying, and

summarizing (see glossary). Trade picture books (see glossary) are included for each grade-level; the books are well-written, from well-regarded authors, and include titles such as *Where Does the Garbage Go* (Asimov, 1998), *Going Home* (Bunting, 1998), and *Whales* (Simon, 1992). The teacher is expected to use the teacher's manual to lead the students through a series of guided reading lessons using scripts and worksheets about using metacognitive skills. The *Soar to Success* program is grounded in the assumption that students don't know how to read, and therefore need explicit modeling in the four specified strategies. Furthermore, this program removes choice from the students by identifying specific trade books (see glossary) that everyone is required to read at the same pace. As outlined in the *Soar to Success* teachers' manuals, discussions about the books generally emphasized the students' use of metacognitive strategies and only superficially explored social issues that might be raised in the literature.

**The curricular framework for The Apprentice-Teaching Project.** In contrast to the lessons driven by the *Soar to Success* program, the lessons of The Apprentice-Teaching Project began with the apprentice-teachers' own experiences and *responded* to their needs. While these lessons built on the metacognitive reading strategies used in *Soar to Success*, they also provided the students with opportunities to become actively involved in their own literacy practices by choosing which books to read, when to ask for help, and how to respond after reading. In short, the curricular framework for The Apprentice-Teaching Project was grounded in principles of responsiveness; I assumed that when students were identified as experts, rather than "struggling" readers, they would more actively engage in the behaviors and activities of proficient readers. Furthermore, as an "on the fly" curriculum developer, I could *respond* to the needs and

interests of the apprentice-teachers by making adjustments to the *curriculum* on the basis of my observations and conversations with the apprentice-teachers.

Rather than relying on a pre-determined script, the apprentice-teachers' own needs drove the instruction. For example, during Round One, the apprentice-teachers focused simply on reading aloud to their first grade students. In preparation, I led mini-lessons on reading to become familiar with the stories and re-reading to practice suspenseful oral reading. The apprentice-teachers added to the content by drawing on their prior experiences, for example, reminiscing about teachers who changed their voices for different characters when reading aloud. On another occasion, and outside the scope of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I had chosen to use an invitation with all my students about books portraying name-calling and teasing (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008), rather than the specified *Soar to Success* lessons. When preparing for Lesson 5, the apprentice-teachers drew on their interest in the name-calling books and asked if they could do the same activity. Therefore, our preparatory lessons in Round Five involved choosing books that dealt with bullying, revising the chart provided by Lewison et al. (2008), and discussing the characters and plot with other apprentice-teachers.

**The impact of standardized testing on The Apprentice-Teaching Project.** Under the requirements of NCLB and my state's school accountability law, every student in grades three to eight had to take a high-stakes, standardized assessment at least once per year in both English / language arts (ELA) and math. The test in my state included multiple-choice and open-ended questions. In prior years, we had taken the test in the fall so that schools could use the results diagnostically; however, prior to the beginning of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, the state legislature opted to administer the tests in the

spring so results could be used to measure students' knowledge of grade-level standards and to more efficiently evaluate teachers. As a result, during the school year of The Apprentice Teaching Project, the students had to participate in the high-stakes test twice: once in the fall to measure the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the preceding year (2007-2008) and once in the spring to measure AYP for current year (2008-2009). Furthermore, to allow time for the tests to be scored prior to the ending of the school year, the spring test was administered in two phases: the open-ended portion in late February and the multiple-choice portion in late April. My district also elected to have students take additional, computer-based tests which were used to diagnose students' strengths and weakness and predict their likelihood of passing the high-stakes test. These intermediary tests were administered three times during the school year. Though each child spent only two hours on the intermediary tests, as an intervention teacher, I was routinely required to cancel my small groups so I would be available to proctor the tests for classroom teachers.

Interruptions to the instructional day as a result of testing were compounded because the school also made changes both to schedules and lesson content as the tests approached. For example, in the four weeks prior to the fall test, Oakdale Elementary adopted a modified looping schedule so students could review and test with the teacher they'd had the prior year. For two hours every morning, second grade teachers worked with third graders, third grade teachers worked with fourth graders, etc. As an intervention teacher, I was required to teach second graders during that two hour block, and my "regular" intervention groups didn't establish a routine schedule until after the first round of testing in late September.

In summary, the seven rounds of The Apprentice-Teaching Project were incorporated into the instructional time that remained after five sessions of standardized testing and the test-preparation lessons that accompanied each bout of testing. Table 3.1 shows the dates my intervention students, including those in The Apprentice-Teaching Project, were impacted by standardized testing.

| **Date** | **My Activity** | **Testing** |
|---|---|---|
| 8/18/08 – 9/03/08 | I taught 2nd graders in morning, rather than pulling intervention groups (including the apprentice-teaching groups). | 2nd – 6th grade classes were each scheduled for computer-based diagnostic testing for 2-3 periods sometime this week. |
| 9/04/08 – 9/12/08 | I continued to teach 2nd graders in morning; began teaching 5th grade intervention groups in afternoon. | |
| 9/15/08 – 9/26/08 | Intervention groups cancelled; I administered high-stakes tests with small groups throughout the day. | High-stakes test for all students in 3rd – 6th grades in the mornings; students with IEP & language accommodations tested throughout the day. |
| 9/29/08 | I began small group interventions: seven groups from four grade-levels. | |
| 12/02/08 – 12/05/08 | Intervention groups cancelled; I proctored computer-based diagnostic testing all day. | 2nd – 6th grade classes were each scheduled for computer-based diagnostic testing for 2-3 periods sometime this week. |
| 2/23/09 – 2/27/09 | While I met with my intervention groups, the curriculum consisted of test-prep lessons. | |
| 3/02/09 – 3/06/09 | I administered the high-stakes tests in the morning, so A.M. intervention groups were cancelled; P.M. groups continued with test-prep activities. | All students in 3rd – 6th grades took the high-stakes test in the morning. |
| 4/15, 4/23 & 4/24/09 | Test-prep lessons during intervention groups. | |
| 4/27/09 – 5/1/09 | Most intervention groups cancelled while I administered high-stakes tests; apprentice-teaching intervention groups met on an adjusted schedule in the afternoon. | All students in 3rd – 6th grades took the high-stakes test in the morning. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5/5/09 | Apprentice-teachers scheduled to meet with their first grade students for Lesson 7. | First graders late for Lesson 7 because their teacher had to give reading assessments |
| 5/07/09 – 5/08/09; 5/12/09- 5/14/09 | Adjusted schedule for intervention groups, including apprentice-teaching groups. | $2^{nd}$ – $6^{th}$ grade classes were scheduled for computer-based diagnostic testing for 2-3 class periods |

**Table 3.1 Impact of Standardized Testing on Schedule and Lesson Content**

## Participants in The Apprentice-Teaching Project

### Selecting Participants from Among My "Struggling" Readers

As a Title I reading interventionist, I taught seven small groups (3-5 children) of school-identified "struggling" readers in a pull-out setting. Participants for this study were drawn from three of my seven groups. These three groups were selected on the basis of the previous relationship I had built with some of the students and the gender and racial composition of the groups; the make-up of these groups generally reflected the demographics of the school and Title I program. The identified groups of intermediate students had the following composition: two groups of fifth graders totaling 9 students (1 African-American female, 3 White females, 1 AA male, 1 biracial male, 3 White males) and one group of sixth graders with 4 students ( 1 AA female, 1 White female, 1 biracial, 1 White male). These 13 students taught lessons to students from a first grade classroom consisting of approximately 23 students. Each group of apprentice-teachers was drawn from a single homeroom.

Though I had students ranging from third to sixth grades in my seven intervention groups, I elected to include only fifth and sixth grade students in The Apprentice-Teaching Project. First, I was concerned about obtaining school and district permission and managing the collection of data if I included all my students (about 30). Second, the

fifth and sixth grade students generally struggled more with reading. Finally, I thought that the larger difference in ages between the intermediate students and the first graders could increase the impact of the project. Though just two of my seven intervention groups were involved for Rounds One and Two, I added an additional fifth grade group after Winter Break resulting in a total of three groups of apprentice-teachers. I added the third group, because I was concerned (at the time) that I wasn't collecting substantive data and thought I might need to continue the project into the next school year. If this had turned out to be the case, I wanted eight students, rather than four, to carry forward.

**The Apprentice-Teaching Project Focal Students**

Though 13 intermediate students participated in The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I focused on just six students for the purposes of this study. After doing my initial analysis and writing early versions of the data chapters I realized I had included too many voices in the narrative, and I'd need to narrow my focus to fewer students. I used multiple criteria when selecting the focal students, though the primary reason for their selection was that the students seemed to have stories to tell. To help me decide which of the 13 students provided the richest data, I used the word count feature of my word-processing program to calculate how many times each student was represented in early drafts of the dissertation. I also attempted to mirror the general demographics of the full group of apprentice-teachers, my larger group of Title I students, and the gender and racial balance of Oakdale Elementary. Finally, I wanted focal students who represented the range of experiences in the project, including those for whom it seemed to "work" and those for whom it didn't. Using all these factors, I honed in on six focal students. Table 3.2 provides the relevant demographic data for each of the six students.

| ***Student*** | ***Group*** | ***Grade Level*** | ***Gender*** | ***Race*** | ***Participant in # of Rounds*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyssa | A | 6th | F | W | 7 |
| LaToya | A | 6th | F | AA | 7 |
| Aureesha | B | 5th | F | AA | 7 |
| DeVontay | B | 5th | M | AA | 7 |
| Salenia | B | 5th | F | W | 7 |
| Billy | C | 5th | M | W | 5 |

**Table 3.2 Focal Students**

**Alyssa.** Alyssa (Figure 3.1) was a sixth grader who had also worked with me as a Title I reading student in fifth grade. She was a quiet girl, tall for her age, and carried herself with confidence. She worked hard in both my group and her homeroom and played the "school game" well. Though her written work was neat and nearly always complete, she was identified for reading intervention services because she struggled with comprehension, especially on assessments. Alyssa read fluently and was able to answer literal level questions (see glossary). However, when asked to make inferences (see glossary) about characters' motivations or connect (see glossary) different portions of a text to understand why something had probably happened, she was unable to articulate or identify answers. One of Alyssa's major strengths was that she was a keen observer and empathetic toward others. For example, during one debriefing conversation, LaToya commented that one of her first grade students didn't participate in an apprentice-teaching lesson; Alyssa noted that the child was very shy, which she knew because she sometimes baby-sat for the child after school. During apprentice-teaching lessons, Alyssa interacted with her students in a calm, professional way, seeming to have an intuitive knack for teaching.

**Figure 3.1 Alyssa**

**LaToya.** LaToya (Figure 3.2) was in the same Title I group and homeroom as Alyssa, but provided a marked contrast to Alyssa in terms of class work and personality. LaToya was also tall and confident, but where Alyssa spoke softly, walked calmly, and was even-tempered, LaToya was volatile. On some days she bounded into a room with high energy, and on others she slouched in with complaints and aches. When full of energy, she did her class work with vigor – often writing three pages in sprawling handwriting with hearts dotting her letter “i”s. When she was down, it was a struggle to engage her in any task. She had a big voice, was often ready to share her ideas, and was very enthusiastic when working with her first grade students. Like LaToya’s behavior, her reading skills were sporadic. Her oral reading was often rapid with minor substitutions that were syntactically (see glossary) inappropriate but generally didn’t significantly change the meaning; however, LaToya struggled with comprehension. On some occasions she stunned me with her ability to understand nuances in a text, but on other days she appeared to read but was unable to discuss even basic elements of a storyline or article. She also had difficulty focusing on the story of longer books, so even attending to audio recordings of books was challenging for Latoya.

**Figure 3.2 LaToya**

**Aureesha.** During the year prior to the implementation of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I used purposeful sampling techniques (Patton, 2002) to identify several students who I specifically wanted to participate in the project. I requested that these fourth graders be placed together in a single fifth-grade homeroom, so I could ensure they'd have the opportunity to work with me as apprentice-teachers (assuming that they still qualified for Title I services the next year).

Aureesha (Figure 3.3), a fifth grader in the year of the project, was one of these students. Her reading sounded dysfluent, so her both her oral and silent reading was slow and laborious, interfering with her comprehension. Aureesha used all three cueing systems (see glossary) to figure out unknown words, but often over-used graphophonics (letters and their sounds; see glossary). While she'd say a word that visually matched the beginning, middle, and end of an unknown word, it would often be "off;" either she'd say a real word that was visually similar to the unknown, but different semantically, or she'd produce a combination of sounds that didn't create an actual word. For example, on one occasion she read the word /plugged/ instead of /plunged/. While both are real words, /plugged/ didn't make sense (didn't fit semantically) in the context of the passage. I

identified her for this project because I believed that the authentic opportunity for re-reading would engage her in focusing on fluency. When selecting books for her own reading, she was interested in historical fiction that focused on civil rights and gritty urban fiction that explored the life issues of African-American teen girls. In her classwork, she often worked hard but was easily distracted by peer relations. Early in the project Aureesha had difficulty warming up to her first grade students, but then became more involved. During debriefing discussions she engaged thoughtfully and passionately (when she was not engaged in verbal sparring with DeVontay).

**Figure 3.3 Aureesha**

**DeVontay.** DeVontay (Figure 3.4) was also a fifth grader who had been a student of mine in fourth grade, and like Aureesha, one of the students that I had pre-selected when students had been assigned to fifth grade homerooms. I selected him for this project, because I was so concerned about helping him connect with school and literacy, and I'd already built a good rapport with him. By the year of The Apprentice-Teaching Project he had already been retained at least once and possibly twice and had attended several elementary schools. He had a history of being uncooperative in school, he

struggled in nearly all academic tasks, and both reading comprehension and decoding were concerns. Like Aureesha, he was able to use the graphophonic cueing system, but often lacked the vocabulary knowledge to choose the correct of several possible pronunciations. For example, when attempting the word /physicians/ he began by saying /fiss-i-kans/, correctly pronouncing the /ph/ digraph (see glossary), but incorrectly pronouncing the /cia/ combination. On his final attempt of /physicians/ he said /physicals/ which had the advantage of being a real word, but didn't fit semantically in this context. In both his homeroom and in my group his behavior was a frequent concern, especially when he became frustrated by academic expectations. DeVontay and Aureesha often engaged in verbal sparring that disrupted other activities.

**Figure 3.4 DeVontay**

**Salenia.** As a soft-spoken girl, Salenia's (Figure 3.5) voice was often overshadowed by Aureesha's and DeVontay's verbal outbursts; however, when heard, Salenia was able to hold her own in conversations. She was a hard-worker who continued with assigned tasks even as others caused minor havoc. Salenia generally understood what she read at both literal and inferential levels (see glossary), especially when she read orally. Her comprehension was particularly impressive considering her rate of

uncorrected miscues (see glossary). Salenia over relied on the graphophonic cueing system, and when she made miscues, she often matched only the beginning and ending sounds of the printed word. For example, when reading the name /Sheila/ she read /Stella/ and for /sensational/ she substituted /sectional/. In these and other cases she failed to draw on the semantic cueing system (see glossary) to make corrections. Salenia was a participant in several important conversations about The Apprentice-Teaching project with DeVontay and Aureesha.

**Figure 3.5  Salenia**

**Billy.** Billy (Figure 3.6) joined The Apprentice-Teaching Project in January during Round Three and was an outlier in the project. Unlike the other students, I had not known him in the year prior to the project. He struggled with all areas of literacy, including handwriting, conventional spelling, oral reading, and comprehension. He read dutifully and perfunctorily with his first graders, but frequently finished early. When reading aloud, he rarely corrected miscues, even when the substituted word didn't make sense. For example, he read /walling/ instead of /wailing/, /instant/ for /intense/, and /sentastic/ for /sensational/. In many cases, not only did Billy substitute a word that matched just one or two parts of a word (beginning, middle, or end), he read

combinations of sounds that weren’t actually words. He showed little initiative when preparing or adapting lessons, and sometimes disrupted our group discussions with his behavior. I included him as a focal student because my early readings of project data seemed to indicate that intervention didn’t work for him.

**Figure 3.6  Billy**

**Closing Thoughts**

In the three major sections of this chapter I first described my evolution into a critical teacher researcher and the ways in which The Apprentice-Teacher Project relied on a responsive curriculum. Next I provided an overview of the demographics and curricular context of Oakdale Elementary School, including an overview of the project, the curriculum that was typically required for students in the Title I intervention groups, and the impact of standardized testing at Oakdale. Finally, I introduced the six focal students whose stories will be shared throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

In the next chapter I discuss the research methodology used in this study. I begin with the research questions and then discuss the data collected. I next discuss the data analysis procedures, including my foundational analysis (a combination of thematic and

narrative methods), my use of the theoretical framework for agency as an analytic tools, and the visual analysis used with transmediations (visual canvases created by the apprentice-teachers as concluding projects). The chapter concludes with a discussion of verification, trustworthiness, and limitations.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE APPRENTICE-TEACHING PROJECT

> *[The first graders] were paying attention and listening to everything I read. They knew all my questions. They were raising their hands and asking questions about the book.*
>
> *-Billy, Round 3 Debrief*

Throughout The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I filled three roles: teacher, curriculum developer, and researcher. As a teacher, I assisted apprentice-teachers as they planned lessons for the first graders and observed their first grade lessons. I facilitated discussions with the apprentice-teachers as they reflected on the successes and challenges of each lesson – as Billy demonstrated in this chapter's opening quote – and participated with them as a co-learner. As a curriculum developer, I structured a framework through which the apprentice-teachers and I co-created the evolving and responsive curriculum of The Apprentice-Teaching Project.

As a researcher, I used common ethnographic techniques to collect data. When using the term ethnographic techniques, I am referring to the ways in which researchers position themselves as participant-observers in natural settings, conduct observations with field notes**,** conduct informal or semi-structured interviews, and spend extended periods of time with the participants in the situation of interest (Creswell, 1998). As both the teacher and researcher I was the "key instrument" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 4). I chose this methodology because I wanted to "get at the inner experience of the participants, to determine how meanings [were] formed through and in culture (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12).

Over the course of the school year, the participants in The Apprentice-Teaching Project taught seven lessons, with the concomitant preparatory lessons and reflection periods. Each phase of the project resulted in several audio and video recordings, numerous field note and summary documents, and a wealth of student work. In this chapter I introduce the key questions which guided the study, outline the procedures used for collecting and analyzing these materials, and conclude with a brief discussion of verification procedures, trustworthiness, and limitations.

## Research Questions

Five key questions, as follow, framed this study. Table 4.1 summarizes the questions and the chapters in which the questions are addressed.

1. What happened when school-identified "struggling" readers were positioned as experts by having them serve as teachers of reading for younger students?
2. In what ways were participants able to exert agency? What classroom conditions seemed to encourage forms of agency that led to productive engagement with school-based literacy practices?
3. What narratives did the apprentice-teachers create around The Apprentice-Teaching Project?
4. In what ways were the apprentice-teachers and I able to co-construct a curriculum that responded to their needs and to the goals of the project and school?
5. In what ways did the interactions of my varied roles – teacher, curriculum-developer, and researcher – impact the project and the study?

| *Dissertation Chapter* | *Questions* |
|---|---|
| Ch. 5 Round One: Developing a Curriculum "On the Fly" | 1, 2, 4 |
| Ch. 6 Mini-Case Study: Salenia | 1, 2, 3 |
| Ch. 7 Round Two: Responding to the Apprentice-Teachers' Needs | 1, 2, 4, 5 |
| Ch. 8 Mini-Case Study: Billy | 1, 2, 3 |
| Ch. 9 Evolving Understandings of Metacognitive Reading Strategies | 2, 4, 5 |
| Ch. 10 Mini-Case Study: DeVontay | 1, 2, 3 |
| Ch. 11 Factors that Fostered Engaged Reading | 2, 4 |

**Table 4.1 Summary of Chapters and Research Questions**

## Data Sources

I collected data throughout The Apprentice-Teaching Project (October to May). As with many qualitative studies, my data came in multiple forms including teaching materials, research notes, audio and video recordings and their summaries, students' written and visual work, and various assessments. Table 4.2 summarizes the types of data I collected and the quantity of each; the subsequent sections provide a detailed description of each.

| *Data Source* | *Quantity* |
|---|---|
| Teaching materials | |
| Lesson plan book | 1 |
| Photos of teaching charts | 24 |
| Research notes | |
| Field note documents | 37 |
| Reflective Memos | 9 |
| Composition notebooks – data collection | 2 |
| Composition notebooks – data analysis | 5 |
| Spreadsheet of key dates in the 2008-2009 school year | 1 |
| Audio recordings of lessons I conducted with apprentice-teachers | 37 |
| Video recordings of apprentice-teacher lessons with first graders | 7 |
| Photos of students | 55 |
| Typed summaries of audio & video recordings (2 binders, 1½") | 45 |
| Apprentice-teachers' written work (2 binders, 1½") | |
| Transmediation-related work | |
| Projects | 12 |
| Audio recordings of interviews | 12 |
| Narrative summaries of interviews | 12 |
| Beginning and ending assessments | |
| Beginning *Burke Reading Interview* (see glossary) | 13 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Ending *Burke Reading Interview* | 12 |
| Beginning *Analytical Reading Assessment* and Interview (see glossary) | 13 |
| Ending *Analytical Reading Assessment* and Interview | 12 |
| * Each interview and assessment includes both an audio recording and handwritten notes on the assessment protocol. | |
| *Reading a-z Reading Level Assessments* | |

**Table 4.2 Summary of Data Sources**

**Teaching Materials**

In addition to the research-specific materials included in Table 3.2, I have the routine documentation of my teaching, including lesson plans, lists of books used in the various apprentice-teaching rounds, and forms and worksheets to support the apprentice-teachers' planning and reflection. I also have photos of 24 teaching charts (posters written during lessons to capture the ideas of the apprentice-teachers). As I re-read field notes and audio summaries during the data analysis phase, I used the lesson plans and teaching charts to nudge my memory about preparatory and debriefing lessons.

**Research Notes**

I took field notes – 37 documents – throughout the project, especially after each phase of a round of apprentice-teaching. Likewise, I made field notes and reflective memos about critical events that occurred between the rounds. In addition to the formally typed documents, I kept composition notebooks during the data collection and analysis phases. To date there are seven indexed notebooks which contain working thoughts, notes taken while reading published sources, and brief notes which were later expanded into memos. Finally, I created a spreadsheet of important dates, such as the beginning and ending of each round of apprentice-teaching, interruptions for standardized testing, and other school-related events.

**Audio Recordings, Video Recordings, and Photos**

Many of the preparatory lessons and all the debriefing conversations were recorded with a digital audio recorder. There are 37 audio recordings which range from eight to forty minutes in duration. These contain all the typical parts of a school lesson, including greetings, questions about absences, and interruptions. Beginning with Lesson 5, significant portions of the apprentice-teachers' lessons with first graders were video recorded. There are 7 video recordings which range from 10 to 22 minutes long. Finally, I took 55 photos of the apprentice-teachers reading with and teaching their students.

**Typed Summaries of Audio and Video Recordings**

Following each lesson, I listened several times to the recordings and then typed detailed summaries with time markers of the major discussion points in that lesson or conversation. While most summaries are in a narrative format, if a conversational exchange seemed especially relevant, I embedded a word-for-word transcript within the summary. These 44 documents supplement the field notes I made after each lesson and range from 3 to 22 pages long.

**Apprentice-Teachers' Written Work**

I kept copies of the apprentice-teachers' work, including the game boards they designed during Round Three, books with sticky notes which marked planned teaching points, and photos of the graffiti board they created during Round Four. In addition, I made copies of their lesson plans, including their book selection notes. These notes included comments about books the apprentice-teachers had read during the preparation phase of the round, and whether or not the individual had decided to use each in a first grade lesson. Their lesson plans also included questions they might ask or activities they

might do with their students. After each lesson, the apprentice-teachers wrote a variety of types of reflections about their lessons. Beginning with Round Five, I used a technique called *photo elicitation* (Collier, 1957) to increase the specificity of the apprentice-teachers' reflections. This process involved showing participants photographs of important events, in this case the first grade lessons, and asking them to comment on features they noticed in the image.

**Transmediations**

Transmediation is "the process of moving what you know in one sign system to another sign system" (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996, p. 341). At the conclusion of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I asked my students to reflect on what the teaching experience meant to them. After briefly explaining the concept of symbolism, I invited the apprentice-teachers to use a variety of craft supplies to create a two- or three-dimensional project that conveyed their ideas about The Apprentice-Teaching Project. I took digital photos of the 12 transmediation projects (see glossary), and I have the original project in most cases.

**Interviews and Narratives about the Transmediations**

After the apprentice-teachers completed their transmediation, I interviewed each person to gain an understanding of his or her interpretation of the elements included in the transmediation. These interviews were recorded and I turned each into a narrative while the student watched me type. After finishing the interview, I did a final member-check (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002) by asking the apprentice-teachers to read their narrative and verify that I had typed what they'd intended to say. I then enlarged each statement so it would fit on an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper, and the apprentice-teacher glued

the statement to the back of the transmediation. In several cases, I went back and made a transcription of the original interview. Just as there are 12 transmediations, there are 12 audio recordings of interviews, and 12 narratives.

**Beginning and Ending Assessments**

I included two forms of data about the students' reading proficiency and information from two different reader interviews. First, I reported the apprentice-teachers' beginning and end-of-year "reading levels" (see glossary), as determined by their homeroom teachers using the *Reading a-z Level Assessment* (Holl, 2002). This protocol is based on the premise that texts can be assigned "levels," designated with the letters of the alphabet, on the basis of their complexity. Students read several texts and their level is determined on the basis of fluency and ability to retell and answer questions about the texts. As an intervention teacher, I also conducted *The Analytical Reading Inventory* (Woods & Moe, 2006) with each apprentice-teacher; this assessment allowed me to gain a more nuanced look at the ways the apprentice-teachers used the three cueing systems (see glossary) and their background knowledge to construct meaning from texts. In addition, this assessment contained an interview which provided information about the students' perceptions of reading and themselves as readers. Finally, prior to the start of the project and again at its conclusion, I used the Burke Reading Interview (Y. Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987) with the apprentice-teachers to gain additional information about their views on reading. When conducting all these assessments and interviews, I made audio-recordings and took handwritten notes on the assessment protocols.

## Data Analysis

With the wealth of data collected during this year-long project, my first task was to organize the material so that the sheer volume was more manageable. The majority of analysis focused on my field notes, the audio recordings, and the typed summaries of those recordings. I'm calling this process the "foundational analysis," because it provided the foundation for all subsequent steps of analysis. During the "foundational analysis," I found a recursive process that combined *thematic analysis*, *narrative analysis*, and *reflection* to be useful in facilitating my understanding of what happened when the participants were positioned as experts of reading through their apprentice-teaching experiences.

### Foundational Analysis

Figure 4.1 provides a schematic of this foundational, recursive process; I provide a brief description of the figure here, and discuss each step in more detail in the sections that follow. While I generally progressed sequentially from Step 1 through Step 5, I constantly went back and forth as I moved through the cycle. The solid, double-headed arrows between each step represent the recursive nature of the process, while their curves reflect the cyclical nature of the process. The dotted, double-headed arrows reflect the relationship between several steps. For example, while composing *descriptive narratives* in Step 3b, I needed to look back at the composition notebooks and the *thematic categories* I'd developed from the data in Step 2; when writing the *reflections* in Step 4b, I referred back to the *descriptive narratives* composed in Step 3b to ensure that the data was included and supported the interpretations I made in the reflections. The multiple images of the "*cooked notes*" (Hubbard & Power, 2003) near Step 1 represent the myriad

field notes, reflective memos, and audio/video summaries; the image of the notebook near Step 2 indicates that the development of thematic categories was done in the notebooks.

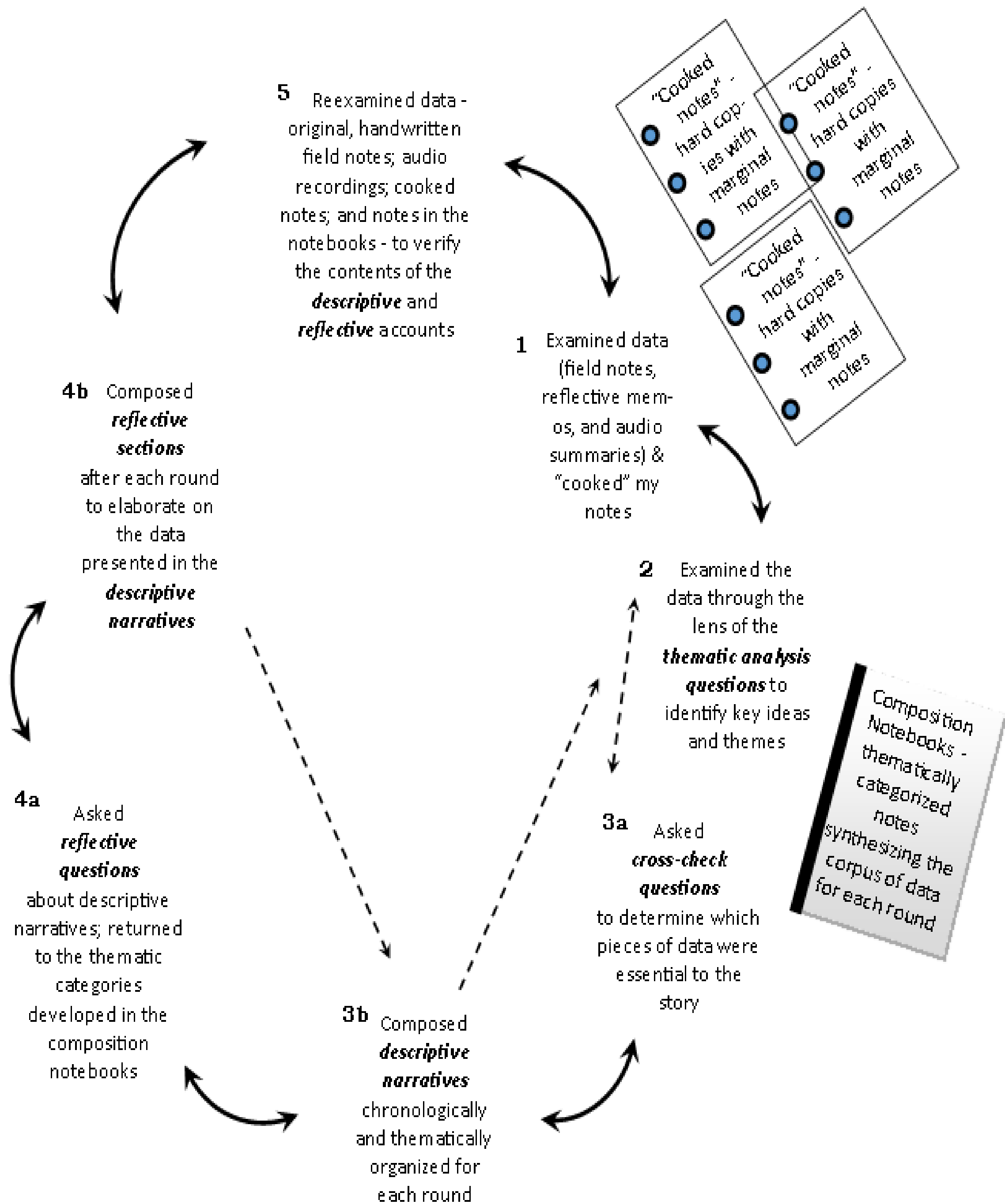


**Figure 4.1 Schematic of the Recursive Process of Thematic and Narrative Analysis**

**Cooking my notes.** (See Step 1 in Figure 4.1.) To facilitate my early coding and analysis, I formatted field notes, audio summaries, and transcripts with wide margins; made hard copies of these documents; and placed them in chronological order in binders. As I read and re-read the documents, I made dated comments in the margins, gaining a sense of how the apprentice-teachers' insights were changing as the project progressed through the year. Likewise, these marginal notes reflected the ways my own interpretations became more layered throughout the analysis process; when reading at different times, my focus was different as my "sensitizing concepts" (Patton, 2002) shifted.

These "cooked notes" (Hubbard & Power, 2003) were the starting point for the remainder of my data analysis. My marginal notes included emerging themes, reflective comments, and patterns and connections across groups and time. Figure 4.2 is an image of the "cooked notes" drawn from field notes made immediately after Lesson 4. The main body of the page was typed on 3/11/2009, and the penciled comments were made in four subsequent readings of the data on 6/3/2011, 6/11/11, 8/24/13 and 11/9/13.

Field Notes_3-11-09_AT Session 4

The first grade teacher also commented about what a different person Devontay is in this environment as compared to how he often behaves when with his peers. For both the past two AT sessions, Devontay has been very disappointed. He wanted to go to the Sports Club instead of teaching his first grade students during the second AT session. Just before the third session, I reprimanded him for goofing off with Aureesha and he went back to class in a fit of temper. In both cases, he returned to the room and did very well with his first grade students. I think that this behavior is one powerful indicator for the potential success of this program. Today, he was reading with just one student, since one of his first graders moved. He made little eye contact, but read with expression and seemed to have the attention of his student. He was definitely making efforts to hold the books so the first grader could see the pictures. He chose to read *Jo Jo's Flying Sidekick* to day. He also had an older "I Can Read" style book called *The Great Balloon Race*. He says he started reading that book, but his first grader said he'd rather read about Jo Jo, so they switched books.

Salenia is another student who finished reading her books very quickly. I know that her book about fishing was quick, but I didn't think her other book was that short. She also read Arthur's Nose & that isn't particularly short either. I'm going to need to watch her lesson more carefully and see if she is doing any actual teaching or just reading aloud. Even some discussion as they read would be useful.

Considering Salenia & Billy's quick readings, I wonder if I need to do another modeling lesson. As we prepped yesterday and today, I know I talked about the difference between "teacher" and "reader" sticky notes. From a reading perspective, we write down what we were thinking. From a teacher perspective, we write down what we think our students need to talk about in order to increase their understanding of the book, or in order to teach a particular point.

6/3/11 Conflicts btwn buddy reading & school -
→ Other programs the child might want to do

6/11/11 Dev seems a diff. person → engaged

6/11/11 AT as teacher
- switch book
- hold in good posn.

8/24/13 - Discourse of Teaching

6/3/11 My role as a mentor - helping ~~stdts~~ ATs feel successful

Comment - There seem to be far fewer comments about behavior/misbehavior
- Is it less of a problem?
12 ATs - smaller groups of 1st grade stdts?
- More experience?

8/24/13 Responsive Curriculum

Diss_09-3-11_Field Notes_AT Lesson 4 Page 5 of 6

11/9/13 Resp. Curr. - adj. future curr. on basis of observed needs in prior sessions

**Figure 4.2 Cooked Notes from Lesson 4**

**Thematic analysis.** (See Step 2 in Figure 4.1.) After "cooking" the documents, I used a process of *thematic analysis* to determine which events and key ideas should be included in the *descriptive narrative* for each round. I used inductive thematic analysis, described by Patton (2002) as the process of searching the content to identify major themes (p. 453), which Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe as "an analyst's impressionistic understandings of what is being described in the experiences, spoken words, actions, interactions, problems, and issues expressed by the participants" (p. 51). I began the *thematic analysis* process by reading my "cooked" copies of the relevant documents – field notes, summaries of audio recordings, reflective comments (made during the "cooking process"), teaching charts, and student work – and considered them through the lens of the *thematic analysis questions*. While Tamboukou (2003) circled and underlined recurring words when conducting her research, I used recurring words to prompt the creation of thematic categories. Using a series of five composition notebooks, I recorded headings for possible categories and jotted down new insights. As I read, I noted instances that supported or contradicted the thematic categories, listing the document title, page numbers, and student quotes. I then re-read the notebook pages, found areas that did not actually have enough examples to warrant their inclusion as major themes, and elaborated on those that did. An element of verification included re-listening to the audio recordings and checking my original handwritten field notes to ensure the accuracy of student quotes and to be sure that the summary was accurate. Figure B.3 in Appendix B is an example of thematic analysis from Dissertation Notebook #6.

***Thematic analysis questions.*** I used the *thematic analysis questions* as a lens to help me determine which data to include in the thematic categories. Table 4.3 lists these questions and shows their relationship to the five broad research questions of the study.

| ***Thematic Analysis Questions*** | ***Research Question*** |
|---|---|
| ***Major activities and events:***<br>- What key events and persistent themes exemplified this round?<br>- What literacy practices did the apprentice-teachers engage in during the three phases of the round?<br>- What teaching points did I attempt to make? | 1, 3, 5 |
| ***Apprentice-teaching role:***<br>- In what ways did the participants take up or reject the various aspects of the *apprentice-teaching role*?<br>- What were they saying and doing in response to the project?<br>- What *teacherly behaviors* were exhibited by the apprentice-teachers? | 1, 2, 5 |
| ***Apprentice-teaching curriculum:***<br>- In what ways did the apprentice-teachers take up or reject the *curriculum* associated with the project? | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| ***Agency:***<br>- What acts of agency were enacted by the apprentice-teachers?<br>- In what ways did the project foster or hinder participants' school-productive acts of agency? | 1, 2 |

**Table 4.3 Thematic Analysis Questions and Corresponding Research Questions**

**Narrative analysis.** (See Steps 3a and 3b in Figure 4.1.) Using the categories and topics derived through *thematic analysis*, I next used *narrative analysis* to describe the key events and themes of each round. As with so many terms in education and research, the phrase "narrative analysis" means different things to different people. In its most general sense, the "heart of narrative analysis" is the "[interpretation of] stories and, more specifically, the texts that tell the stories" (Patton, 2002, p. 118). Riessman (2008) further explained that narrative analysis "refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form" (p. 11). It is helpful to consider a distinction that Polkinghorne (1995) made between a process that begins with documents already in

storied form, which he referred to as *analysis of narratives*, and a process by which a researcher takes disparate bits of data and assembles them into a coherent story, which he called *narrative analysis* and which is the technique used in this study. Appendix B contains a portion of the narrative and examples of the data from which it was constructed for the preparation phase of Round Four.

***Asking cross-check questions***. (See Step 3a in Figure 4.1.) To facilitate the process of *narrative analysis*, or the construction of stories on the basis of the themes and categories derived in step 2, I asked several "cross-check" questions prior to composing chronological stories about each round. As Polkinghorne (1995, p. 16) explains, though, "not all data elements [were] needed for the telling of the story. Elements which [did] not contradict the plot, but which [were] not pertinent to its development" were not included in the final narratives. Though *thematic analysis* had helped me determine what major ideas should be included, the *cross-check questions* help me consider the relevance of anecdotes or student quotes and synthesize the most important plot points for the *narrative description*. These questions included:

- Does this idea help the reader understand a crucial aspect of the project?
- Does this theme/idea drive one of the main storylines?
- Is this apprentice-teacher a vital and ongoing character throughout the project?

***Composing narrative descriptions.*** (See Step 3b in Figure 4.1.) After using the *cross-check questions* to determine which data were most "pertinent to [the stories'] development" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 16), I proceeded to compose *narrative descriptions* by using the "descriptions of events and happenings" and "[configuring] the data elements into stories that united and gave meaning to the data" and attempted to

answer questions such as "Why did this happen?" or "How did this come about?" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15).

Shockley, Michalove, and Allen (1995) used this method of *narrative analysis* when studying the importance of children's literacy experiences outside of school; however, they had actually begun their analysis with the constant comparative process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Reflecting in a subsequent book, two of the researchers wrote that they had been "unhappy with the process" of line by line coding, because they felt they were "losing the children, their families, and the stories by reducing [the] rich exchanges to codes" (Shockley-Bisplinghoff & Allen, 1998, p. 65). As a result, Shockley et al. (1995, p. 152) developed a process whereby they synthesized all the data for individual participants into three to five page narratives which highlighted patterns of response, pivotal points of change, and questions for further exploration. In a recursive process, they then used the narratives as the basis for discussions and further analysis.

The analysis technique used by Shockley et al. (1995) informed my process of composing *narrative descriptions*, in which I compiled the multiple sources of data from each phase of each round and crafted a coherent story that included a beginning, middle, and end. I believe that this process helped me maintain the integrity of the apprentice-teachers' stories and experiences and deepened my understandings about their perspectives.

**Reflections – an additional layer of interpretation.** (See Steps 4a and 4b in Figure 4.1.) After composing each *narrative description*, I added an additional layer of interpretation by reflecting about my moves as a teacher, curriculum developer, and researcher and the apprentice-teachers' reactions to the project curriculum. During the

*reflection* process, I returned to the categories and labels developed during *thematic analysis* and viewed them through the lens of *reflective questions,* which served as a framework for reflective interpretation. Table 4.4 lists the *reflective questions* and shows their relationship to the five broad research questions of the study.

| ***Reflective Questions*** | ***Research Question*** |
|---|---|
| ***Overarching Question – Research Question #4***<br>- In what ways were the apprentice-teachers and I able to co-construct a curriculum that responded to their needs and the goals of the project and school? | 4 |
| ***Responsive curriculum:***<br>- What did I notice about the curriculum of The Apprentice-Teaching Project?<br>- In what ways was I able to make the curriculum responsive?<br>- To what or whom? | 2, 4, 5 |
| ***Affordances and constraints:***<br>- What affordances and constraints are emerging about the project and curriculum? | 2, 4 |
| ***Tensions:***<br>- What tensions seemed to exist?<br>- In what ways were my multiple roles relevant to the project? | 1, 2, 5 |

**Table 4.4 Reflective Questions and Corresponding Research Questions**

**Foundational analysis as applied in this dissertation.** This recursive process of *thematic analysis*, *narrative analysis*, and *reflection* provided the foundation for all seven data chapters of this dissertation. The full cycle of analysis is seen most clearly in Chapters Five and Seven, in which I told the stories of Rounds One and Two. In these chapters I used the *narrative descriptions* to highlight themes from the participants' comments and my perspective as a teacher and researcher. I followed these *descriptions* with *reflections* that drew attention to the ways in which the apprentice-teachers and I had been able to co-construct the curriculum to meet their needs and the requirements of the Title I program and school administration. Though less visible, I also used the

foundational analysis process – thematic analysis and narrative analysis and reflection – to cull the relevant data from the documents of each round prior to writing Chapter Nine (metacognitive reading strategies) and Chapter Eleven (factors that fostered engaged reading).

**The Theoretical Framework for Agency as an Analytic Tool**

After using the foundational analysis process to develop narrative descriptions, I used the theoretical framework for agency (developed in Chapter Two) to explore the ways in which the apprentice-teachers' actions illustrate the definition of agency. To summarize from Chapter Two:

> *Agency* is
>
> the ways in which *social actors*, including individuals and small groups,
>
> functioning in *situated sociocultural contexts*, which inherently include
>
> *structures of power*,
>
> position themselves strategically to *make and remake their identities*
>
> through the use of *mediational tools* (such as Discourses and artifacts);
>
> agency is performed in varied *forms* with both short- and long-term
>
> *consequences*.

Lasky (2005) asserted that "the appropriate unit of analysis for understanding human agency [is] people doing things together in social settings with the cultural tools available to them" (p. 900). Thus I sought to understand the forms, purposes, and consequences of agency exerted by the apprentice-teachers in the context of their preparation, teaching, and debriefing activities. In discussing the corpus of data presented

in the chapters, a main question I sought answers to was "In what ways and to what extent were participants able to exert agency?"

To dig more deeply into the data, I used the following questions, drawn from my working definition for agency:

- In what ways did the participants strategically position themselves to allow for the making and remaking of identities?
- What mediational tools and Discourses were taken up by the apprentice-teachers and how were these used to facilitate agentic actions?
- What acts of agency were exhibited? How might these acts be characterized, and what were the short and possible long-term consequences?
- In what ways did agentic actions lead to or subvert productive uses of school-based literacy practices?
- What classroom conditions seemed to encourage forms of agency that led to productive engagement with school-based literacy activities?

These questions framed the discussion sections that close all seven data chapters and helped me step away from my "in the moment" teacherly reactions (which were sometimes filled with frustration and other times unvarnished joy), to understand the apprentice-teachers' actions through the lens of scholarly research about agency, identity, and literacy.

**Analyzing the Transmediations and Accompanying Narratives**

The mini-case studies of Salenia, Billy, and DeVontay, as presented in Chapters Six, Eight, and Ten, included the students' transmediations and accompanying narratives.

I used techniques for both *visual analysis* and *analysis of narrative* (Polkinghorne, 1995) to delve into the layers of meaning conveyed in the transmediations and narratives.

**Visual discourse analysis and the grammar of visual design.** Because the transmediations were visual representations of the apprentice-teachers' understandings of reading and The Apprentice-Teaching Project, analysis tools that focus on graphic images were necessary; *visual discourse analysis* (Albers, 2007; Albers, Frederick, & Cowan, 2009) combined with the *grammar of visual design* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) served as useful lenses through which to view these images.

***Visual discourse analysis.*** Visual discourse analysis (VDA) draws on the field of semiotics and discourse analysis (Gee, 1999a, 2011) to consider art as a language, to study structures and conventions within visual texts, and to identify how social identities and practices are embodied in those texts (Albers, 2007, p. 83). Albers defines a visual text as "a structure of messages within which are embedded social conventions and/or perceptions, and which also presents the discourse communities with which the visual text maker identifies" (Albers et al., 2009, p. 239). Such texts are frequently projects made in English language arts classrooms in response to a discussion of literature or literary themes, and are typically crafted from visual materials (such as posters, paint, markers, collage, drawing, and photographs). Albers (2007) explains that she has intentionally chosen to use the term *visual text* to discuss these multimedia projects rather than the term "artwork" because artwork carries the connotation of fine art, works produced from formal training, or works created with more costly materials.

The VDA framework comprises six dimensions through which the analyst attempts to understand who is doing what, who is speaking to the viewer, what discourses

the text maker identifies with, what discourses shape the viewer, and what the speaker might want the viewer to think or believe from viewing the text (Albers, 2007, p. 86). The first dimension is *underpinning systems*, or those five cueing systems that inform the reading, creating, and interpreting of visual texts. These are the graphic, syntactic, semantic, tactile, and pragmatic cueing systems. The second dimension is *disciplinary knowledge*, which includes specific knowledge of the elements of art and design. These factors include such things as the orientation of the canvas, the placement of objects in the quadrants of the page and in relation to each other, the effective center of attention, and elements of line, directionality, color, etc. The third dimension of VDA is *intertextuality*, or the relationship of the visual text under consideration to other texts and systems of communication. Bits of other texts, including real and symbolic elements from literature and motifs representing social languages, are often embedded in the visual texts created by students in schools. *Conversations* is the fourth dimension of VDA, prompting the analyst to consider the discussion the narrator is attempting to have with the viewer around the topic of the text. Fifth, *social acceptability* is considered. In schools, visual texts are generally created at the direction of the teacher to fulfill some curricular requirement. The analyst would consider whether or not the text being studied fits the generally accepted norms of inclusion or exclusion from school work. Finally, the sixth dimension relates to the *apparent discourses* represented by the sign maker in the visual text.

***Grammar of visual design.*** The grammar of visual design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) is a framework that fits well with Albers' Visual Discourse Analysis. Her second dimension, *disciplinary knowledge*, includes the elements of art and design that are

necessary for “reading” visual texts. Likewise, her first dimension, *underpinning systems*, includes the *syntactic*, *graphic*, and *tactile* cueing systems. Kress and van Leeuwen’s framework provide guidance for understanding how the composition, orientation, and design choices about the size of objects, lines, and shapes, etc. come together to create the *graphic*, *syntactic*, and *tactile* cueing systems (Albers, 2007) to convey specific messages to the reader/viewer of visual images.

The *composition* of a visual text includes the elements and their relative positions. Kress and van Leeuwen (2007) make a distinction between narrative and conceptual representations, with narrative images telling a story, typically through the inclusion of at least one character, while conceptual images convey information through inanimate objects. Another aspect of *composition* is the *orientation* which refers to how the canvas (paper, poster, etc.) is positioned – either vertically or horizontally – and the arrangement of objects within the four *quadrants*. When an image has a vertical orientation, objects in the two lower quadrants (both left and right) generally stand for concepts that are real or given. On the other hand, objects in the upper quadrants usually represent ideal or promised qualities. When a canvas has a horizontal orientation, objects in the left quadrants (both upper and lower) often convey qualities that are known or given for the viewer. In contrast, objects in the right quadrants represent new or imagined qualities. When looking at the placement of objects in the four quadrants, it is also important to consider the *effective center of attention*, or the object that seems to hold the most prominent position, which might not always be the center of the canvas. The relative size of objects, their position in relation to other images, and the angle from which the viewer

sees the image can all influence the *center of attention*. Finally, the *size* of objects can convey information about power relations among the characters in the image.

The placement and direction of *lines* are also important in understanding relationships within a text. While lines might be drawn, they can also be represented by linear elements in the text – characters' limbs, eye gaze, and the placement of inanimate objects, etc. These real or perceived lines act as *vectors* that direct viewers' attention, and can serve to establish relationships among parts of the image and between the images and the viewer.

Finally, the shapes of objects can carry meaning as well. In western societies, circles are often perceived to symbolize something that is natural, self-contained, or complete in itself. In contrast, angular objects, such as squares, rectangles, and triangles are inorganic or crystalline; they often represent the man-made or technological world. It is also important to note that angular objects can be placed adjacent to each other to form building blocks of larger images, whereas circles, ovals, and other curved shapes generally stand alone. In summary, each element of the image is "assumed to be significant and made with the intent 'to mean'" (Harste, Leland, Grant, Chung, & Enyeart, 2007), and each element has symbolic value in interpreting, or "reading" the visual image.

**Analyzing the transmediations.** When I began analyzing the transmediations and co-created written narratives, it had been more than a year since I had actually looked at the images or read the students' interpretations. I decided that I would analyze the images prior to re-reading the narratives so that my initial interpretations would be a step

removed from my knowledge of the apprentice-teachers' perceptions of their work. Though I had kept most of the original projects, I also had digital photographs of them.

On my first reading of the 12 transmediations, I simply made notes about what struck me, keeping the six dimensions of visual discourse analysis (Albers, 2007) in mind. I selected several projects for more detailed analysis on the basis of several factors, including: 1) visual interest, 2) which students had focal student status, and 3) which transmediations seemed to tell a compelling story. The detailed analysis relied first on Kress and van Leeuwen's *grammar of visual design* and Albers' VDA dimensions of *underpinning systems* (graphic, syntactic, and tactile) and *disciplinary knowledge*. In addition, I created a spreadsheet to organize my notes about the other dimensions included in VDA. This spreadsheet prompted me to consider elements of design that I might not have noticed on my initial readings of each project.

**Analyzing the apprentice-teachers' narratives.** After this initial survey of all 12 transmediations and the detailed analysis of several of them, I conducted *analysis of narratives* of the co-created narrative interpretations. These summaries led me to look more closely at the visual projects and to notice details that I hadn't initially attended to. As I looked back and forth between the visual images and written narratives, I also revisited theories of identity, agency, reading metacognition, and sociocultural literacy practices. This recursive process of analyzing two forms of data through the lens of existing theory supported the interpretations in the three case study chapters.

## Verification, Trustworthiness, and Limitations

### Verification and Trustworthiness

Creswell (1998) used the term *verification* to refer to the collection of procedures used to increase the trustworthiness and credibility of qualitative studies. The Apprentice-Teaching Project incorporated multiple verification procedures. First and foremost was my *prolonged engagement* with participants, a full school year for the project, multiple years teaching several participants, and time for the development of trust among all the participants. Likewise, the use of multiple sources of data (field notes, audio recordings and summaries of lessons and debriefing discussions, student work, teacher lesson plans, etc.) increased my ability to provide "*rich, thick description*" which "allows the reader to make decisions about transferability" (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). This wealth of data conforms to Patton's (2002) assertion that "the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size" (p. 245). The wide collection of data also enabled me to verify ideas through *triangulation*, corroboration through the use of "evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (Creswell, 1998, p. 202).

Yet another form of verification suggested by Creswell is to *clarify researcher bias*, which can be done through *reflexivity.* As I gathered and analyzed data, I constantly reminded myself of the truism that the researcher is the instrument in qualitative studies; as such I attempted to maintain a reflexive stance. Reflexivity involves self-questioning and self-understanding. It is a tool a qualitative researcher uses to increase awareness of one's own positions, perspectives, and biases (Patton, 2002, p. 64). As Bogdan and

Biklen (2007) point out, “researchers can never eliminate all of their own effects on subjects….they can however, understand their effect” (p. 39). By using myriad sources of data collection, varied analytic tools, and multiple reflective steps, I developed a greater understanding of how the apprentice-teachers exerted agency and ways my biases shaped my reactions to their agentic acts.

**Limitations**

This study had several limitations including the power differential between the students, and me, as teacher and researcher; the biases I brought to the project as a teacher researcher; and the limited time available for the activities related to The Apprentice-Teaching Project. The teacher-student relationship is impacted by the difference in power inherent in the roles. Though I did my best to frame the activities related to The Apprentice-Teaching Project as invitations, ultimately, the students in the groups selected for the project did not have a real choice about participating in the related activities. (It is important to note, however, that they did have a choice about having their data included in the study, per the informed consent procedures.) I sought to offset this limitation by discussing any concerns that the apprentice-teachers raised during our preparation and debriefing discussions. Likewise, when we negotiated the curriculum, I made efforts to include their suggestions.

As a teacher I brought biases to the project; as a teacher researcher I sought to unpack and examine those biases while also seeking ways to ameliorate them. I found the most challenging situations to be those in which I perceived my students to be misbehaving. My initial “teacher” reaction was often to coerce more biddable behavior or punish inappropriate behavior; as a researcher, though, I attempted to step back, reflect,

and unearth possible reasons the student might be reacting in a “negative” way. This reflexive process caused me to both examine my biases and find ways to mitigate the inherent power differential between me and my students.

A third limitation of this study, and indeed The Apprentice-Teaching Project, was the constrained instructional time available for apprentice-teaching activities. My field notes include numerous references to cancelling groups because I was asked to substitute in another class, attend school-required meetings, or proctor high-stakes tests. Even when I was teaching, I had to “sandwich” the apprentice-teaching activities between the curricular activities outlined in the school’s Title I School Improvement Plan, though I received permission to implement The Apprentice-Teaching Project from the school and district administrators.

In addition to spending time on the Title I required curricula, the building expectation was that teachers, both homeroom and intervention, spend significant time reviewing and drilling tested concepts and skills. In the Title I groups, we usually spent about two weeks on test-preparation before each of the three parts of the high-stakes, state test and several days before the computerized, diagnostic tests. Finally, we spent many hours engaged in actual testing. The state’s main high-stakes test comprised about four weeks of testing spread over three time periods in the fall and spring (September, February, and April), and the students participated in six diagnostic testing sessions (English/Language Arts and math tests conducted three times a year). Likewise, the Title I teachers’ time was diverted for three weeks of the school year to proctor these tests. Though the school year was 10 months long, I was able to include just seven rounds of apprentice-teaching, each lasting from five to eight class periods. This works out to about

25% of the participants' Title I intervention time, or a very small fraction of their school experience.

This study is not intended to be a program evaluation of The Apprentice-Teaching Project. With the specific nature of the cross-age tutoring curriculum that evolved and the small number of focal students and participants, it is not possible to transfer these findings to other curricular settings. However, the pedagogical implications related to conditions that foster productive student agency and the insights about the power of a co-constructed curriculum may be transferrable. It is my hope that other teachers and researchers will glean understandings this study and use them to facilitate their own students' positive engagement in school-based literacy activities.

**Closing Thoughts**

In this chapter I have discussed the research questions, data sources, and analytic methods used in the study of The Apprentice-Teaching Project. In the next chapter I unpack the events of Round One, during which the intermediate students first assumed the role of apprentice-teachers, and I fully experienced my roles of teacher, mentor, curriculum developer, and teacher researcher.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## ROUND ONE: MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH TEXTS AND OUR STUDENTS

> *I got to a word, then I just thought about it, and, I kept on messing the words up. But I knew them, I knew it. I just was, I could have just kept on practicing it. And the words that I didn't know, I could have written them down, and practiced, or found the definition.*
>
> *–DeVontay, Round 1 Debriefing*

During the first round of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, my goals were twofold. First to ensure that the apprentice-teachers felt successful with their initial lessons, and secondly to use teacher research techniques to understand what adjustments would need to be made after Round One. Just as the apprentice-teachers entered the world of teaching through this project, I entered the world of teacher researcher and "on the fly" curriculum developer. As a teacher research study, I knew subsequent rounds would flow from and build on this round.

In this chapter, I explore what happened when students from my Title I intervention groups had their first experience as experts on reading, rather than "struggling" students. As described more fully in Chapter Four, I used a combination of thematic analysis and narrative analysis to closely examine the wealth of data accumulated from field notes, audio recordings, summary documents, and student work; I then crafted a *description* of what happened as the apprentice-teachers and I negotiated activities for the first graders. After each phase of Round One, I *reflected* on the data in light of my theoretical perspectives. The reflection section represents a layer of interpretation in which I examine the evolving curriculum and the assumptions I brought

to the setting. At the conclusion of the chapter, I synthesize the data and my reflections in a discussion section where I make connections with the wider body of research presented in the literature review.

Round One of The Apprentice-Teaching Project took place from 11/17 to 11/21 and consisted of five class periods. During this round the project included apprentice-teachers from only two of my intervention groups. I hadn't intended for us to start in November, relatively late in the school year, but other school and state deadlines conspired against us. Most notably, the state had scheduled the first of three bouts of our NCLB-mandated, high-stakes test in late September. As a result, Oakdale Elementary instituted an adjusted schedule to accommodate intensive test preparation. After the standardized testing, we had several uninterrupted weeks of instruction, and then another shift in routines for Parent/Teacher Conferences and Fall Break. When we returned from Fall Break, I elected to spend three additional weeks solidifying routines with my intervention groups prior to starting The Apprentice-Teaching Project. The data for Round One consisted of 47 pages of documents including three field note documents, two audio recordings and their summaries, two audio transcripts, and seven student reflections. Table 5.1 summarizes the topics of the apprentice-teachers' chosen books, my teaching points, and the format of the closing conversations for Round One.

| Rd | Dates | # class ses-sions | Topics of picture books | Teaching activity | Reading skill | Format of Debrief |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 11/17 – 11/21 | 5 | General | Read aloud | Reading fluently | Open discussion; "What do you want to tell me?" |

**Table 5.1 Summary of Round One**

## Preparing for, Teaching, Bringing Closure to, and Reflecting on Round One

### Preparing for Lesson 1

For the apprentice-teachers' first lesson, I decided that simply having them read aloud to the first graders would be a good way to build their self-confidence. We visited the school library to choose books, and while there, I invited the apprentice-teachers to consider books they remembered from previous home and school experiences. My erroneous assumption was that they would remember book titles and authors, and that they would have enough experience with picture books to cull out inappropriate books. I quickly discovered that the library's dozen-plus bookcases presented too large a selection and that more than half the apprentice-teachers didn't really understand that picture books were organized alphabetically by author (11/18/08, Field Notes 5N, p. 1 & 6th, p. 1). Likewise, they didn't have the experience to judge books' "readability" and appropriateness for a first grade audience. Some of the books they considered dealt with critical issues that required background knowledge beyond the first graders' experiences, and others, like *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See* (Martin, 1968), were too short to last the full period.

After our group visit to the school library, the apprentice-teachers worked semi-independently in subsequent class sessions to prepare for Lesson 1. They read their chosen books first silently and then aloud, timed themselves to see how long the book lasted, and asked me for help with word pronunciations. I tried to be unobtrusive, waiting for students to come to me with questions rather than interrupting. One exception was near the end of our final period of preparation when I asked the apprentice-teachers to

consider how they would hold their books to ensure that the first grade students could see and hear.

I asked the apprentice-teachers to use the "Book Selection Notes" page (Figure 5.1) to help them organize the books they had read and then selected or discarded. The form had spaces for each book's title and author as well as the date the apprentice-teacher read it, whether the book was kept or dropped, and the reason. In Figure 5.1, Alyssa indicates that she read and considered five books and elected to use three with her first grade students. However, she didn't note her rationale for keeping or dropping books.

# BOOK SELECTION NOTES

Name Alyssa Homeroom Teacher

| Date | Author's Last Name | Title | Yes or No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11/18/08 | Aylesworth | MR. McGIll goes to Town | Y |
| (reason to keep or drop) | | | |
| 11/18/08 | Pringle | Naming the cat | Y |
| (reason to keep or drop) | | | |
| 11/18/08 | SchachNer | In Mummy Troble | NO |
| (reason to keep or drop) | | | |
| 11/18/08 | Carlson | Loud mouth George and the Sixth-Grade Bully. | No |
| (reason to keep or drop) | | | |
| 11/18/08 | ARchAMBAult | Boom CHicka Rock | Y |
| (reason to keep or drop) | | | |

**Figure 5.1 An Example of the *Book Selection Notes* from Round One**

## Teaching Lesson 1

Though the majority of the first grade lessons were scheduled during the last period of the day, other school events required that we conduct Lesson 1 in the morning. I arranged for the apprentice-teachers to leave their homerooms about 20 minutes before I expected the first graders to arrive in our classroom. I used this time to ask the apprentice-teachers where they would work with their students and then helped them arrange our classroom furniture. Some apprentice-teachers decided to have their first graders sit in chairs, others decided to sit on the floor with their students, and others elected to sit in a chair with the first graders on the floor nearby.

I noticed that several apprentice-teachers did not think about a logical sequence for their lesson. Most simply opened the book and began reading to their students. Notable exceptions were Alyssa, who showed the cover of *Mr. McGill Goes to Town* (Aylesworth, 1992), read the title, and asked her first graders "Do you think he'll get to town?" (11/20/08, AT Lesson 1 Field Notes, p.2), and Salenia, who showed her students all three of her selected books and invited them to choose the one she'd read first. Several of the apprentice-teachers were also unsure what to do when they had finished reading. For example, Aureesha asked, "I'm done, what should I do now?" (11/20/08, AT Lesson 1 Field Notes, p.3).

Though I wasn't able to hear as much of the apprentice-teachers' lessons as I would have liked, I did notice several instances in which I was concerned about their lack of fluency and comprehension. Salenia read a book called *Annabelle's Big Move* (Golembe, 1999) that had text at the top and bottom of the page, separated by an illustration. She consistently skipped the text at the bottom of the page, which sometimes

resulted in lost meaning, but she didn't seem to notice (11/18/08, Field Notes 5N, p. 2). LaToya read the pages of *The Fairytale Cake* (Sperring, 2005) very quickly, with little expression, and no pauses to look at the pictures (11/18/08, Field Notes 6th, p. 2). When we talked later about the lesson, she said she had invited the first graders to read aloud to her because "all the words in there were easy enough for first graders. Like 'special,' it was not that easy, it was hard, but 'the,' 'up,' 'down,' 'hill.' It was all easy for them to read" (11/21/08, Debrief Transcript 6th, p. 2).

**Bringing Closure to Lesson 1**

On the day following each first grade lesson, I had conversations with the apprentice-teachers about their experiences teaching and reading. The format of the debriefing conversations varied from round to round, and in this case I simply asked, "What do you want to tell me about what happened?" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 1). Prior to opening the discussion, I asked the apprentice-teachers to gather their thoughts by doing a written reflection (Figure 5.2). While I vacillated in my own thinking about whether to invite the apprentice-teachers to talk first or write first, in this round, we began with the writing because I wanted to get a sense of each apprentice-teacher's thoughts, unaffected by others' comments.

**Apprentice Teacher Project**

Name DeVontay Date 11-20-08

**Teaching Journal: After-Lesson Reflection**

Now that you have finished your first lesson, take a few minutes to think about how the lesson went. Consider these questions as you write:

🕮 What did you learn about each of your students? 🕮 What went well? 🕮 What do you wish you'd done differently? 🕮 What would you like to work on or know before your next lesson with the first graders?

I think I could see if some of the words sound
Correct, and make shore that I know the meaning and make
shore that I say it right. I kno when I came acroze
a word I kept particting the word a I make shore that
when I was reading I wasn't reading to the book I was
reading to the kind. I even let them talk because
they were talking about the book and then could te
ll that they were instead in the book and they
really like that book and if they have library they
will remember my book and they will check it out. I
even let them pick there own book.

**Figure 5.2 An Example of a Reflection After Lesson 1**

While the apprentice-teachers wrote their reflections, I worked on my own field notes and set up the recorder I'd use during our debriefing conversation. In subsequent sections about the debriefing conversation, each subheading represents a major theme that emerged from the analysis of the data, including feeling like role models, the use of metacognitive reading strategies, first graders' behaviors, making the read aloud event interesting, and the need to practice reading aloud.

**Apprentice-teachers as role models.** Every apprentice-teacher who expressed an opinion said that working with the first grade students was a good thing, though their rationales differed. DeVontay seemed to enjoy being a role model, saying "I think it was a good idea, reading to the little first graders 'cause one day when they get older, they going to look up to us. They look up to us right now" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 1), while Salenia responded from the perspective of the first graders, saying "little kids enjoy like having people read to them" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 1). LaToya appeared to approach the event from a social perspective, saying "I just liked it. It was fun. And I knew two or three people in there because they ride my bus" (11/21/08, Debrief Transcript $6^{th}$, p. 3). After this first lesson, the apprentice-teachers seemed to share the feeling that the experience was worthwhile.

**Using metacognitive strategies with our first graders.** One of my goals for this project was to help the apprentice-teachers improve their own reading comprehension. One avenue to increasing students' comprehension is to help them become more aware of their own thinking while reading, in other words, to increase their metacognition (see glossary; Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992). To this end, I explicitly initiated a conversation about metacognitive reading strategies in this round's debriefing discussions. I'd noticed Alyssa intuitively asking questions during her read aloud, so I invited her to talk about the questions she'd asked and how those led her students to make connections to the text (see glossary), to which she'd replied, "We kept stopping, and asking questions, like, 'What would you name your cat? What about your dog's name?'" In response to Alyssa's questions, both first graders talked about their own dogs, so I extended the line of talk:

11. Mullin What were you thinking when they started talking about their dogs?

12. Alyssa Well, that's not about this book. We're not talking about dogs. This is about cats.

13. Mullin Is that what you told them?

14. Alyssa No.

15. Mullin That's what you were thinking?

16. Alyssa Yeah (with a laugh in her voice).

17. Mullin So what would you do the next time, if the kids started, kind of …would you say they were kind of going off track? Off task?

18. Alyssa Yeah.

19. Mullin So, what will you do the next time, if that happens?

20. Alyssa Umm, tell them, we're still talking about cats, and…

*(At this point, Alyssa was interrupted and the discussion changed directions.)* (11/21/08, Debrief Transcript 6th, p. 1-2).

In reviewing the transcript, I found it noteworthy that Alyssa used questions to help her students activate background knowledge (see glossary) and make connections to the text rather than as an assessment of their comprehension. However, she didn't actually teach the first graders to use questions to improve their own understanding of the text.

Later in the debriefing discussion, I asked the apprentice-teachers what reading strategies they'd noticed themselves using during the first grade lesson. Aureesha described visualizing (see glossary) an illustration that was depicted in the text. DeVontay was clearly trying to convey his thinking process while reading *Way Out West Lives a Coyote Named Frank* (Lund, 1997) but had several interruptions. He initially said that he'd visualized, then said that he'd made an inference, and later he summarized a portion of the book and referred to visualizing again (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p.

10-11); unfortunately, I was never quite clear about what he was trying to convey. Though several apprentice-teachers used labels for metacognitive strategies, none were able to give concrete examples of ways they'd used the strategies to improve their own or their first graders' understanding of the stories.

**First graders' behavior.** The next three topics that emerged in the debriefing conversations were all related, and I'm initially calling them "teacherly behaviors." These included the behavior of the first graders, ways to make the learning experience more interesting for the first graders, and ways to prepare for teaching. As I showed in the transcript above, Alyssa briefly mentioned that her students talked about the names of their own dogs, instead of referring to the actions of characters in her book, *Naming the Cat* (Pringle & Potter, 1999), and the names those characters suggested for their new pet. She concluded that next time she would tell her students, "We're still talking about cats" (11/21/08, Debrief Transcript 6th, p. 2). Later, the apprentice-teachers discussed whether their first grade students were paying attention or not. Salenia commented that "there was a girl in the middle and she wasn't paying attention that much" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 3). Aureesha felt that her students were all paying attention, with the evidence that they asked her to hold the book so they could see it (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 6). DeVontay added that his students were talking while he was reading, but, "I didn't pay no attention. Because they was talking about what was going, what I was reading…and it would have been different if they was talking about, you know what we was gonna have for lunch or something" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 5). He thought his students' talking was a good thing "'cause they was getting into it. And if they seen the book I was reading there, and if they went to the library, and saw

the book and checked it out" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 6). Even in this first lesson, the apprentice-teachers noticed the behavior of the first graders and were able to make judgments about whether that behavior was appropriate or not.

**Making read alouds interesting.** Another "teacherly behavior" discussed after Lesson 1 was how to make the read aloud experience more interesting for the first grade students. LaToya said that she could make the book more exciting by using "different kinds of voices" (11/21/08, Debrief Transcript 6th, p. 4), and Alyssa said that she could "read with expression and stuff" (11/21/08, Debrief Transcript 6th, p. 5). DeVontay and Aureesha both said they needed to practice their books more, because, as Aureesha commented, "it was getting me confused…all those confusing words, and I was still messing up" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 6-7). During this part of the conversation, I commented that I'd seen Salenia and DeVontay trying to read their books upside down, the way they'd sometimes seen teachers do. The pictures and text were right-side-up for the students, but for the teacher the text was inverted. Aureesha said that "you got to be real good to be sitting like [that] and just reading it" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 8). She concluded that it would work better if her students sat next to her so that everyone could read the text from the same direction. DeVontay added, "I learned that if you reading a book, and you don't show the kids the pictures, they gonna get mad" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 9). The apprentice-teachers noticed that the reading lesson would be more interesting for the first graders if they read with expression and showed the illustrations of the books.

**We need to practice our books.** In the context of the discussion about making the read aloud experience more interesting for the first graders, the apprentice-teachers

also discussed miscues and word pronunciation, which led to the consensus that they needed to spend more time practicing their books. Aureesha said that her chosen text, *The Butter Battle Book* (Geisel, 1984), was a rhyming book and her students "had known what the next word was and I didn't. That was embarrassing" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 7). On the other hand, a non-focal student added, "I said a dumb word and they all thought it was funny" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 7). Later in the discussion, he revealed that he'd said a word starting with F when the text said 'duck' (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 13) and he grinned again. In the epigraph of this chapter, DeVontay took this type of reflection one step further when he revealed ways that he could have improved – practicing more, writing the words down, or finding them in a dictionary. The apprentice-teachers both acknowledged that the miscues they'd made were embarrassing and that they should rehearse their books more before the next lesson.

**My Reflections on Round One: Figuring Out What the Apprentice-Teachers Needed**

Just as my students were diving into the world of apprentice-teaching, I was diving into the world of curriculum developer and teacher researcher. In subsequent sections, I discuss insights about each of my *reflective questions* (see Chapter Three, Figure 3.1, p. 49 and Table 3.4, p. 55) in light of the students' and my interactions in Round One. In the area of curriculum, I examine the adjustments I made to help the apprentice-teachers select books and ways they might engage and keep the first graders' interest. In the area of constraints of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I explore the view of reading that seemed to dominate the apprentice-teachers' comments. Finally, in the area of tensions, I explore my thoughts about whether the apprentice-teachers or I should take the lead in determining our topics of instruction.

**A responsive curriculum.** As I reviewed the data and reflected on the apprentice-teachers' experiences in Round One, I considered two major changes that would help the apprentice-teachers make Lesson 2 stronger. First, the apprentice-teachers had too wide a selection of books, and second, it seemed that they would benefit from additional modeling about ways to open their lessons and follow-up with instructional activities.

***Narrowing the book choices.*** Inviting the apprentice-teachers to choose their books from the full collection of the school library was not effective; in retrospect, there was too much choice – too many books. Some books were too hard or easy, too long or short, about very simple topics or more complex. In Round Two I adjusted by narrowing the selection of books to several dozen. Likewise, I decided that it would be more manageable for the apprentice-teachers if I placed them in our own classroom and gave them time to browse this more limited collection.

***Engaging and keeping the first graders' interest.*** Though this was just their first lesson, the apprentice-teachers did demonstrate a number of teacherly behaviors. I noticed, however, that several didn't have a clear understanding about ways to open the lesson in an engaging way or maintain the first graders' interest throughout the read aloud and subsequent discussion. In my field notes, I commented, "I need to figure out a way to structure their next first grade lesson in a way that they focus on the meaning and big ideas of the book they read with their students" (11/20/08, AT Lesson 1 Field Notes, p. 5). In preparing for Round Two, I considered ways to help the apprentice-teachers begin their lessons and also wondered about meaningful activities they could do when they'd finished reading. My field notes mention the possibility of think-alouds and graphic organizers (11/20/08, AT Lesson 1 Field Notes, p. 5), Big Books (see glossary), and

CLOZE activities (see glossary; 11/21/08, Debrief Transcript 6th, p. 2), all of which could increase both the apprentice-teachers' and first graders emphasis on meaning-making.

**Affordances and constraints: Views of reading.** I noticed that a *word-based view* of reading seemed to dominate discussions in all three phases of Round One. This view was expressed when Salenia skipped paragraphs of text at the bottoms of pages and LaToya read rapidly without pausing to look at the pictures. I interpreted her rapid oral reading to mean that for LaToya, reading is all about saying the words. Finally, several students, including DeVontay, asked me repeatedly to pronounce words for them. In striking contrast to this word-based view of reading, on his post-teaching reflection, DeVontay wrote, "I wasn't reading to the book I was reading to the [kid]" (11/20/08, Round Three Student Reflection), indicating his awareness of audience when reading aloud.

I recognized during our preparations that reading aloud is inherently a performance event, but I still wondered about ways to increase the apprentice-teachers' level of meaning-making as they read. I thought that introducing a Read-Aloud/Think-Aloud instructional strategy (see glossary) in Round Two might help the apprentice-teachers slow down, causing them and their first grade students to engage more thoughtfully with the stories in their selected books.

**Tensions: Finding the balance – Who takes the lead?** This first lesson was a learning experience for me, as much as it was for the apprentice-teachers. I wasn't sure what I should be doing, how much to get involved with the apprentice-teachers' first grade lessons, or how to intervene if some first graders seemed off-task. In general, I circulated about the room, watching the groups, and jotting quick notes on a small tablet

of paper. After school, I used my collection of phrases to prompt my memory as I wrote field notes about the lesson. I realized later that wearing my voice recorder would have facilitated this process.

Throughout this round, I felt the tension between my knowledge as an experienced teacher and my desire to let the apprentice-teachers take the lead in designing and conducting their lessons. At least in this first round, I struggled to balance my opinions about the apprentice-teachers' needs with their opinions about their needs. For example, prior to Lesson 1, I wrote reflective notes about needing to teach them how to open their lesson with first graders. Instead, I chose to wait to see if they'd identify this as a need in our post-lesson reflective discussions. Likewise, I thought the apprentice-teachers needed to spend more time rehearsing their books, but didn't force them to spend extra time (say at lunch) re-reading.

**Discussion of Round One**

As I planned The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I sought to open a space in the school day for the students who were officially labeled as "struggling" readers to begin remake their identities from "bad" readers to "reading teachers" – from "dummies" to competent people who had something to share with younger students. In the process, I hoped they would find ways to engage positively in school-defined literacy tasks, and assert their agency in school-productive ways. During Round One, I found relatively few incidents that would illustrate this study's definition of agency; however, I did find numerous ways to *adjust* the *curriculum* and classroom conditions to better support productive agency among the apprentice-teachers.

## Agency among the Apprentice-Teachers in Round One

In Chapter Two I argued that *agency* is the ways in which *social actors* functioning in *situated sociocultural contexts*, which inherently include *structures of power*, position themselves strategically to *make and remake their identities* through the use of *mediational tools* (such as Discourses and artifacts), and that agency exists in varied *forms* and with both short- and long-term *consequences*. This definition provides the framework for unpacking students' agentic actions in the data chapters.

**Where were the agentic actions in Round One?** While analyzing the data for Round One, I was struck that few of the apprentice-teachers' actions stood out as being agentic. They half-heartedly selected books, read with their first grade students, and participated in the debriefing conversations. However, I saw little evidence that the apprentice-teachers were beginning to "strategically remake identities" or use mediational tools to make changes in their social context.

**A tentative use of the Discourse of Teaching.** Alyssa seemed to intuitively shift from a Discourse of Student into the Discourse of Teaching when she showed her students the cover of her book and asked them what they thought would happen with the character on the cover. In contrast, Aureesha seemed to stay in her Discourse of Student when she asked me what she should do when she'd finished reading to her student.

## Classroom Conditions and Acts of Agency

A major goal of this study was to identify classroom conditions that supported participants' productive engagement with school-based literacy practices, i.e. those that increased the likelihood the apprentice-teachers would exert their agency in productive ways.

**Apprenticeship with a mentor to support agentic actions**. In reflecting on the apprentice-teachers' actions during Round One, I considered Wertsch et al. (1993) and his use of the term "re-mediation," which he defines as the process of "reequipping people with new mediational means" (p. 349-350). I speculate that during Round One, the apprentice-teachers had not yet had enough experience as apprentices to learn the new Discourses needed to fully engage with their teaching roles. This idea is supported by Greenleaf et al. (2001) who argue that "in an apprenticeship, an expert practitioner or mentor draws on his or her expertise to model, direct, support, and shape the apprentice's growing repertoire of practice. Apprenticeship also generally involves learning while doing" (p. 88). In designing this study, I used the term *apprentice-teaching* intentionally, but perhaps during Round One, the apprentice-teachers had not yet had enough experience with a mentor to build their "repertoire of practice" and needed more time to "learn by doing."

**A responsive curriculum to support agentic actions**. In other cross-age tutoring programs, the staff involved often provided lesson plans to the tutors for early lessons (Patterson & Elliott, 2006; Van Keer & Vanderlinde, 2010). In this project, though, I simply invited the apprentice-teachers to choose books and read aloud.

***Using "noticing and naming" as one element of a responsive curriculum*****.** In his research about the ways teachers use language to help students develop into compassionate, thoughtful, literate adults, Johnston (2004) argued that "when people are being apprenticed into an activity of any sort, they have to figure out the key features of the activity and their significance" (p. 11), and that teacher talk is key to helping students figure out those "features" and "significance." One technique used by successful teachers

is that of "noticing and naming" (Johnston, 2004), and there are multiple instances in which I used this this approach to help the apprentice-teachers become aware of their own teacherly behaviors. Thus "noticing and naming" became a *mediational tool* which the apprentice-teachers could take up to facilitate the *making of their identities* as teachers. For example, in Round One, I *noticed* that Alyssa was intuitively asking her students questions about the book as she read, and subsequently drew her attention to her action while describing it as an effective teaching technique.

**Closing Thoughts**

In this chapter I discussed the five days devoted to apprentice-teachers' first lesson: the process of choosing a book through a teacher's eyes, rehearsing that book and making lesson plans, and considering how the lesson went. Like my students, I was new to apprentice-teaching and wasn't sure how much support to give; my primary concern revolved around responding to their needs through a flexible curriculum. Throughout this study, I argue that a *responsive curriculum* is necessary to support students as they learn the Discourses of schooling, and I identified *apprenticeship* and *noticing and naming* as elements of responsive curricula.

In the next chapter I present the first of three mini-case studies. Using a variety of data, including reading assessments, interviews about reading, and an analysis of her completed transmediation project, I explore the impact of The Apprentice-Teaching Project for Salenia.

# CHAPTER SIX

# MINI-CASE STUDY of SALENIA:

# WHY DID THE SCHOOL CALL HER A "STRUGGLING" READER?

*I learned – don't be afraid to express what you're really thinking. If you just mess up on something, you can re-say it and try again. I learned that when you tell your first graders about the book, they will sit and listen.*

*-Salenia, Transmediation Narrative*

In this chapter I present the first of three mini-case studies of selected focal students. In the first major section, I introduce the three students highlighted in the case studies and provide an overview of the data sources included in the case studies. The bulk of this chapter is devoted to Salenia. After presenting the data related to her apprentice-teaching experiences, I use a framework from M. W. Smith and Wilhelm (2006) to reflect on those experiences; I conclude with a discussion of Salenia's experiences through the lens of the foundational literature for this study.

## Reason for and Structure of the Mini-Case Studies

The case study chapters are interleaved with the other four findings chapters; I wanted a forum for helping readers get to know focal students who are representative of the wider group of apprentice-teachers and their experiences.

Chapter Four has detailed information about my process of narrowing the pool of 13 apprentice-teachers to six focal students, and I explain below how I further narrowed that pool to three students for the case studies. Each mini-case study includes information from reading level assessments (see glossary), miscue analysis, Burke and *Analytical*

*Reading Inventory* reading interviews, a "telling moment," and an analysis of the transmediation project and narrative reflection.

### Focal Students Included in the Mini-Case Studies

In writing the dissertation, I've included quotes from and anecdotes about the focal students; however, of those six, three seemed to have particularly powerful stories. In addition, they represent the range of experiences of the larger body of apprentice-teachers.

**Salenia.** Salenia, presented in this chapter, was a young lady for whom the project worked very well. She'd been identified as a "struggling" reader, though her reading was actually better than it appeared on standardized measures. Over the course of the project, she grew in confidence, was able to assert her voice more strongly, and made significant gains on reading assessments and her perception of herself as a reader. Her experiences reflect those of many of the apprentice teachers.

**Billy.** Billy, presented in Chapter Eight, is a young man for whom I initially thought The Apprentice-Teaching Project hadn't worked. Indeed, I selected him as a focal student early in the dissertation writing process because I believed he was an outlier and that this intervention hadn't been efficacious for him. However, after taking closer looks at his written work and class participation and "re-valuing" (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004) his interactions through the lens of other research studies, I have become convinced that this project was beneficial for Billy. His case study is an exploration of my "revaluing" process.

**DeVontay.** DeVontay's case study is presented in Chapter Ten. As an African-American guy with many negative school experiences, his future educational trajectory

was fragile. The project was successful for him in the short-term, but probably wasn't sufficient for changing his long-term outlook. His case-study demonstrates the challenge of enacting multiple identities and conflicting roles in a traditional elementary school.

## Reading Level and Miscue Assessments

**The a-z Reading Level Assessment.** At the time of this study, all intermediate students at Oakdale Elementary had their *reading level* assessed by their classroom teacher three times each year using the a-z Reading Level Protocol (Holl, 2002). Reading level assessments are based on the premise that texts can be ranked by difficulty according to the vocabulary, sentence structure, font size, amount of support from illustrations and rhyme, complexity of ideas, etc. and assigned a "level" corresponding to the letters of the alphabet. Very simple books with just a few words on each page are assigned the level A, while complex, lengthy young adult novels are assigned the level Z.

At Oakdale, the homeroom teacher conducted the reading level assessments with individual students. An assessment consists of having the student read a portion of a book aloud while the teacher notes oral reading patterns. Oral fluency is considered to be at the independent level if read with 98% accuracy; the instructional level is 95% accuracy, and anything below 90% accuracy is considered to be at the frustrational level. After the oral reading segment, the student reads the remainder of the book silently. Comprehension is measured by having the student retell the text and answer comprehension questions. Teachers determined the highest level of text read at an instructional level of proficiency and assigned that level to the student. Though I had access to the reading levels of the students I worked with, there were problems associated with this data. Teachers were trained by our school's literacy coach to give the assessment, but not everyone was

consistent about the degree of assistance given to students during the test, the relative weight given to oral fluency versus comprehension, and the number of leveled-readers used during the test. Thus, a student might appear to read a T level book proficiently, but if given the opportunity, might also read a slightly more difficult U book proficiently also. Likewise, students' ability to read texts is impacted by a number of other factors not measured through these assessments, including their interest, amount of background knowledge about a topic, and effort on any given day.

**The Analytical Reading Inventory.** Miscue analysis primarily focuses on students' reading strengths and using those to help students improve. The process involves looking for patterns in students' oral reading and determining which cueing systems – semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic – students over use, under use, or use proficiently. Though the a-z Reading Level assessment ostensibly included miscue data, I did not have easy access to that information; therefore, I conducted an additional assessment from which I could evaluate students' miscue data and diagnostic information about the types of questions they could answer.

I selected *The Analytical Reading Inventory* (ARI; Woods & Moe, 2006), because its passages were longer than those in other reading inventories, the protocols included spaces for miscue analysis, and comprehension was assessed using both literal and inferential questions. Like the a-z assessments, the ARI had some problematic aspects. First, students' comprehension was primarily determined on the basis of their responses to comprehension questions, a very "school-like" task, in contrast to the a-z assessments, which were more conversational in nature. Second, the ARI passages varied widely in difficulty, because they were drawn from texts "typically read" by students in the

designated grade-level. For example, the text at the seventh grade level was from the novel, *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967); this passage was highly engaging and many students could relate to the difficulties of the protagonist. In contrast, the sixth grade text was a "work sheet style" passage (rather than from an actual book) about the death of a notable surgeon who lived in the 1950s. Most students found it difficult to relate to the character and setting in this passage, and thus had little support when attempting to figure out less familiar words such as /physicians/.

**Burke and ARI Reader Interviews**

The reading assessments provided one avenue for assessing the apprentice-teachers' growth as readers, but I also wanted to understand the ways in which participation in The Apprentice-Teaching Project might have influenced my students' perceptions of reading and themselves as readers. In the mini-case studies I will examine the students' responses to several questions drawn from two interviews conducted near the beginning and at the end of the project. Two questions are drawn from the Burke Reading Interview (BRI; Y. Goodman et al., 1987): *Do you think you are a good reader? Why?* and *If you knew someone was having trouble reading, how would you help that person?* Two other questions offer additional information about a reader's perception of reading and were included in the interview portion of *The Analytical Reading Inventory* (ARI; Robb,1995, as cited by Woods & Moe, 2006, p. 92). These questions are *What do you do well as a reader?* and *How does reading make you feel?*

**Telling Moments**

My understanding of each apprentice-teacher is characterized by memories of particular incidents over the course of the project. By including a "telling moment" (or

two) in each apprentice-teacher's case study, I hope to shed light on my evolving understandings of his or her actions, and help the reader gain a more robust picture of the human behind the numbers and words.

**Transmediations**

I chose to have the apprentice-teachers create transmediations, because I wanted them to engage in a concluding project that would help them synthesize their experiences, provide a venue for reflection, and stimulate discussions during an end-of-year celebration. The apprentice-teachers spent six class periods making visual projects (2-dimensional collages and 3-dimensional collections of artifacts) in which they translated their verbal understandings of The Apprentice-Teaching Project into other sign systems.

In retrospect, asking the students to create the transmediations seemed to be one of those synergistic moments between my researcher and teacher roles. The projects evolved because I wanted a vehicle for eliciting data in the students' words about The Apprentice-Teaching Project, and I hoped the transmediations would prompt rich year-end interviews. However, as had happened with the debriefing conversations, I felt the apprentice-teachers gained significant insights through the creation of and discussion about this multimodal invitation. The success of the transmediations as research and instructional tools should not come as a surprise. Hayik (2011) asserts "art is a system of meanings that offers interesting insights into students' understandings of texts and themselves. Through reflecting the ideas, beliefs, and values of its maker, art work may make the ideological contexts in which it is created visible" (p. 95). As a result of these culminating projects, I had several new types of data: multi-media projects; oral interviews in which I invited the students' interpretations of various symbols included in

their visual images; and audio recordings and narrative summaries of the interviews. The "Data Sources" section in Chapter Three provides more detail about the creation of the transmediations and interview process.

**Getting to Know Salenia**

Salenia (Figure 6.1) was a calm, mature young woman who worked hard, showed perseverance when trying new tasks, and was able to maintain focus on her work even when interrupted. Because she was soft-spoken, her voice was sometimes subsumed by others in her group. However, as the school-year progressed, she seemed to gain more confidence and was able to assert her opinions. Salenia was placed in Title 1 because she performed below school and district expectations on standardized assessments, though during apprentice-teaching activities she generally understood texts at both literal and inferential levels. She did have some difficulties when trying to pronounce unfamiliar words, and often didn't self-correct miscues.

**Figure 6.1 Salenia Reading with her Student**

In this mini-case study, I describe Salenia's performance on reading assessments and her changing perceptions of herself as a reader. I also share a telling moment in which Salenia vigorously explains that when she likes a book, she can keep trying to read it until she understands it. Finally, I examine her transmediation and the narrative that she created to accompany it. When taken together, Salenia's case study highlights a young woman who grew markedly in her confidence in her reading and leadership skills.

**Reading Assessments**

**Reading a-z level.** When the school year started, Salenia's reading level as measured with the Reading a-z assessment was one level below that expected for a student in her grade. Between August and December, she progressed one level, exactly the amount expected, with the result that she was still officially below the grade-level benchmark. During this time she had been involved with The Apprentice-Teaching Project for a month-and-a-half and had taught two lessons. During the spring semester, when she conducted five more apprentice-teaching lessons, her reading level progressed three levels, or three times the expected growth. She ended the year at the high end of her grade-level expectations.

**ARI comprehension and miscue assessment.** Salenia (fifth grader) read the fifth-grade ARI passage with confidence and understanding at the beginning of the year. She answered all the comprehension questions appropriately, demonstrating both literal and inferential understanding at the independent level, though her word recognition rate was 95% (instructional level). She made four self-corrections and just two of her miscues were non-words (/hurrifying/ for /horrifying/ and /victorial/ for /victory/). None of her miscues appeared to interfere with her overall understanding of the passage. Thus, while

she was slightly behind on the a-z assessment, she was at the grade-level benchmark according to the ARI.

At the end of Salenia's fifth grade year I elected to have her begin by reading a sixth-grade passage, because she had done so well on previous assessments. Her comprehension was solidly in the independent bracket, with six of the eight questions answered thoroughly, and partial answers to the remaining questions; she did struggle slightly with inferences. When reading a seventh-grade appropriate passage, a text about a year-and-a-half beyond where she currently was in school, she was in the instructional range on both comprehension and word recognition. Salenia ended with an eighth-grade appropriate passage, where she struggled more with comprehension, answering appropriately on just five-and-a-half of the eight questions (between instructional and frustrational levels). Her word recognition continued to be 97% (in the high instructional/low independent range). A significant number of miscues on the seventh- and eighth-grade passages were non-words. I speculate that both the original words and the substitutions were outside her experience and thus not in her reading or listening vocabularies. For example, she read /scambering/ for /scampering/, /trooged/ (with a hard /g/) for /trudged/, and /wreet-chted/ for /wretched./

In summary, Salenia ended her fifth grade year comfortably reading a seventh-grade text and was even able to get some meaning from an eighth-grade text. However, there were consistent discrepancies between Salenia's performance on assessments administered in the classroom and those done as part of her apprentice-teaching experience. At the beginning of the year she was slightly below grade-level on Reading a-z but on level on the ARI; at the end of the year she was on level according to Reading

a-z but significantly above grade-level on the ARI. Regardless of which assessment is considered, though, Salenia's reading growth did accelerate during the time she was involved in The Apprentice Teaching Project. I speculate that Salenia's relationship with the person giving the assessment is one factor that impacted her performance. She routinely demonstrated a desire to please her teachers, and seemed nervous during her assessments. A strong, positive relationship may have helped reduce her tension during assessments. Likewise, the confidence she developed over the course of the project may have contributed to her ability to perform well despite her anxiety.

**Burke and ARI Reader Interviews**

Salenia's perceptions about reading and her beliefs about The Apprentice-Teaching Project remained fairly consistent throughout the project. Near the beginning of the project, Salenia felt she was sometimes a good reader, but sometimes she'd "stutter a little bit," especially when reading in front of others or if she came "to a word [she] didn't know" (10/20/08, BRI). At the end of the year, instead of saying she was "sometimes" a good reader, she answered more confidently, "Yeah, because sometimes I do read fluently, but if I don't know a word, I can sound it out and try my best to get it right" (5/12/09, BRI). Salenia's responses to how reading made her feel were remarkably consistent from the beginning to the end of the project. She said reading made her "feel happy" because she could "sit and relax and read and learn about more stuff while I'm reading" (12/12/08, ARI Interview). At the end of the year she said reading "makes me feel good about myself – Wow – I never knew that I could learn new stuff every day!" (5/13/09, ARI Interview).

At the beginning of the project, Salenia identified “taking her time” and using predictions and inferences as things she did well in reading. She also said that if she didn’t know a word, she could “cut it in half, sound it out, and put it back together” (12/12/08, ARI Interview). I was struck that during this interview Salenia was unable to give an example of a time she’d used inferences or predictions to figure out something while reading. At the end of the project, Salenia mentioned “sounding out” in her Burke Interview, but the next day on the ARI interview, she referred to the semantic cueing system as another way to figure out unknown words, saying she could “look at the sentence” if she got stuck on a word. Likewise, she added the idea of reading with expression to things she did well as a reader, saying she could sound “enthusiastic on an exciting part” and if the character was “really happy,” she could sound “excited” (5/13/09, ARI Interview).

In explaining what she’d do to help others with reading, Salenia hinted at the meaning cueing system near the beginning of the project, saying she’d ask, “What do you think it says?” She’d also help a person “sound the word out” and “sound out syllables” (12/12/08, BRI). When asked how she’d help others at the end of the project, she started with the idea of sounding out words, but added more specificity, talking about covering “the ending,” reading the first half and then the last, and then reading the whole thing. In addition, she said reading every day would help the person because “practice makes perfect,” so she’d “give them a book to go home and practice” (5/12/09, BRI).

Salenia was aware of her difficulties with identifying and pronouncing unfamiliar words, as indicated by her comment that she would “stutter a little bit.” However, she gained confidence over the course of the year as she developed the ability to more

flexibly use decoding strategies. Her view that reading was a positive activity, as expressed by, “Wow – I never knew I could learn new stuff every day!” probably helped her develop the stamina that led to improved reading skills.

**A Telling Moment**

Two days before Spring Break as the apprentice-teachers and I reflected on their insights about Lesson 5, Salenia and two other members of her group had an enthusiastic and wide-ranging conversation about their teaching, the importance of students’ opportunities to choose reading texts, and the role of perseverance when reading difficult material. In one part of the discussion, the apprentice-teachers excitedly read aloud the “difficult” passages that dealt with bullying and name-calling – passages that had complex rhymes, made-up words, unusual spellings, and tongue twisters. This time of relaxed light-hearted, oral reading and energetic responses generated a sense of excitement that carried into the final segment of our conversation, shown in Figure 6.2.

**Key:**
S = Salenia
N = a non-focal student
… indicates brief comments from others which I omitted to allow a focus on Salenia's comments

I began this exchange by asking, "What are you learning about *reading* by being an apprentice-teacher?"

1. S: Like reading starts to become relaxing to me, 'cause like, I get to, like, say if I get really into a book, I get to, like read, and then I'll know everything, exactly what happened. As long as I like the book, and I get really into it, and then I really like it.

…

2. S: If it's a good book…

…

3. S: I think people get frustrated over reading because the words are too hard, and like they try to say a word and they get tongue twister, and like I can't do it, and give up. People just keep on tryin'…

4. N: Keep on trying…

5. S: and they're like, it's really hard, and they get the hang of it and they don't notice until they're done with the book, and they're like, 'I did it!'

…

6. S: Pick a new book that you never read before, like, say it's a new book that you never read before, never heard of, and you think it's a good book, and you start reading it and practicing it, if you mess up a couple of times, just go back

7. N: and do it again, do it again.

8. S: If it takes you more than like…50 times, then like, don't give up…

9. N: Keep trying.

10. S: Then come back to it.

(3/26/09, Audio summary and transcription, AT Debrief 5, pp. 13-15)

**Figure 6.2 Salenia's Comments about Practicing Difficult Text**

Salenia was often fairly quiet during our debriefing conversations, and this exchange is notable because she spoke more, and with more passion, than in many prior discussions. The first theme that struck me, both immediately after participating in the discussion and on further reflection, was the role that liking a book plays in understanding it. In line 1, Salenia used the word "know" which I interpreted as "understand," leading to: "*If I get really into a book…then I'll* understand *everything*." Interestingly, though, Salenia also indicated that one could enjoy a book you've "never heard of [or] read before" (line 6).

The second theme is the role of practice. Salenia's increasing confidence was evident; she described the importance of continuing to try and going back even if you "mess up" as crucial to her sense of success when reading. These comments also demonstrate her understanding that perseverance can be difficult when the "words are too hard" and they want to "give up."

Finally, the call-and-response format that the non-focal student used in lines 4, 7, and 9 is fascinating; he chanted affirmative phrases each time Salenia paused to draw a breath. Rather than interrupting her, these phrases seemed to encourage her to keep going. Because this debriefing conversation resonated so strongly with me, and because I saw the precursor of themes that Salenia expressed again in the end-of-year interviews, it warranted attention as her "telling moment."

**Salenia's Transmediation and Interview**

Salenia used all four available class periods when completing her transmediation, generally working with quiet effort while several others in her group distracted each other. She was also one of the two apprentice-teachers who chose to create a 3-

dimensional transmediation by placing objects in a container, rather than making a 2-dimensional collage.

**Salenia's transmediation.** Salenia's transmediation (Figure 6.3) consisted of a large, decorated, cylindrical container (approximately 12" tall with a diameter of 6") into which she had placed objects representing various facets of The Apprentice-Teaching Project. The cylinder was decorated as a female character with long, red hair, green eyes, and a large, smiling mouth. This image seemed to be looking toward some point over the viewer's shoulder, though she could be interacting with the viewer. Given the interaction represented by the eye-gaze and smiling mouth, the transmediation can be interpreted as having a *transactional* structure (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 63) in which the character seems to be having a friendly *conversation* (Albers, 2007) with the viewer.

**Figure 6.3  Salenia's Transmediation**

**Salenia's interview, narrative, and the contents of the transmediation**. I conducted the interview (Figure 6.4) about her transmediation during Salenia's regular class period. Because her transmediation wasn't on poster board, as most of the other students' were, I couldn't see all the pieces of it initially, so I began the interview by prompting her to "tell me what you've got." Salenia started by describing the outside of the container and then pulled each item out, explaining the items' significance as she went. Salenia's narrative was the second longest of the 13 apprentice-teachers. She had so much to say that my interview comments consisted of asking Salenia to "hold on" while I typed the remainder of what she'd told me. As with the other interviews, I asked about the transmediation, what she had learned about reading, and her opinions of The Apprentice-Teaching Project. When we finished the interview, I asked her to read through and approve the final narrative.

I put a face on the front, and it's a girl, so I put some hair and her bangs come over her eyes. When you open the lid, it's supposed to be their brain, like when they're thinking. I put…I made a book inside the brain. I put a picture of a bear and its hat says sleepy. I think it stands for like a boring textbook, and they're thinking in their mind, I'm bored, sleepy.

Then I put, I got these two flowers. It's like how their mind just expresses out. I got a bear, like for when I'm reading with my first graders, like the teddy bear I had when I read with them. Then I have an R, for reading. Then I have like a cool person and a boring person. Like if they're thinking "This person is cool and I should hang out with him more, and this person is boring and I don't want to go there anymore." Then I have a star, it's shooting out of the brain. It's like he's thinking something and it shoots out of his mouth and he can't hold it. I think he's thinking,

I learned that, don't be afraid to express what you're really thinking. If you just mess up on something, you can re-say it and try again. I learned that when you tell your first graders about the book, they will sit and listen. Some first graders may be like, "I don't care about the book," or "I'm just going to do what I want." I'd say, "If you don't like the book, why didn't you tell me? Why don't you let me read it first? Don't judge a book by its cover."

**Figure 6.4 Salenia's Transmediation Narrative**

The interview with Salenia about her transmediation was illustrative and essential to the viewers' understanding of the images, supporting Albers et al. (2009) suggestion that researchers interview children about their visual texts to hear their interpretation of the images. Figure 6.5 shows Salenia's complete transmediation, with the outer container (the girl) and interior objects; as she discussed each item, she placed it in the arrangement shown in the photo.

**Figure 6.5 Salenia's Transmediation with Displayed Objects**

Salenia began by explaining that the cylindrical container was a girl, and added that the inside is "supposed to be their brain, like when they're thinking."

The second object Salenia described was the brown leatherette "book," saying that it had a picture of a teddy bear with a hat that says "sleepy" which represented a textbook that made the reader bored. With this comment about textbooks, Salenia echoed a conversation that had been circulating among the apprentice-teachers since mid-March when they'd had a dynamic discussion about the importance of student choice about reading materials. Likewise, the image of the teddy bear on the cover of the book could indicate that this book is a picture book, suitable for children, to mark the contrast

between picture books and textbooks. The inclusion of this object in her transmediation hints at the role picture books assumed as mediational tools used by the apprentice-teachers to increase their facility with the Discourses of Reader and Teacher.

She next pulled out two foam flowers, one pink and one white, and described them as symbols of the way her student's "mind just expresses out" (Transmediation Narrative, 5/22/09). As I looked again at the way the flower buds open out, I wondered if Salenia was attempting to articulate the idea that reading broadened her students' minds.

Salenia also chose to include a painted, wooden teddy bear with paws of a contrasting color, a bow around its neck, and facial features. She said this represented the stuffed bear she and her students held during their reading lessons. This could be interpreted as a *conversation* (Albers, 2007) that Salenia was having with the audience (first graders, parents, and me), conveying the importance she placed on having rituals (holding the stuffed animal) when reading together. Likewise, when Salenia arranged her objects, she placed the two flowers, which represented the opening of the mind, on either side of the bear, which stood for reading together. The placement of these four objects made a vector from the girl that represented Salenia. Because vectors represent relationships among ideas, this arrangement could indicate that reading together helps "open one's mind," with the resulting increase in comprehension and enjoyment.

Salenia then pulled a large, metallic silver "R" from the cylinder, saying it stood for reading. I was struck by the lack of verbal elaboration about this letter "R." However, its position in the front, center of the arrangement is striking, and implies the importance she places on reading. In addition, the "R" forms a vector with the leatherette book and the girl, showing the connection among the three.

Near the end of her interview, Salenia discussed two smaller "characters" she'd made out of clothespins. One had a hat made of a green strip of cloth; the other had a head made of a cotton ball and a shirt made of a yellow strip of cloth; both have faces drawn with marker. After describing these characters as a "cool person" and a "boring person", she placed them against the larger girl. The inclusion of the three characters – the larger girl and the smaller clothespin figures – seemed to carry dual roles in Salenia's transmediation. On the one hand, she explained, "This person is cool and I should hang out with him more, and this person is boring and I don't want to go there anymore" (Transmediation Narrative, 5/22/09), conveying an awareness of social status and interpersonal relations. Her reference to being "boring" also picked up on the theme of "boring textbooks" that she'd introduced when explaining the leatherette book.

Also significant is the grouping of the three figures, which I interpreted as representing Salenia and the first grade students. When Salenia placed the clothespin figures in the arrangement, she very gently put them against the larger girl, as if they were nestled under her arms. She seems to be portraying herself as both a protector and role model for the young people. While there is no overt action or connection through the gazes of the three figures, the "Salenia" seems to be sheltering the smaller ones. Because the two smaller figures are clearly *with* the girl, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) might describe the grouping as a *circumstance of accompaniment* (p. 72).

The last object included in Salenia's transmediation was a pipe-cleaner shaped to look like a wand with a star on one end and a knob on the other. Building on the idea begun with the introduction of the flowers that the mind "expresses out," she described the star as "shooting out of the brain" and the brain not being able to "hold it" (referring

to having had all the objects inside the "brain" container.) I speculate that she drew on cultural knowledge that shooting stars represent magic, thus conveying the sense that "reading is magic." While the *conversation* (Albers, 2007) represented by the teddy bear was one internal to our group "reading with friends is important," the *conversation* represented by the star seemed to be based in the wider world of folk literature.

Salenia's transmediation interview provided insight into her views about the importance of thinking with at least four references: first when she described the container as a brain, next when she said the flowers showed how the "mind just expresses out," and finally when she described the star as representing thoughts shooting out of a person's mouth. She closed by saying that she learned to not "be afraid to express what you're really thinking." Taken as a whole, Salenia's transmediation and accompanying narrative deepened my understanding of her experience in The Apprentice-Teaching Program and demonstrated the value she placed on thinking, learning new things, and taking risks.

**Should The Apprentice-Teaching Project be Continued?**

Salenia was unequivocal when I asked her if The Apprentice-Teaching Project should be continued. "Yeah, it helps us read more and better. We practice with the kids. The first graders get to leave their classroom and have fun while they're reading with big kids" (5/12/09, BRI). She thought the kids could help each other because, "I didn't know what the animal (in an illustration) was, and the first grader said 'that's a rabbit.'" The project did have a downside though because Salenia said that it sometimes made her "feel not too good" because "I'm supposed to know it already. I've been in school five years" (5/12/09, BRI). Salenia's comments again highlight the importance of social connections

among students, because she directly tied the value of the project to “practice[ing] with kids” and that kids help each other. She saw value in the project for both the apprentice-teachers and the first graders, even though she occasionally felt badly when she didn’t know how to pronounce words.

**Reflections about Salenia**

In their book *Going with the Flow*, Smith and Wilhelm (2006) use the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as a frame through which they analyze the literacy experiences of adolescent guys. Csikszentmihalyi identified eight characteristics of optimal experiences which Smith and Wilhelm condensed to four principles and then added a fifth from their data. They leveraged this framework to design lessons and units that would increase students’ literacy success. The resulting five principles include: 1) a sense of control and competence, 2) an appropriate challenge, 3) clear goals and immediate feedback, 4) a focus on the immediate experience, and 5) the importance of the social (M. W. Smith & Wilhelm, 2006, pp. 3-16). These five principles for understanding optimal experiences serve as an effective organizing framework for Salenia’s case study.

The first factor is the need for an individual to feel a sense of *competence* and *control*. Salenia felt a sense of *competence* and achievement when she tried something hard and got the hang of it, as described in Round Five’s debriefing discussion. Likewise, Salenia gained an increased sense of power; through her actions, she was able to influence her students to listen as she read aloud and led response activities. She explained this sense of control in this chapter’s epigraph from her transmediation narrative: “I learned that when you tell our first graders about the book, they will sit and listen.”

The second factor outlined by Smith and Wilhelm is that students engage in activities that provide an *appropriate challenge*. Salenia's comments in the Round Five debriefing conversation revealed an understanding of the nature of an appropriate challenge, i.e. one that is difficult, but achievable. She was discussing the frustration some feel when reading, and continued, "People just keep on trying…and they're like, 'It's really hard,' and [then] they get the hang of it….They don't notice until they're done with the book, and they're like, 'I did it!'" (Line 5, Figure 6.2). Salenia also indicated that she was engaged in appropriate challenges when she said, "If you just mess up on something, you can re-say it and try again" (5/22/09, Transmediation Narrative).

The Apprentice-Teaching Project provided *clear goals* and *immediate feedback*. Salenia knew immediately from her students' reactions if her reading was sufficiently fluent and expressive, and their social regard was an important source of intrinsic motivation for developing her reading skills. Salenia also gained *immediate feedback* when she learned new things, as mentioned in each of her reading interviews.

M. W. Smith and Wilhelm (2006) described an *immediate experience* as one in which "engagement is so intense that…unwanted [mental] intruders are banished" (p. 10). Salenia described this aspect of a flow experience during her Burke Interview when she said, "reading starts to become relaxing to me…if I get really into a book" (Line 1, Figure 6.2). This remark also made it clear that her confidence had increased over the course of the project.

*Social experiences* were also important to the flow experience; M. W. Smith and Wilhelm (2006) identified the relevance of relationships between teens and their friends, family members, classmates, teachers, and book characters to engaged reading. Salenia's

relationship with her first grade students is a hybrid of the relationships that adolescents have with friends, classmates and teachers. In her transmediation interview she demonstrated her value of these relationships when she spoke of telling first graders about books, the way they'd sit and listen, and her willingness to listen to their feedback about books.

Salenia was a student for whom I had no doubt, either during the project or at its conclusion, that the project was beneficial. Her achievement on reading assessments progressed at an accelerated rate, and she ended the year at or above grade-level benchmarks. She was able to articulate reading strengths and areas for growth on her end-of-year interviews. Finally, over the course of the project, she gained confidence in her peer interactions and when teaching her first grade students. The Apprentice-Teaching Project provided a forum through which Salenia was able to improve her reading skills and her sense of self-efficacy and agency.

## Discussion

Chapter Five, about Round One, discussed the dearth of agentic acts among the apprentice-teachers as they entered the project, their tentative uses of the Discourse of Teaching, and ways in which apprenticeship and a responsive curriculum supported their productive use of school-based literacy practices. In contrast much of Salenia's case study can be connected to the sociocultural view of literacy.

### Sociocultural View of Literacy

This study supports sociocultural theorists, such as Gee (2001) who asserted that meanings are derived from people's experiences in the world, and Franzak (2006) who concurred, arguing that reading is "embedded in socially situated identity and activity"

(p.221). This case study sheds light on three areas that fall under the sociocultural perspective on literacy: students' purposes for reading, the importance of the "social" in the sociocultural view of literacy, and the pervasiveness of the word-based view of reading.

**Students' purposes for reading.** Salenia's enjoyment in reading in order to learn new things affirms existing research that people need their own purposes for reading (Cunningham & Allington, 2010; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Kittle, 2013). Individuals have different purposes for reading. My purpose would – most often – be to escape into a fictional world and have fun, but Salenia's seemed to be to learn about the reading process itself. She commented several times that she figured out words or ideas as she read more, fulfilling Smith and Wilhelm's (2006) principle of getting immediate feedback. Just as the two of us have different purposes, it is up to the teacher to know her students well enough to help them identify their own purposes for reading. While there are many teaching strategies that focus on *giving* students a purpose for reading (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Leu & Kinzer, 2003; D. W. Moore, Moore, Cunningham, & Cunningham, 2010; Zwiers, 2004), this study reminds us that the purpose ultimately needs to come from the reader, not the teacher.

**The social in the sociocultural perspective.** Social engagements were an integral part of The Apprentice-Teaching Project; these included interactions among the apprentice-teachers about the texts they chose, discussions of successes and frustrations when teaching first grade students, and the ways in which the apprentice-teachers perceived their work with the first graders. Salenia's comments specifically, and this study in general, support existing research on the relevance of social relationships in

strengthening students' interest in reading (Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Kittle, 2013; Layne, 2009; M. W. Smith & Wilhelm, 2006). Likewise, Salenia's experiences affirm the importance of relationships among tutors and tutees as found in prior cross-age tutoring studies (Heath & Mangiola, 1991; Jacobson et al., 2001; Patterson & Elliott, 2006). A visual analysis of one of the vectors in Salenia's transmediation demonstrates the connection she perceived among herself, the joint reading experience (as demonstrated by the teddy bear), and the way that reading can make the "mind just expresses out" (as symbolized by the opening flower buds). In reading with others, Salenia seemed to say, people can broaden their mind and increase their understanding. When examining social relations in The Apprentice-Teaching Project, it is also worth noting that nearly every apprentice-teacher indicated their relationship with first grade students was a valuable part of the experience.

**The pervasiveness of the word-based view of reading**. Salenia clearly aligned herself with the word-based view of reading, supporting Compton-Lilly's (2005) assertion that "sounding out" is a cultural model. When asked if she was a good reader on her year-end interviews, she said that if she didn't know a word, she could "sound it out and try my best to get it right," and when explaining what she'd do to help others, she said she'd help them "sound out" words and syllables and cover the endings.

The apprentice-teachers emphasis on "sounding out" was especially disheartening to me because I consistently conducted demonstrations in which I encouraged them to focus first on what would make sense and second on what would sound like English. Only occasionally did we discuss "sounding out" techniques, such as identifying affixes or covering parts of the words. Given the pervasive nature of the "sounding out" model, it

is especially important that all readers, including those who are school-identified as "struggling," have multiple opportunities to read widely with an emphasis on meaning (Allington, 2006; Krashen, 1993; Miller, 2009).

**Closing Thoughts**

Salenia's case study illustrated Smith and Wilhelm's (2006) framework for an optimal experience and demonstrate the ways in which the five principles can work in concert to foster a flow experience for readers. Likewise, her case study demonstrated the need for ongoing attention to sociocultural perspectives on literacy, especially attending to the purposes for reading that students bring, the need for social interactions around literacy events, and the importance of meaning-based reading activities. These findings push against the widespread implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the concomitant punitive testing regime threaten to reduce authentic reading experiences and relationship-driven instruction in our public schools.

In the next chapter I explore Round Two and ways I continued to ensure that the curriculum of the project was responsive to the apprentice-teachers' needs.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## ROUND TWO: RESPONDING TO THE APPRENTICE-TEACHERS' NEEDS

> *The Apprentice-Teaching Project helped little kids learn how to read and helped me learn how to read. It helped me 'cause every time I chose the book, I practiced reading it, and I read books that I didn't think I would read. I didn't think I'd be interested, but then I read the books and I started to get interested.*
>
> *-DeVontay, Transmediation Narrative*

In this chapter I explore ways in which The Apprentice-Teaching Project was driven by a *responsive curriculum*. I was able to respond to my students' needs observing closely, reflecting, and adjusting the activities and degree of support.

Round Two of The Apprentice-Teaching Project took place from 12/10 to 12/16, squeezed between the Thanksgiving and winter breaks, and had to be juggled with a bout of standardized testing, several convocations, and cancelled classes (because I'd been assigned substitute duties in others' classes). The three phases took five class periods – one in which I demonstrated a read aloud/think aloud technique (see glossary) in which I used sticky notes to prompt my thinking about a text; two days for the apprentice-teachers to select books, rehearse their read alouds, and plan their think aloud points; one in which the apprentice-teachers taught their lesson; and one for debriefing. Table 7.1 summarizes the topics of the apprentice-teachers' chosen books, my teaching points, and the format of the closing conversations for Rounds One and Two.

| Rd | Dates | # class ses-sions | Topics of picture books | Teaching activity | Reading skill | Format of Debrief |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 11/17 – 11/21 | 5 | General | Read aloud | Reading fluently | Open discussion; "What do you want to tell me?" |
| 2 | 12/10 – 12/16 | 5 | Christmas | Read aloud & Think aloud | Predicting & Questioning | Open discussion |

**Table 7.1 Summary of Rounds One and Two**

The data for Round Two consisted of 38 pages of documents including: two field note documents, two audio recordings and their summaries, two teaching charts (see glossary), and six student reflections.

### Preparing for, Teaching, Bringing Closure to, and Reflecting on Round Two

The opening quote for this chapter, from DeVontay, highlights a key theme of Round Two – the importance of selecting and rehearsing books. While I'd given the apprentice-teachers free rein to select books during Round One, a curricular adjustment in Round Two involved narrowing the range of choices and providing more support to the apprentice-teachers as they made their selections. Another adjustment was the inclusion of a model lesson in which I demonstrated ways to engage the first graders and use metacognitive strategies during a read aloud.

#### Preparing for Lesson 2

**Demonstrating a read-aloud/think-aloud.** Our cooperating first grade teacher had been working on asking questions and making predictions, so I chose to focus on those two strategies with the apprentice-teachers as well. For the model lesson, I selected the rather sophisticated picture book *Christmas in July* (Yorinks, 1996), in which

Christmas is delayed because Santa lost his breeches at the dry cleaners, walked the streets of New York in his boxers, and was then jailed for six months.

During the first preparatory lesson for the apprentice-teachers, I explained that I would be doing a lesson called a read-aloud/think-aloud, and that I'd be pausing several times to "think out loud" about the things that I wondered (questions) and what I thought might happen later in the book (predictions). I also invited the apprentice-teachers to think about the model lesson on two levels: first as a reader who is learning about new ways to use questions and predictions, and also as a teacher who is learning about new ways to teach students. As I read the book aloud, I paused to think aloud at the spots I'd previously marked and invite discussion of the story. See Figure 7.1 for my planned "think aloud" comments for the first few pages of the text.

***Read aloud p. 2***: *Oh, it was beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Snow fell like angels parachuting from Heaven. Bells jingled. Chestnuts roasted. All was calm. All was bright. Right?*

***Think aloud***: This seems like an odd beginning. Most books don't use a question mark to ask the reader a question, in the last line where it says, *"Right?"* I'm already predicting that this won't be a typical kids' Christmas story.

***Read aloud p***. 4:

*Wrong.*

*"Where's Donner? Where's Blitzen? Where's my pants!" Santa was hysterical.*

*Sydney, head helper, stepped forward. "Uh, sir? We have some bad news," he mumbled. "The cleaners, um, lost your pants."*

"What!*" Santa began to sweat. "Not my – "*

*"Yes, Boss. Your Christmas pants."*

"Yumpin' yimminy*!" cried Santa.*

***Think aloud***: I have a question. "What do you think Santa will do without his pants? I predict that he'll get pretty cold, since the picture on page 1 showed snow all around Santa's house.

**Figure 7.1 Sample of My Read Aloud/Think Aloud Comments**

After conducting the read aloud/think aloud with the apprentice-teachers, I led a discussion in which we unpacked the lesson and the steps I'd gone through to prepare. My goal during the model lesson was for the apprentice-teachers to see how I used information in the text to ask logical questions about events and character motivations and to make text-supported predictions about upcoming events. As the apprentice-teachers and I talked about the book and the lesson, we wrote ideas on a white board; I later synthesized the comments from the two small groups of apprentice-teachers into a single teaching chart (Figure 7.2; 12/15/08, AT Prep Field Notes, p. 1).

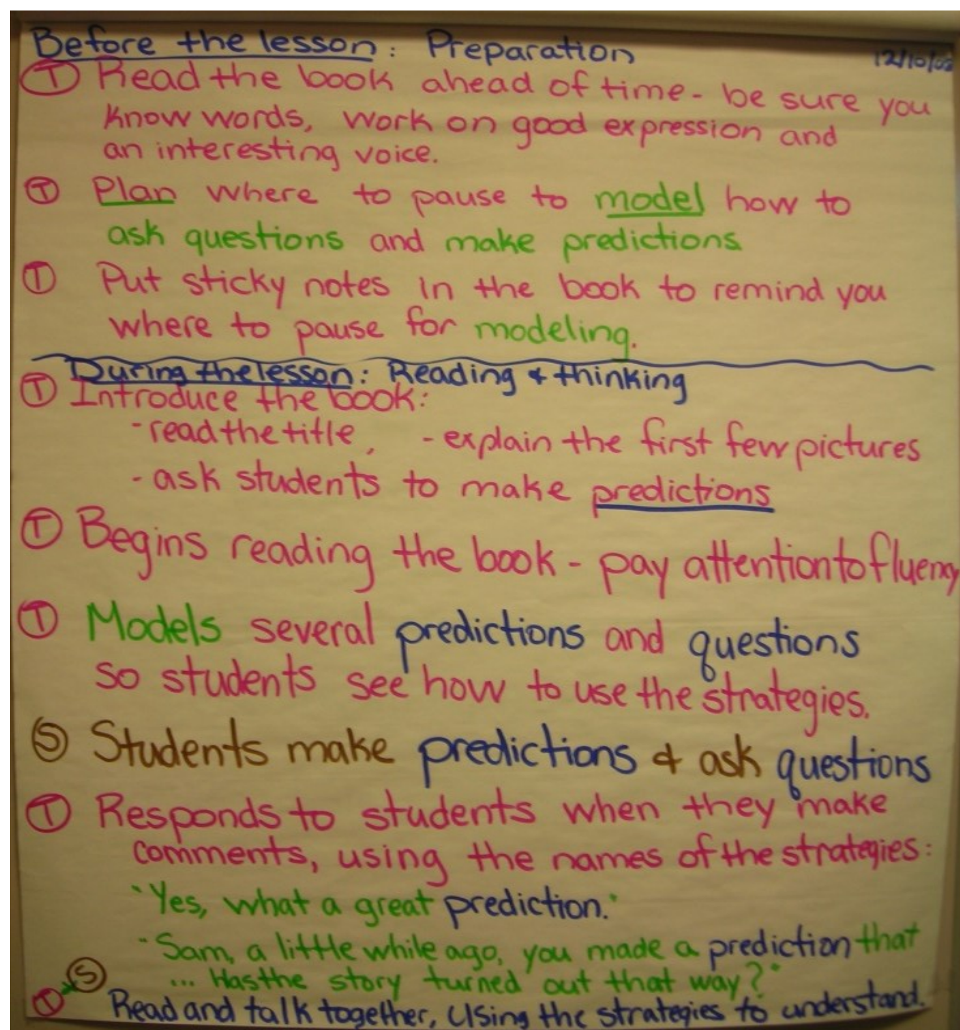


**Figure 7.2 Synthesis of Comments Made While Preparing for Lesson 2**

**Selecting books and planning lessons**. On the second day of preparation, I invited the apprentice-teachers to browse and select books for Lesson 2. Addressing another need I'd noticed during Round One, I pre-selected a wide variety of books about Christmas, a topic the apprentice-teachers had expressed an interest in. Having this smaller selection of books available in our classroom seemed to help most of the apprentice-teachers; they spent more time reading and less time picking up and putting down books. LaToya selected *Truffle's Christmas* (Currey, 2000) fairly quickly and discovered that she could read it aloud in just fifteen minutes, which would be less than half of our scheduled lesson. I asked her to rehearse a second book, *Morris's Disappearing Bag* (Wells, 2001, 12/15/08, AT Prep Field Notes, p. 2). Even with the more focused selection of books, Aureesha struggled. She asked several times why the apprentice-teachers' students were first graders, rather than second or third graders. This seemed to be in the context of wanting to read *Christmas in July* (Yorinks, 1996) with her students, even though it's a bit mature for a first grade audience (12/15/08, AT Prep Field Notes, p. 6).

After the apprentice-teachers choose books, I asked them to rehearse and plan spots to pause for questions and predictions. In an attempt to increase my ability to have conferences with individual apprentice-teachers while also ensuring that the others knew what they could (or should) be doing, I wrote a note that included various tasks that the apprentice-teachers could pursue during our preparatory time (see Figure 7.3).

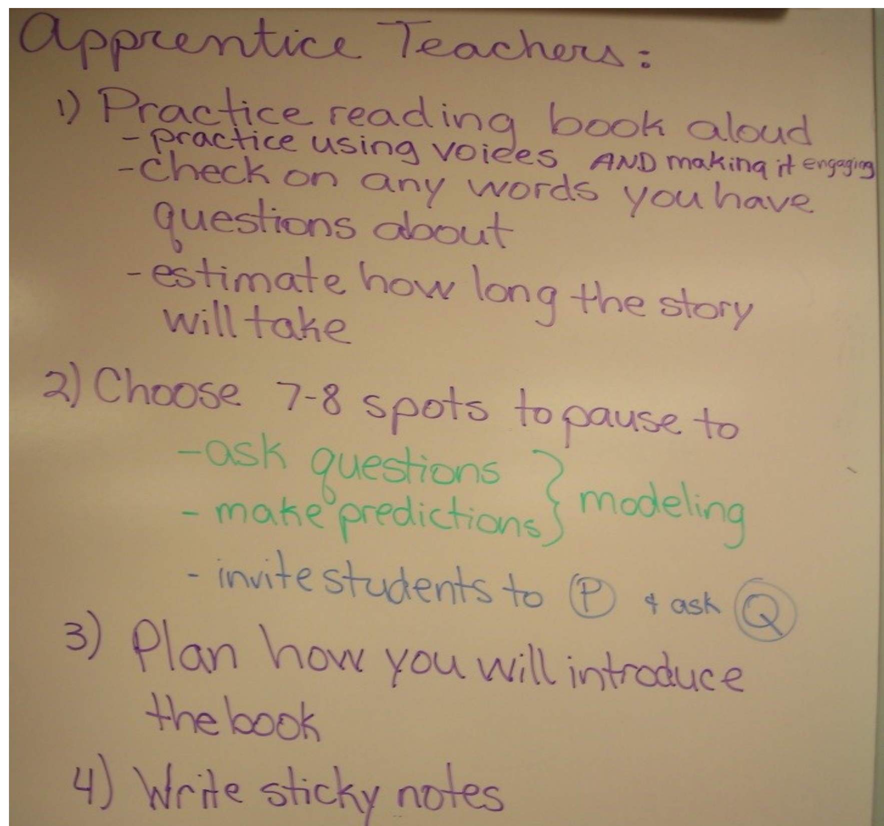


**Figure 7.3 Note to Apprentice-Teachers on the Third Day of Preparation for Lesson 2**

**Conferring with individual apprentice-teachers.** In contrast to the preparation for Lesson 1 when the apprentice-teachers and I talked extensively about word pronunciation, the discussions that I had with individuals while preparing for Lesson 2 seemed to focus on the content of the books. A non-focal student asked me who Charles Dickens was and why *The Christmas Carol* was important, because the characters in his book, *The Fright Before Christmas* (Howe, 2007) referred to Dickens' play (12/15/08, AT Prep Field Notes, p. 3). Aureesha wondered about the animal characters in *Zelda and Ivy One Christmas* (Kvasnosky, 2000) and what real-life animals they were intended to represent – after looking at the cartoonish illustrations and various images on the internet, we decided the characters were foxes (12/15/08, AT Prep Field Notes, p. 5). The most

extensive background-building discussion happened with DeVontay, who had chosen to read *The Christmas Wreath* (J. Hoffman, 1993). He was unfamiliar with the word wreath and the concept of a beacon, pronouncing it /*bacon*/. During our conference, he read aloud parts of the book and commented on the illustrations. When he paused, I described other places he might have seen wreaths, and he finally connected the glittering, icy construction around the polar bear's neck with the fake evergreen wreaths that he'd seen as part of stores' holiday decorations. The idea of a beacon was more difficult, because I couldn't find a common frame of reference for understanding how a beacon is often used.

In summary, I saw significant differences between the preparation for Lesson 1 and Lesson 2. The largest change was the amount of time spent rehearsing books. LaToya timed herself reading and, with alacrity, followed my suggestion that she choose at least one more book. Another significant difference was the level of investment among the apprentice-teachers to understand unfamiliar concepts. As Aureesha's and DeVontay's examples demonstrated, the apprentice-teachers generally understood that they couldn't reasonably use their books for first grade lessons if they were unsure themselves about the characters, word meanings, and pronunciation.

**Teaching Lesson 2**

Given our limited time for preparation, I wasn't sure the apprentice-teachers had spent an adequate amount of time planning the think-aloud portion of their lesson. We'd discussed having the first grade students make predictions and ask questions, but I didn't know how much the apprentice-teachers had prepared for this, or if they had even considered why these metacognitive strategies might be relevant. I have several comments in my field notes about the numbers of possible think-aloud comments each

apprentice-teacher had marked with sticky notes. For example, I wrote, Alyssa "only has three sticky notes in her book and they don't really seem to be predictions or questions that help drive the story" (12/15/08, AT Prep Field Notes, p. 4), and LaToya "said she didn't need any sticky notes. This comment made me think that she still wasn't connecting why [readers] ask questions or make predictions" (12/15/08, AT Prep Field Notes, p. 2).

Following my lead with the model lesson on our first day of preparation, the apprentice-teachers did include think-alouds about questions and predictions as part of their read aloud. Despite my concern about the limited time we'd had to prepare for this lesson, most apprentice-teachers reported a successful experience. LaToya said, "It was fun. I liked it better than last time." Another apprentice-teacher reported that his students "liked it. They were nice and cooperating, not fidgeting, and listening. They really liked it" (12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6th, p. 1-2). Head nods of agreement came from most of the other apprentice-teachers. In contrast, Aureesha and a non-focal student initially reported that they didn't feel the lesson went well, because their students were talking or not paying attention. Interestingly, both these apprentice teachers had more dysfluent oral reading (12/15/08, AT Lesson 2 Field Notes, p. 1-2) and maintained more physical distance from the first graders. LaToya, on the other hand, had her students nearly in her lap (12/15/08, AT Lesson 2 Field Notes, p. 3-4). A final observation about this lesson is that a number of the apprentice-teachers finished reading their prepared book well before our allotted time was up. I noted to myself that we'd have to make a plan for the future – perhaps keep baskets of books they'd already read or have predictable books ready in case there was extra time.

## Bringing Closure to Lesson 2

Three major themes emerged during the debriefing discussions that followed Lesson 2. The first included the relative level of engagement of the first graders and ways to handle their "bad" behavior, and was mentioned by nearly all the apprentice-teachers. The apprentice-teachers also briefly mentioned topics they "couldn't" discuss with their first graders. Third, a few apprentice-teachers were involved in conversations in which I attempted to discuss metacognitive reading strategies while they turned the conversation to other topics.

**The first graders weren't paying attention**. Most (71%) of the apprentice-teachers felt that their first grade students were off-task, disengaged, or outright disruptive at some point during this lesson. Though one apprentice-teacher initially said that his students were paying attention, he also reported that one of his students was looking around at the ceiling (12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6$^{th}$, p. 6). Another apprentice-teacher was frustrated because "the kids kept moving around, making retarded comments, and snatching the book away from me, and stuff;" he further reported that one of his students said, "That's not Santa Claus, that's a retarded dude. He's gonna go take a dookie in the tree" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 1). Aureesha complained that one of her students was "doing a sheet" and that another commented, "You're not a very good reader, are you?" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 1). Salenia remarked, "Well the boy and girl were fighting over the ring," and DeVontay said, "They were talking about Christmas and what they were gonna get for Christmas. I wanted to tell them to shut up" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 2).

After the apprentice-teachers shared their frustrations about their students' behaviors, our conversations turned to things the apprentice-teachers could do to help the first graders behave more appropriately. There were three distinct narratives about first grade behavior. I'll call one "They'll behave if we read good books in an interesting way," another "They'll behave if we force them," and the third "They'll behave if we talk like teachers."

***The first graders will behave if there are good books read in an interesting way.*** Several apprentice-teachers, including DeVontay, thought that the choice of books was important for good first grade engagement (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 2-4). An apprentice-teacher who was reading *The Fright Before Christmas* (Howe, 2007) thought that his students were generally engaged, because "It's probably the book, because they really liked it. They laughed when Howie crashed. It had funny characters, the dog and the cat. The cat was weird because he thinks there are ghosts" (12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6th, p. 6).

In addition to choosing books the first graders would "like," five of the seven apprentice-teachers commented that reading them with expression was important. LaToya said the first graders would like the book if the reader used "some funny voices, showing them the pictures from the book" (12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6th, p. 6). Salenia had a similar belief saying, "you read with more expression, kind of like what they're really saying" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 4), and a non-focal apprentice-teacher commented that adding expression to his own reading was important because "it makes it more interesting" (12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6th, p. 1). Finally, Aureesha, who'd previously commented that her students weren't paying attention, said "I was just

reading, I wasn't just, like, if there was an exclamation point, I just, I was just reading" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 5), indicating that she didn't feel she'd been using strong expression.

Demonstrating a contrasting perspective, one non-focal apprentice-teacher thought that good expression sometimes led to less engaged first grade behavior: "I was doing the bear part, and stuff. And every time I'd do it, [the first graders] were making little childish remarks" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 5). It appeared that while the apprentice-teachers thought that reading with expression was beneficial, occasionally it led to difficulties. While choosing good books and reading them in interesting ways prevented disengaged behaviors, there were times that the apprentice-teachers thought they needed to address "bad behavior" directly.

***The first graders will behave if we force them to.*** Throughout the debriefing conversations, three of the four apprentice-teachers made suggestions for intervening in the first graders' behavior which seemed more "kid-like" and less "teacher-like," and in some cases relied on force or intimidation. For example, in response to Aureesha's students' comments about her reading ability, DeVontay said that he'd "Tie they bootie up" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 5), and that he'd "tell her to shut up," to which Aureesha agreed (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 1-2). When we discussed Salenia's students' predictions, a non-focal member of the group jumped in saying, "Man, I gave them a prediction" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 3). These comments, stated in "kid-like" language, seemed to reveal an underlying belief that teachers coerce their students to behave appropriately.

***The first graders will behave if we talk like teachers.*** In contrast with the "kid-like" comments of coercion and force, the apprentice-teachers also had more "teacherly" comments woven throughout the same conversation. For example, Salenia said "I was like, 'Will you guys please listen, please listen?'" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 2). DeVontay said to tell the first graders to "Cool down," and another suggested saying, "Calm down" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 4). A few minutes later he added, "This is what I'd do. I'd say, 'Can you please sit down and listen to me read this book (*firmly*), if not (*now laughing*), I'm going to give you a check[mark]." (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 5-6). He also said that he wouldn't tell his students to shut up "because that would be a bad remark, and it would probably hurt their feelings or something" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 2). In contrast with the belief that teachers force students to behave, these comments from apprentice-teachers seem to be modeled on more "adult-like" professional language. It is worth noting that while the tone and words are more "adult-like" they are still inherently coercive, as teacher-language generally is.

**We can't talk about that**. A second theme that emerged in the Lesson 2 debriefing conversations revolved around "appropriate" books and images for young children. In several cases the apprentice-teachers briefly touched on topics that they didn't think were appropriate for first graders or that reified their own stereotypes. One of the available books was *Morris's Disappearing Bag* (Wells, 2001). As DeVontay was skimming the pictures, he noticed that the main character, a baby rabbit named Morris, was only wearing boxer shorts in a number of the illustrations. In response, he said, "He's naked, in just his little polka dot boxers. I could never show [the first graders] that" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 3). Later, in the context of a conversation about

making predictions while reading *The Christmas Day Kitten* (Herriot, 1993), Salenia said that her students predicted that the mother cat would "get sick and die," and DeVontay jumped in with, "That actually happened, it died, the cat ended up dying?" (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 3). He seemed to be expressing surprise that a character, even an animal, would die in book for children.

On a related note, LaToya described a brief conversation that her students had about gender and toys. When looking at the pictures of Christmas gifts in *Truffle's Christmas* (Currey, 2000), LaToya explained that her male student said, "Why is [the male character] on a hula hoop? Ain't that for girls?" and that her female student replied, "Can't boys have hula hoops?" (12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6th, p. 2). LaToya said that her first grade students then went on to talk about other aspects of the illustrations, but about six minutes later in the debriefing conversation, LaToya referred to this exchange again,

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | LaToya | Don said, |
| 2. | LaToya reporting Don's comment | *Can I have…?* |
| 3. | LaToya | He said, hmmm, what did he say again? He said |
| 4. | LaToya reporting Don's comment | *I don't want a hula hoop…* |
| 5. | LaToya | And he was like, |
| 6. | LaToya reporting Don's comment | *Sheila can have a hula hoop, but I don't want a hula hoop.* |
| 7. | LaToya | I said, 'You don't have to have a hula hoop.' And he said, |

8. LaToya reporting Don's comment *I want a bouncy ball.*

*(At this point, the discussion changed directions.)*
(12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6th, p. 3, 9 min., 48 sec.).

In LaToya's report of her first grade students' comments, it is clear that all three have assumptions about the types of toys that boys and girls play with. Her male student, Don, seemed surprised that a boy would play with a hula hoop and explained that he'd rather have a ball. Rather than asking why a boy wouldn't play with a hula hoop, LaToya affirmed Don's choice. In all three situations – boxer shorts, death, and gendered roles for toys – the apprentice-teachers and I skated by potentially fruitful discussions about the ways that our own assumptions guide the topics we discuss with our students, and indeed, that those more "controversial" topics could provide entrée for more engaging conversations.

**The apprentice-teachers and I hold two different conversations.** While one segment of the debriefing was interesting because the apprentice-teachers seemed to have three different solutions for misbehavior woven throughout their conversation, another segment was interesting because there seemed to be two distinct discussions happening simultaneously. After the apprentice-teachers had shared their initial thoughts about Lesson 2, I reminded them that one of the goals had been to help the first graders ask relevant questions and make good predictions about the stories (12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6th, p. 2). I referred back to LaToya's anecdote about the student who had asked why a boy character had a hula hoop, and I asked whether this question would help a reader understand the characters better. LaToya thought that it would help them, because "they get started talking about the characters, and would know more and more

and more. At the end I asked about one of the characters and they could tell me the whole thing" (12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6$^{th}$, p. 2). When I asked Alyssa about questions that would help her first grade students understand the story better, LaToya started a parallel strand of the conversation by jumping in with her opinion of *Morris's Disappearing Bag* (Wells, 2001):

> Isn't it a good book? It was funny. I was laughing when his ears was peeking out of the ground. They was like (made a pouting face). It was funny. He said, he was too young to play hockey, he might get hit in the head. He was too young to play with chemicals, he might blow up the house. He was too silly to play with his sister's beauty kit, he might waste all the make-up, lipstick and stuff. His dad asked him why he was pouting. Victor said he probably got hit in the head by the hockey thing. Rose said he probably ate some lipstick. And then Betty said it was the chemicals. He breathed it in. (LaToya; 12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6$^{th}$, p. 2-3).

Alyssa joined this rapid-fire summary, saying that Morris's mom said they'd make a hat for his teddy bear. Interrupting this readerly exchange of enjoyable details from the book, I attempted to bring the apprentice-teachers back to the idea of how questions help us understand characters better. Two responses were half-hearted – Alyssa responded that a question could help her student understand the plot of the story better, and a non-focal student thought that questioning might help his students understand *Fright Before Christmas* (Howe, 2007) better because now they knew Howie was hiding in the basement because he was afraid (12/16/08, Debrief Summary 6$^{th}$, p. 3). While this last

comment was in line with what I'd been hoping to hear, much of the discussion didn't relate to understanding characters more deeply.

In contrast to the discussion with LaToya and Alyssa, a conversation about predicting and questioning with DeVontay and a non-focal student had a different outcome. The boys chose instead to engage in a side conversation which included DeVontay saying, "Get out of my face," and the other boy saying "Get away from me" (12/16/08, Debriefing Summary 5N, p. 9-10). While not all the verbal sparring is clear in the audio recording, my field notes indicated that there were multiple exchanges between the two boys.

In both discussions, I thought I was facilitating a reflection about how metacognitive strategies increase readers' comprehension, though the apprentice-teachers pursued other agendas. As a result of the content and tone of the two conversations, I perceived LaToya's and Alyssa's off-topic discussion about how much they had enjoyed the books they'd chosen differently than I perceived DeVontay's and the non-focal student's verbal sparring.

**My Reflections on Round Two: Responding to the Needs of the Apprentice-Teachers**

As my students and I moved into Round Two, my reflections about Round One had given me some sense of what they needed. In this round, my focus was on responding to those perceived needs. These reflections are driven by the *reflective questions* that I introduced in the reflection sub-section of the Foundational Analysis component of Chapter Three. In the area of curriculum, I discuss the ways in which I used one-on-one conversations to help the apprentice-teachers develop vocabulary and

content knowledge related to their chosen books. In the area of constraints of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I discuss my questions about Oakdale's emphasis on metacognitive strategies and our failure to take up critical issues when selecting books. Finally, in the area of tensions, I explore my thoughts on how I attempted to balance my roles as a teacher, mentor, curriculum developer, and researcher.

**A responsive curriculum: Building background knowledge.** When Round One came to a close, I had realized that the apprentice-teachers had had too many book choices; thus, for Round Two I made a *logistical adjustment* by narrowing the range of choices. I brought several dozen books into the more intimate space of the classroom so that the apprentice-teachers weren't spread so far apart. This change enabled me to more easily have brief conferences with each person about books he or she might enjoy reading with the first grade students.

An *instructional adjustment* came about when it became clear that the apprentice-teachers' chosen books had numerous words and concepts with which they weren't familiar; in response, our conversations during the preparation phase focused on developing the apprentice-teachers' background knowledge about the ideas inherent in their books. For example, when DeVontay had questions about the words /wreath/ and /beacon/, he and I could have an extended conversation in which I attempted to find common frames of reference to help him understand the those concepts. Likewise, when Aureesha wondered what the cartoon-like animals depicted in her book were, we could do an internet search together to find photos of the most likely animals.

The one-on-one conversations that the apprentice-teachers and I had while preparing for their second lesson were crucial. It would have been unrealistic to believe

that the students could have read and discussed the books with first graders when they still had questions themselves. In each of these cases, the curriculum of the project responded to individual student needs; our conversations focused on pronunciation, vocabulary, and concept development driven by the books that each student had selected. Though each of these picture books could have been considered "easy," they presented a wealth of concepts that the apprentice-teachers needed time to synthesize. Also, because they had chosen the books themselves and knew that they'd be on the spot with their first grade students, the apprentice-teachers had more investment in reading fluently and becoming knowledgeable about the stories.

**Constraints of The Apprentice-Teaching Project.** I began to identify possible constraints of The Apprentice-Teaching Project as early as Round One when I saw that the curriculum and activities privileged a word-based view of reading. In this round, two other constraints emerged. First, I began to question ways in which the metacognitive reading strategies were treated as skills by the apprentice-teachers, rather than as behaviors that readers use to improve their understanding of texts. Second, when reading with the first graders, the apprentice-teachers and I assumed that we had little flexibility in choosing books that discussed critical issues.

***Metacognitive reading strategies.*** Metacognitive strategies played a large role in this round for two reasons. First, the development of these strategies in the context of actual reading was an explicit goal of the mandated curriculum in my Title I reading program. Second, the first grade teacher was currently teaching her students to use questioning and predicting, and she had asked me to have the apprentice-teachers include these strategies in their lessons. The demonstration lesson that I conducted included a

read aloud/think aloud that incorporated questioning and predicting. Likewise, I began the debriefing conversations with a clear goal of discussing the apprentice-teachers' and first graders' use of these strategies (12/16/08, Dissertation Journal #1, p. 35).

During the preparation phase, I noted my concern about the apprentice-teachers' understanding of the purpose of the strategies, writing in my field notes:

> Even after [LaToya] read her selected book, she said that she didn't need any sticky notes [to mark pre-planned spots to model questions and predictions.] This made me think that she still wasn't connecting why [readers] ask questions or make predictions to help understand text better….As I was talking with her I wondered if I'd done a sufficient job ensuring that the kids understood the point of the sticky notes. This led then to the further question of wondering if we (as a school and I as a reading teacher) have really helped some of our kids understand why readers make predictions and ask questions during reading (12/15/08, AT Prep Field Notes, p. 2).

A thematic analysis of both debriefing discussions further revealed the apprentice-teachers' general lack of engagement with the topic of reading strategies. Though several students "went along," providing answers when asked direct questions, most of the students participated in one of two types of disengagement: focusing on their enjoyment of the books or verbally sparring with each other along the margins of my attempted discussion. In short, both these forms of disengagement were indicators that the content or form of this debriefing discussion wasn't efficacious. While these conversations revealed a constraint of both the project and Oakdale Elementary's approach to metacognitive strategies, they also revealed my own failure to respond to the interests of

the apprentice-teachers. Picking up on possible underlying reasons for LaToya's passionate retelling of the story and the boys' side comments might have helped me re-direct the conversation to a more useful topic, rather than plowing ahead with my own agenda of discussing the metacognitive strategies.

***Failure to take up "critical issues."*** As I sifted through the data from this round of the project, I also received my first hint of another of the constraints that I would eventually identify. During our book selection, the apprentice-teachers and I instinctively gravitated toward books about topics that were generally considered "safe" or accessible for young children. However, this meant that many books that would have appealed to the older students' social interests or engaged them in analysis of historical events remained unexplored. Such texts and topics could have fallen under the purview of critical literacy, or an exploration of critical issues. Lewison et al. (2008) explain that critical literacy practices encourage students to notice and ask questions about events that occur in the everyday world, question the relations between language and power, analyze popular culture and the media, and understand how power relationships are constructed through our social interactions (p. 3).

During the closing conversations of Round Two, I noticed several potential lines of critical inquiry that dropped by the wayside. In one instance, DeVontay commented that he couldn't show the first graders a picture of Morris in boxer shorts, and in another, he was surprised that a mother cat would die in a picture book. Taking up the topic of what's considered appropriate content for young children could have led to a powerful conversation about book censorship, but I didn't follow up on this possibility even though I had read studies in which both young children (Vasquez, 2003) and middle-school

students (Freedman & Johnson, 2001) demonstrate their ability to handle challenging topics.

While an illustrated pair of boxer shorts seems like a mild example of inappropriate content, and the death of a pet only slightly more risky, the apprentice-teachers nodded in agreement when DeVontay said that he didn't think he could show these books to his students. Interestingly, the apprentice-teachers' responses echo those of teachers involved in a book study with Freedman and Johnson (2001). In that study a group of middle school teachers read and discussed *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This* (Woodson, 1994), in which two teens cross racial and class barriers to become friends; one of them slowly reveals a secret – that she's being sexually abused. While the teachers in the book club all agreed that the book was poignant and that it dealt with a topic that some of their own students had first-hand experience of, none felt comfortable including this book in their own classrooms. In other words, they self-censored their selection of materials based on how they perceived the books would be received by outside audiences, despite the fact that Freedman and Johnson had read the same book with middle-school students who had reported that they thought the book could be used in schools. Clearly, the content in *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This* is edgier than that which the apprentice-teachers discussed; however, the apprentice-teachers showed a startling resemblance to the self-censorship of the middle school teachers in the Freedman and Johnson (2001) study.

Another topic not taken up in Round Two was gender roles and stereotypes based on gender. When she was discussing *Morris's Disappearing Bag* (Wells, 2001), LaToya commented that one of her male students said he didn't want a hula hoop, but that it

would be okay if a female student wanted it. In this discussion I also forbore to explore a critical issue by choosing not to challenge LaToya's perception of "appropriate" activities for boys and girls. Furthermore, by not addressing these stereotypes, I didn't model ways for the apprentice-teachers to challenge their own students in a similar way. These reflections about our failure to take up critical issues in Round Two, did lead me to intentionally include a variety of books that dealt with gender roles and stereotypes in sports during Round Four.

**Tensions: Balancing my roles as teacher, curriculum developer, mentor, and researcher.** An ongoing theme throughout the project was the balance of what I saw as four roles that I assumed. First and foremost, I was the *reading teacher* of these students, a role that also included work as a *curriculum developer*, creating curriculum (lessons, activities, and materials) at the point of need; third I was a *mentor* helping students become successful reading teachers for the first graders; and finally; I was a *researcher*, gathering data for this study. As a mentor, I had to balance what I felt the apprentice-teachers needed in terms of preparation and rehearsal with what they felt they needed. As a reading teacher, I felt a strong sense of accountability for increasing the students' reading ability as measured by standardized tests.

I felt this tension between my teacher and researcher roles very strongly on the day the apprentice-teachers taught their second lesson. On one hand, I felt that I should be monitoring behavior, modeling teaching moves, and ensuring that the apprentice-teachers had the materials they needed – all acts of teaching. On the other, I wanted to collect data about teacherly and reading behaviors of the apprentice-teachers. This data collection seemed to be more an act of the researcher, though of course all good teachers

collect formative assessment data “on the fly.” After the lesson, I wrote, “I wish I could get a better sense of what’s happening in each lesson. Today, I felt like I was wandering around checking on behavior, and making sure students had a book to read when [they’d finished] the first one” (12/15/08, AT Lesson 2 Field Notes, p. 3).

I also struggled to balance my various goals during the debriefing conversations. Reviewing the typed summaries of the discussions revealed a number of strong teaching points, demonstrating that while I’d originally envisioned the debriefing discussions as a venue for data-gathering, they also furthered my instruction. My teaching moves in this round focused on helping the apprentice-teachers improve both their teaching and their reading skills. Discussion prompts that drew their attention to the use of questioning and predicting served as the bread of a sandwich, opening and closing the conversation. I began a new segment of a debriefing conversation by saying:

> We were working on questions and predictions this time with your kids, and of course one of my goals is that this [experience] helps you get better at asking good questions and making good predictions…. Do you think [LaToya’s student’s] question would help him understand the characters better, or do you think it is an off-task question? (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 6$^{th}$, p. 2).

I ended the debriefing conversation by reminding the apprentice-teachers that the same strategies they used with their first graders could also be used when they were doing their own reading (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 6$^{th}$, p. 7). In between these prompts, which were intended to draw the apprentice-teachers’ attention to the process of reading, I asked two questions which were intended to help them improve their teaching, including what they could do when their first grade students made off-track comments (12/15/08,

Debrief Summary 6th, p. 4), and what ideas they had about ways to keep their students engaged (12/15/08, Debrief Summary 6th, p. 6).

When I designed the research study in which The Apprentice-Teaching Project was embedded, I originally envisioned the debriefing conversations as a forum for exploring the apprentice-teachers' use of various Discourses, their shifting identities, and agentic actions. However, as seen by the analysis of Round Two's debriefing, these discussions also became forums for important teaching. Though I perceived the balance of *teaching* and *researching* as a tension, in this case, they were complementary.

## Discussion of Round Two

### Agency among the Apprentice-Teachers in Round Two

In Round Two, I began to see ways in which the apprentice-teachers asserted their agency in productive ways, while also engaging positively in school-defined literacy tasks. In the subsequent sections, I use the definition of agency developed in Chapter Two to delve more deeply into the data of this round.

**Apprentice-teachers begin to strategically position themselves to remake their identities.** I argue that the apprentice-teachers recognized the power inherent in the apprentice-teaching role and used that power to begin the process of remaking their identities as they gained more confidence. Though the apprentice-teachers noticed the first graders' behavior during Lesson 1, in Round Two, they more clearly recognized that their own actions could influence the behavior of their students. Several reiterated that the first graders were more likely to behave appropriately if the apprentice-teachers chose good books and read them well. However, they also began to incorporate some of the teacherly Discourses that they may have seen used by other adults in their school life or

in the wider media. For example, DeVontay's comment that he'd "tie they bootie up" reflected a sense of force or coercion toward a student. In contrast, Salenia suggestion of asking the students to be quiet, and a non-focal student's comment that one can't tell students to shut up because "it would probably hurt their feelings" both reveal an awareness of more socially acceptable ways of interacting with younger students in a teacherly way. These actions demonstrated an awareness of the apprentice-teachers' emerging identities as reading teachers, and support the contention of Holland et al. (1998) that when people "develop more or less conscious conceptions of themselves as actors in socially and culturally constructed worlds," their identities permit them to have "at least a modicum of agency or control over their own behavior" (p. 40).

**Apprentice-teachers take up varied Discourses.** Just as the apprentice-teachers began to remake their identities, several also began to take up new Discourses in Round Two. Referring again to Gee's (1996, 2012) notion of big "D" Discourses and the ways in which various Discourses can be used as mediational tools, I argue that the apprentice-teachers used several as they developed confidence in their new roles; I'll call these the Discourse of Kid and the Discourse of Teacher. When discussing another apprentice-teacher's student, DeVontay said he'd tell the student to "shut up." In the same discussion, a non-focal student said that he would say, "Can you please sit down and listen to me read this book? If not, I'm going to give you a check." In these examples, DeVontay demonstrated the Discourse of Kid while the other demonstrated the Discourse of Teacher.

Allowing and accepting varied Discourses by the apprentice-teachers supports Gallas' assertion that colloquial wording should be permitted in the classroom, because

"only those students who come to class *already knowing* classroom vocabulary…will be able to participate fully" and learn academic languages if approximations are not accepted (Gallas (1995) as cited by Rymes, 2009, p. 127; italics in original). The Apprentice-Teaching Project facilitated the participants' acquisition of new Discourses by providing a venue (the debriefing conversations) in which to use their own languages and an alternative place, with less peer oversight, to be natural leaders while trying out more teacherly languages (the first grade lessons). It is relevant to note that while some apprentice-teachers were beginning to take up the Discourse of Teacher, especially when teaching the first graders, they were, in fact, still children themselves (albeit rapidly approaching adolescence). It was natural for them to slide fluidly across Discourses, or social languages (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986), depending on their audience and their current purposes.

***Ventriloquation as a means of learning new Discourses.*** Drawing on my understanding of Gee's ideas about "ways of being in the world" (1996, p. 127), I looked for evidence that the apprentice-teachers were beginning to use the new Discourses, or social languages, to try on new identities, because this is one way that people can acquire new ways of interacting and being. Using Bakhtin's (1981) term "ventriloquation," which represents the notion of "speaking through" various social languages, Wertsch et al. (1993) contend that if children are to be "socialized such that they can function successfully in particular sociocultural settings, then, the issue is one of learning how to ventriloquate through new social languages" (p. 345). In an early reflection about the data in Round Two, I subconsciously used the concept of ventriloquation when I wrote, "In these debriefing conversations, I'm 'implanting language' – suggesting to the apprentice-

teachers specific ways that they may have accomplished a [reading] goal….When I used ["readerly"] language, I modeled ways they might incorporate this school language with their own actions" (10/18/09, Reflective Memo in Debrief Summary 6th of 12/15/08). By the end of Round Two, the apprentice-teachers had only been part of the project for ten school days and had taught just two lessons. I believe that it was too early to see significant shifts in identities or to observe consistently school-productive agentic actions. However, the frame of ventriloquation provided a tool for understanding how the apprentice-teachers might have been beginning to assume the Discourse of Teaching.

**Resistant acts of agency and their short and possible long-term consequences.** The debriefing conversations with Alyssa and LaToya (in which they redirected the topic away from metacognitive reading strategies and toward their excitement about the book they'd both read with their students) and DeVontay (when he chose to engage in verbal posturing on the margins of our group discussion) provided especially powerful looks at the apprentice-teachers' agentic actions; how those could be construed in different ways by school personnel, in this case me; and how those actions could have different consequences.

***Consequences of varied agentic actions.*** Though the students were all performing agency in ways that could be categorized as *resistant*, the consequences were very different. At the time I was participating in the discussion with LaToya and Alyssa, and indeed, on my first several passes through the data, I didn't even perceive their enthusiastic comments about their book to be resistant to my agenda of discussing metacognitive strategies. Therefore, the short-term consequence for them was my pleasure in the fact that they enjoyed the reading experience. A possible long-term

consequence would be their positive memory of a good book and a subsequent desire to read more. The short-term consequence for the boys' agentic behavior was very different. I immediately perceived their actions to be resistant, responded to their comments in sharp tones, and suggested that one of them move to a different spot. A possible long-term consequence is that they might have negative memories of that space and the debriefing conversations, leading to a possible decrease in their desire to engage in other apprentice-teaching activities.

***Agentic actions that enhance or subvert school-based literacy practices***. Just as I didn't initially see Alyssa's and LaToya's conversational turns as resistant, the girls didn't appear (in early reads of the data) to subvert school-based literacy practices. They both made active eye contact, leaned forward, and enthusiastically talked about books they'd read with their first grade students. In contrast, DeVontay and his conversational partner did appear to be subverting or avoiding the given agenda. They were turned at slight angles from the conversational leader (me), they were communicating behind the back of another student, and they were unable to respond when I asked them to restate something that another apprentice-teacher had said about her use of metacognitive strategies with her first grade students.

***Resistant forms of agency as conscious or unconscious.*** In her work on agency, Ahearn (2001) asked whether actions must be "conscious, intentional, or effective" (p. 113) to be considered agentic. However, Ewick and Silbey (2003) caution researchers about over-attributing consciousness, saying, it isn't always clear how resisters interpret what they are doing, and in the absence of researchers' knowledge of the resisters' intentions, "some scholars have asserted that others may be attributing greater agency and

a more highly developed oppositional consciousness than is warranted by the evidence" (pp. 1329-1330). I concur with Ewick and Silbey, because it is impossible to know whether these four apprentice-teachers were consciously resisting my agenda of metacognitive strategies. For DeVontay and his group-mate, it seems more likely that they were following a more personally relevant agenda – that of peer status. Likewise, Alyssa and LaToya naturally took the conversation in a direction of more personal interest. These situations also call into question Ahearn's idea of effectiveness. Different people would judge effectiveness differently. As a teacher, I felt that DeVontay and the other boy were resisting, and thus were ineffective students. However, from their perspective, their conversation may have been effective because they achieved their inferred goal of increasing their status with peers.

***Agentic acts which appear resistant but which may be students' attempts to "remake identities."*** I wrap up this section on acts of agency with a final reflection on DeVontay's participation in verbal sparring on the margins of a class activity, and his comment to a peer to "get out of my face." As already noted, I perceived this statement as a form of resistance, but also recognized, in retrospect, that DeVontay may have seen this exclamation as an effective way to gain "street credit" with his peers.

DeVontay's comments here remind me of a boy named Andrew presented in research from Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, and Suart-Faris (2005). Andrew attempted several times to position himself as a competent student and reader; however, his cooperative partner and an adult in the class did not take up these attempts. Instead, they continued to treat him as a nonperson (p. 139). It is possible to read DeVontay's exhortation to his peer to "get out of my face" as a demand for the other person to stop

“trash talking” so DeVontay could enact a *good student* identity, rather than a *tough guy* identity. However, I did not perceive DeVontay’s exclamation positively; rather than recognizing an attempt to join our group discussion, I saw him as a disruptive force in our class who was moving further to the fringes. Like Andrew, DeVontay’s attempts to *remake his identity* were not taken up by his peers or me, his teacher.

### Classroom Conditions and Acts of Agency

**A responsive curriculum to support agentic actions**. During Round Two, I saw more examples of the beginnings of positive agentic behavior on the part of the apprentice-teachers. While I can’t definitively associate those actions with either the more supportive curriculum or with their increasing facility with the Discourse of Teaching, it seems safe to assume that the curricular changes played a role. Therefore, the Round Two data also support my assertion that a *responsive curriculum* supports school-productive agency.

**“Noticing and naming” as a tool to share power and develop teaching identities.** During Round One, I used “noticing and naming” (Johnston, 2004, p. 14) to draw the apprentice-teachers’ attention to productive teaching and reading moves, and this technique was effective  Round Two as well. I asked the apprentice-teachers to use the language of teaching to give feedback to their peers, thus conveying my belief that all of us were experts who could give advice about reading aloud and creating engaging teaching environments. When we *noticed and named* teacherly behaviors, we shared *power*, enhancing our learning and teaching community so that the apprentice-teachers could continue to *strategically position themselves* and develop their *identities* as *teachers.*

## Closing Thoughts

In this chapter I've discussed the apprentice-teachers' second lesson with their students. At this time they were just beginning to feel comfortable with their teaching roles and exerted both productive and resistant forms of agency. I argue that a responsive curriculum is necessary to support students as they learn new Discourses of schooling, and I've identified "on-the-fly" curriculum adjustments and noticing and naming as elements of a responsive curriculum.

In the next chapter I present the second of three mini-case studies. Using data from reading assessments and interviews, an analysis of written work, and a close look at his transmediation project, I'll introduce Billy and explore the impact of The Apprentice-Teaching Project for him.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

# MINI-CASE STUDY of BILLY:

# I USED TO THINK THE PROJECT HADN'T WORKED FOR HIM

*Reading is fun. You learn new stuff. The stick figures are holding the books to show this. The Apprentice-Teaching Project is cool.*

*-Billy, Transmediation Narrative*

**Figure 8.1 Billy Reading with his Students**

## Getting to Know Billy

Billy (Figure 8.1) was placed in the Title I reading intervention class because he struggled with all areas of literacy. He had failed the high-stakes state test the previous year, had failing grades, and his fifth grade class work showed glaring gaps in reading comprehension, writing, and oral reading. Billy joined The Apprentice-Teaching Project for Round Three when I expanded the project from two to three intervention groups.

Based on his work in that round, I was unsure about whether he was invested in his role as an apprentice-teacher. Even after he'd been in the project for several rounds, Billy read and discussed his books perfunctorily and failed to make plans for extra activities (as the other apprentice-teachers did). As the project drew to a close, Billy bothered other apprentice-teachers and disrupted our celebratory activities.

At the conclusion of the project, I believed that this curricular intervention hadn't been effective for Billy; indeed, I selected him as a focal student because I wanted to understand why The Apprentice-Teaching Project hadn't seemed to meet his needs. However, as this chapter's opening quote indicates, Billy thought the project was "cool" and defined fun as "[learning] new stuff." As I've looked more closely at his work and interview responses, I have come to understand that while he didn't "do school" in ways that I expected, there were conditions under which he would engage in literacy practices.

**Reading Assessments**

**Reading a-z Level.** At the beginning of the year Billy was three reading levels below grade-level on the Reading a-z Reading Level Protocol (Holl, 2002) and his level didn't change from August to December, a period during which he wasn't involved in The Apprentice-Teaching Project. In contrast, his reading level increased two levels from January to May, a time frame in which we'd typically expect a student his age to progress just one level and during which he was in the Project. Though Billy's level increased, the district expectations increased also; when he ended the year his reading level was still three levels below expectations, but he had experienced a brief period of accelerated growth that corresponded to the time that he participated in The Apprentice-Teaching Project.

**ARI comprehension and miscue assessment.** At the conclusion of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, Billy was able to orally read a grade-level appropriate passage from the *Analytical Reading Inventory* (ARI; Woods & Moe, 2006) and answer all the comprehension questions accurately (independent level); however, he was able to recognize and articulate the words with 95% accuracy (instructional level). Because this was the end of a school year, I elected to administer an assessment using a passage appropriate for the next grade-level as well. On this passage, Billy struggled more with both comprehension and word recognition, scoring between instructional and frustrational levels in both areas. It is striking that Billy self-corrected only three of his twenty-six miscues while reading these two passages. Seven of the miscues were non-words, and eight were syntactically inappropriate, circumstances which should have prompted self-corrections. His remaining miscues were imprecise semantically, but could make sense and sound appropriate for a student whose vocabulary knowledge was weak.

In summary, when Billy read, he didn't seem to pay attention to whether the text made sense, and thus failed to make self-corrections that would have increased his comprehension. Though his ability to understand grade-level appropriate texts on unfamiliar topics did improve during the time he participated in The Apprentice-Teaching Project, his growth did not accelerate enough to close the gap between where he started the year and where the district expected him to be at the end of the year.

## Burke and ARI Reader Interviews

In this section I examine Billy's perceptions about reading and himself as a reader as expressed in the Burke Reading Interview (BRI; Y. Goodman et al., 1987) and the interview component of the ARI. At the beginning of the project, Billy was able to

identify two ways to help others: split unknown words into syllables or look them up in a dictionary (10/20/08, BRI). After the project, however, he'd learned additional techniques, including sounding out words, going back in the text to find it, re-reading, and seeing if he'd skipped something.

Billy indicated that he was not a good reader at the beginning of the project, saying, "No, my tests, I forget. I get Cs or Fs" (10/20/08, BRI). At the conclusion of the project, though, his responses were more nuanced. He responded that he was "not perfectly good" because he didn't know some words, that he sometimes got stuck, and that he read too fast. In contrast, he also thought that the first graders needed lots of help, and that he was able to help them (5/12/09, BRI). When asked what he did well as a reader, Billy said that he reads "all kinds of stuff" and that he's good at reading "tape books" (audio books), because the narrator will "say the word for you." Despite these positive perceptions of his reading ability, when asked how reading made him feel, he said that it made him feel bad because "it's hard to do," "you have to sound out words," and "no one helps you" (5/13/09, ARI Interview).

As the project drew to a close, Billy seemed to continue to have negative perceptions about reading and himself as a reader; however, he was also beginning to recognize some things that he did well. It is striking that though he felt he could help the first graders and that he read broadly, he still thought that reading made him feel badly.

**Two Telling Moments: Revaluing Billy's Work**

My defining memories about Billy came during Round Three, early in his participation in the project, and again near the conclusion of the project as we began Round Seven.

**Billy's Round Three Reflection.** As with most apprentice-teaching lessons, I asked the apprentice-teachers to complete a written reflection after Round Three. The prompt read:

> ***Now that you have finished your third lesson, take a few minutes to think about how the lesson went. Consider these questions as you write:***
> **What did you learn about each of your students? *What went well? *What do you wish you'd done differently? *Did any of the questions seem harder or easier for your students? Why do you think so?*

When I composed this prompt, I suppose I'd envisioned responses that used traditionally organized paragraphs with topic sentences that essentially restated the question and included additional sentences that revealed the apprentice-teachers' thoughts about the answers. While most of the apprentice-teachers wrote responses that came close to my mental expectations, Billy's response (Figure 8.2), clearly didn't. I was initially nonplussed when I read it, attempted to reread it multiple times, and talked with Billy, trying to understand his thinking. In the pressured atmosphere of our routine teaching and learning tasks, I ultimately failed to make sense of Billy's response.

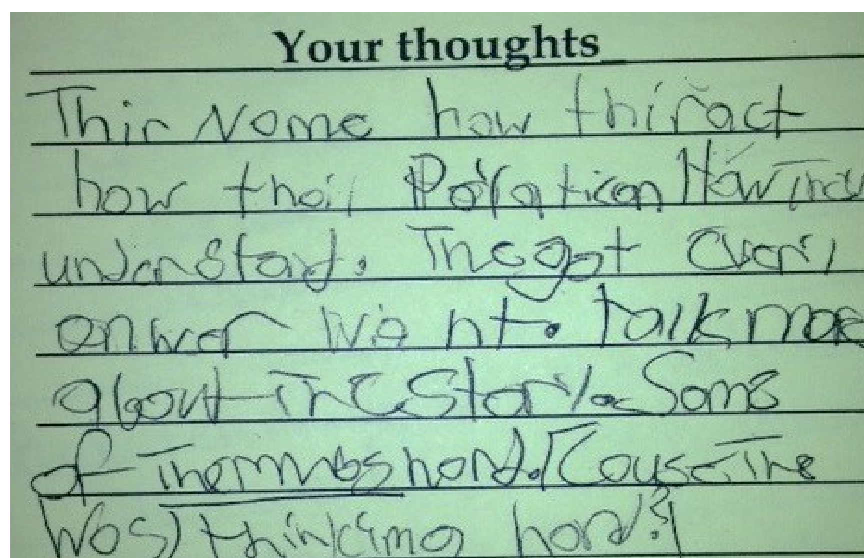


**Figure 8.2 Billy's Reflections after Teaching Lesson 3**

Finally, as I was analyzing the data for this dissertation, I thought that physically matching Billy's response with the questions might be helpful, so I made my best guesses about the words represented by Billy's non-traditional letter formation and spellings, and created the following:

***What did you learn about each of your students****? Their name.*

***What went well?*** *How they acted. How they pay attention. How they understand. They got every answer right.*

***What do you wish you'd done differently?*** *Talk more about the story.*

***Did any of the questions seem harder or easier for your students?*** *Some of the questions was hard.*

***Why do you think so?*** *Because they was thinking hard?* (In this final response, I believe Billy was indicating that the students found some questions hard because "they," i.e. the students, had to "think hard.")

Juxtaposing Billy's brief responses with the initial prompts gave me the context to decode Billy's words, leading me to understand that he was more invested in the teaching tasks than I had believed at the time. At first glance, I failed to give Billy's work the attention it needed, and I assumed that Billy hadn't shown significant effort. After deconstructing this response, I understand instead that he was beginning to think as a reading teacher, as demonstrated by his assessment that his students "got every answer right" and that he "needed to talk more about the story." By "revaluing" (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004) Billy's work, I was able to "connect the dots," and see that he was thinking more about his role as a teacher than I'd realized.

**"Do I have to read?"** My second "telling moment" for Billy occurred early in Round Seven, and corroborates his growth as a reading teacher. While Billy and the others in his group were walking to class with me, Billy asked if he *had* to read. I replied that yes, he had to read, because that's what we did in our class. He then asked if he could read books for his first grader (5/2/09, AT Prep Round 7 Field Notes, p. 3). I interpreted this to mean that he didn't want to spend his routine 15 minute independent reading time with the near-grade-level chapter book that he'd previously selected.

The message he conveyed was that he'd be more amenable to reading his "first grade books" than reading and listening to an audio chapter book. I have two hypotheses for Billy's desire to change his reading material. The first is that the "first grade books" were picture books, and thus had less text and more picture support on each page. While the technical reading level of the books was close to a fifth grade level, the additional visual support may have facilitated Billy's comprehension. A complementary hypothesis involves the "work" of reading; while reading "just for fun" wasn't relevant for Billy, he may have perceived reading for a "job" as more important and worthwhile.

**Billy's Transmediation and Narrative**

Billy had three class periods, amounting to about two hours, to complete his transmediation, but he "seemed to have a difficult time getting focused" (5/22/09, Field Notes). During the second class period devoted to work on the transmediations, he repeatedly hid craft supplies from the community supply tub and other students' cubbies and refused to tell people where he'd put them. In short, he spent a significant amount of time roaming the room and disturbing others' work. Despite these delays, Billy did create a project that seemed visually complete.

**Billy's transmediation.** The base of Billy's transmediation project (Figure 8.3) was a large sheet of pink poster board (22" x 28") on which he glued marbled blue and gray fabric. The viewer's eyes are immediately drawn to the silver "R" which Billy placed in the center of the canvas. He created two stick figures out of pipe cleaner and cotton balls which he placed to the left and right of the "R." The pipe cleaners form the arms, legs, and torsos of the figures, while the cotton balls form the heads. Each head has two "googly" eyes, but no other features. Using a sheet of leatherette from a book of wall paper samples, Billy fashioned a book for each figure to hold. At the bottom of the canvas, Billy made a box using red ribbon in which he wrote his first graders' names, thus indicating that the stick figures are characters. A gray/lavender scalloped border surrounds the images on the left, top, and right sides, revealing just a bit of the pink poster board.

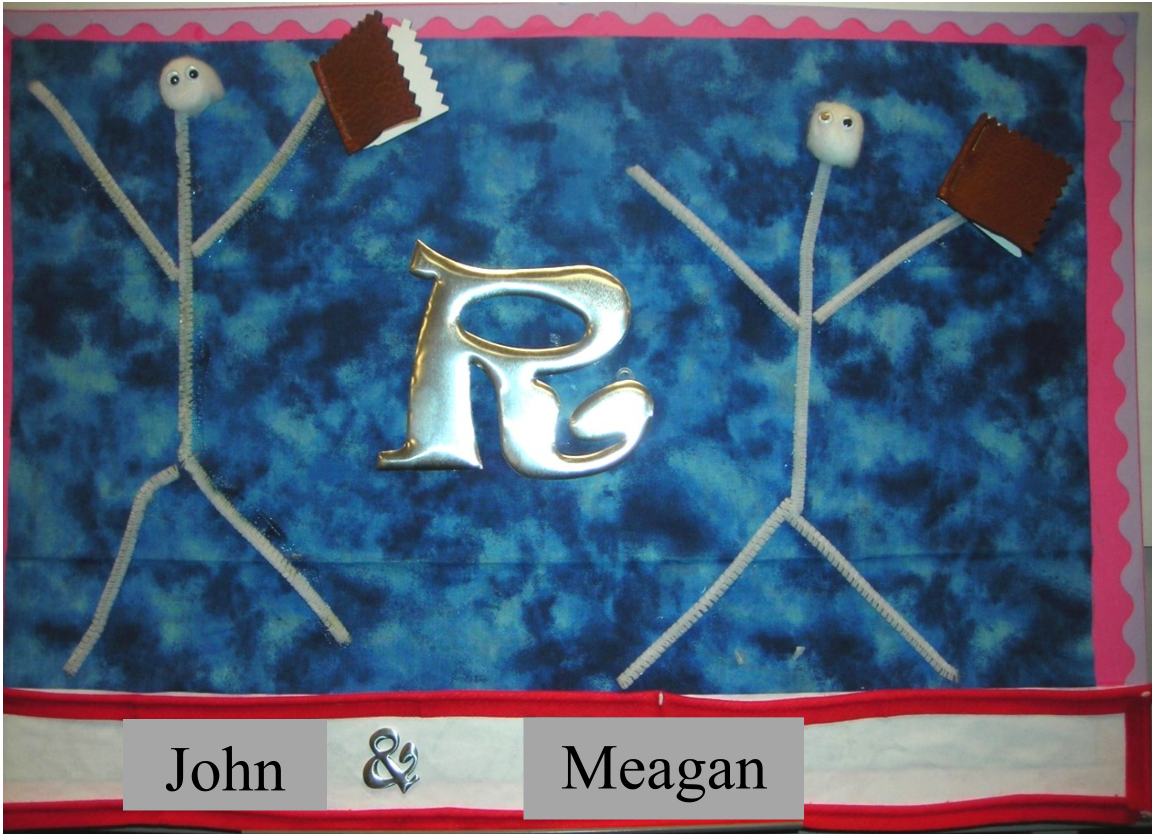


**Figure 8.3  Billy's Transmediation**

The first graders are looking directly at the viewer, implying that they are engaged with the viewer, rather than with each other. Given that they are holding books, and assuming that the silver "R" stands for reading, it is logical to infer that Billy sees these characters as members of the Discourse of Readers. Two elements of this visual image are surprising. First, neither stick figure has a mouth drawn on the face (cotton ball), possibly indicating that the first graders are mute. Second, notably absent from this canvas is an image of Billy himself. He seems to have removed himself from the story, perhaps serving as a detached narrator, telling the story in third person.

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design provides a contrasting perspective on how this canvas might be interpreted. In Billy's visual text, the lower

quadrants contain only the names of his first grade students and their feet; the upper portion shows the students holding books. In some interpretations of the vertical axis, the lower two quadrants can represent the current situation and the upper two quadrants an ideal situation; in alternate readings, the lower quadrants can indicate a prior situation (before) and the upper can represent the current. The lack of references to books or reading near the bottom could be inferred to suggest that reading was not important or present before the project, while the presence of books at the top can indicate that reading is now important. It is also possible to interpret the books as an idealized notion that the first graders will join the Discourse of Readers at some point in the future.

Billy's visual image does follow typical "school" norms in that it appears to be "finished" (borders, symmetrical, characters, etc.) Also, it follows the guidelines that I, as the teacher, established. I indicated that the students should tell the viewer about The Apprentice-Teaching Project, demonstrate what they had learned, and convince the new principal that we should continue the project in the next year. Thus, Billy's transmediation meets the general guidelines for a *socially acceptable* (Albers, 2007) school project.

**Billy's interview and narrative**. I conducted the interview (Figure 8.4) about Billy's transmediation project on 5/21/09 during his regular class period. While we both looked at the completed project, I asked him to "tell me about your project." As Billy talked, I transcribed his words into a narrative, editing for syntax, while he looked over my shoulder and read along on the screen. At just 92 words, Billy's completed narrative was the shortest of the 12 narratives completed by other apprentice-teachers, and I had to give frequent prompts to encourage him to elaborate, with 11 prompts in total. As we

wrapped up, I asked him to re-read the typed narrative to see if I should add or delete anything.

> I put my first grade readers' names on the bottom. I put the stick people on there and I gave them a book to show that they are reading. The R in the middle stands for reading. I put red things around their name to make it look cool. One stick figure is John and the other is Meagan.
>
> Reading is fun. You learn new stuff. The stick figures are holding books to show this. The apprentice teaching project is cool, because you get to choose books to read to first graders.
>
> **Figure 8.4 Billy's Transmediation Narrative**

The first paragraph of Billy's narrative is a straight-forward description of the literal images he'd placed in his visual text. He indicated that the central "R" stood for reading, and that the kids are carrying books to show that they are reading. In contrast, the second paragraph does add to our understanding of the transmediation. The lack of expression on the characters' faces, primarily because they have no mouths, made it difficult to attribute feelings to them. Billy's comment in the interview that "reading is fun" provided a layer of information that was otherwise lacking. It was also illustrative that he identified "fun reading" as that through which one can "learn new stuff." In addition, Billy's assertion that The Apprentice-Teaching Project was "cool" because "you get to choose books" reiterates the importance that many of the apprentice-teachers placed on student choice and voice regarding text selection.

Billy's transmediation and interview give a comprehensive view of his opinion of The Apprentice-Teaching Project. In contrast to some of his prior work, the transmediation is complete and he responded appropriately to the assignment, thus

showing more effort and engagement in the "work" of school. Likewise, Billy verbally expressed benefits that he saw in the project – choosing his own books and reading to the first graders.

**Should The Apprentice-Teaching Project be Continued?**

During the end-of-year Burke and ARI interviews, I included two questions specifically about the Apprentice-Teaching Project. Billy believed that the project should be continued because, "We can help first graders so they can go on to second grade." He also recognized that sometimes the first graders knew things that he didn't and that they could help the big kids, that he read more than he usually read, and that he "got to have more fun reading" with games afterward (5/12/09, BRI). From these comments, it seems clear that Billy did perceive value in participating in the project, feeling that there were benefits for both the apprentice-teachers and first graders.

**Reflections about Billy**

Prior to the deep analysis that was necessary to construct this case study, I perceived Billy as a student for whom the project didn't work. He continued to struggle with producing written work that met traditional school expectations, his verbal and artistic work on the transmediation project seemed minimal, his reading achievement was still below benchmark, and he often roamed or disturbed others during work periods. However, I have had to rethink my initial perceptions. The "telling moments" helped me value his written work; his reading achievement did accelerate during the time he was involved in The Apprentice-Teaching Project; the visual text produced during the transmediation project fit the standards of *social acceptability* for school work; and he

began to recognize aspects of reading and teaching that he did well. These combined factors helped me see value in Billy's participation in this project.

Billy's experiences highlighted one factor that can contribute to students' school success: the use of literacy for "real work." I first began to recognize Billy's need for "real work" at the beginning of Round Seven when I connected his question about whether he *had* to read with Hicks' (2002) discussion of Jake, a focal student in a long-term research study. Hicks described Jake's working-class family, the values they held about education, and the ways in which Jake's literacy practices at home differed from those practiced at school. For example, she said that "reading at home was …typically immersed in the ebb and flow of work, play, and family relations." Jake "sometimes seemed disengaged or frustrated" when he "encountered classroom reading practices that emphasized analyzing parts of texts" (p. 118), and when he was expected to "provide commentary or explanations about an activity that was already *done*" (p. 99; emphasis in original). Hicks further explained that the adult men in Jake's experiences "did not bother with [reading] practices that were not linked to *constructive action* or *informative learning*" (p. 120; emphasis added). To demonstrate the importance of such *informative learning* to Jake's family, Hicks used the example of Jake's father, "a working man" who read voraciously, and "was considered an expert in [the] literary domain" related to the assassination of John F. Kennedy (p. 116).

As a strong member of the Discourse of Avid Reader, I read fiction "just for fun," finding pleasure and relaxation when I escape into the imaginary world of a book. Though I knew that my definition of reading for fun didn't work for Billy, I didn't really understand why until I connected his comment, "Do we *have* to read?" with Hicks'

descriptions of the literacy practices of working class men. I don't have the intimate knowledge of Billy's home literacy practices that Hicks had of Jake's, but it is worth speculating that he gained intrinsic value from the "work" of reading. Once he began to buy into his "job" as a reading teacher, he valued reading as preparation for his first grade lessons so that he would be good at his job. Incidentally, he still might not have seen value in "providing commentary" about tasks that were already done, such as lessons he'd taught or the transmediation project. Billy's comment in the transmediation narrative that "Reading is fun. You get to learn new stuff" also supports the assertion that reading should serve a useful purpose, such as *informative learning*.

In summary, I have revisited my hypothesis that The Apprentice-Teaching Project was not an effective activity for Billy. Instead, I argue that his nascent moves as a member of the Discourse of Reader were not yet established habits. He would have benefited from additional time in the project.

## Discussion

Billy's experiences highlight aspects of the sociocultural perspective on literacy, especially students' purposes for reading, and the importance of considering the role of power and identity when characterizing students' acts of agency.

### Sociocultural View of Literacy

Just as the case study about Salenia (Chapter Six) offered support for the sociocultural view of literacy, so to do Billy's experiences. Like Salenia, Billy's purposes for reading were driven by a desire to learn new things and do real "work" (Hicks, 2002).

**Students' purposes for reading.** Billy's question, "Do I *have* to read?" and Salenia's and Billy's desire to gain information when reading both affirm existing

research that students need to feel invested in their reading – they need to feel purposeful about reading tasks (Cunningham & Allington, 2010; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Kittle, 2013). As I highlighted with Salenia, different people will have different purposes for reading. While my own purpose is often to simply enjoy a fantasy world, at other times my reading purpose is to find a new recipe for dinner; Billy's comments made it clear that his purposes for reading included the accomplishment of real work (Hicks, 2002). This may often put him at odds with school-based literacy tasks when the reading purpose is nebulous, working toward the goal of "learning the skill," "passing the test," or completing a teacher's assignment.

### Acts of Agency by Billy

While this study supports existing research in the sociocultural perspective, it also fills a gap identified by Lewis et al. (2007) – that "most sociocultural research and theory does not attend closely to the issues of power, identity, and agency" (p.2). Billy's acts of agency could be characterized in different ways. Likewise, such characterizations were related to the circulation of power among the participants, including me. Finally, an analysis of agentic acts can shed light on possible consequences of non-productive actions and classroom conditions that might support more productive actions.

The acts of agency under consideration for Billy's case study occurred when others in his group were working industriously on their transmediation projects. In addition to doing some work, Billy hid things from his classmates and roamed around the room, preventing others' continued work.

**Characterizing Billy's agentic acts.** Examining the forms in which agency is exerted is one way to understand students' engagement with school tasks; hence, one of

the analysis questions I suggest is “In what ways can agentic acts be characterized and what are the consequences (i.e. resistance, compliance, academic engagement)?” As the teacher, I labeled Billy’s actions differently than he or his peers might. Likewise, in the traditional structure of schooling, children are lower in the hierarchy of power, with adults determining what students are or aren’t allowed to do, thus *positionality* and *power relations* were relevant in this situation.

I initially perceived Billy’s “lack of effort” and the fact that he repeatedly hid supplies from his peers as *resistant*. However, in retrospect, I don’t think it’s fair to say that he showed poor effort on his transmediation. His finished project fit the norms for *social acceptability* (Albers, 2007), and I’ve already discussed our different definitions about the value of various forms of literacy work (Hicks, 2002). Ferguson’s (2000) work provides a useful lens through which to view Billy’s agentic actions, though he is White, and Ferguson’s work focused on African-American boys. She argues that acts such as chanting, uncooperativeness, and fake hiccups (and Billy’s roaming and object-hiding) are a “form of performance of the self” that “become moments for self-expression and display [which add] some lively spice to the school day” (p. 175). Thus, while I considered Billy’s actions to be *resistant*, he might have characterized them as a form of *self-expression*.

**Examining the power relations in play during Billy’s actions.** In addition to characterizing Billy’s agentic acts, it is also necessary to discuss the apparent *power relations* among the apprentice-teachers, because the circulation of power influenced the ways in which Billy’s actions were perceived. During each gathering of apprentice-teachers, power circulated (Foucault, 1978/1990) in different ways, depending on which

members of the apprentice-teaching community (me, apprentice-teachers in various combinations, and first grade students) were present. In Chapter Two, I described the overlapping layers of the sociocultural contexts that the apprentice-teachers and I negotiated daily. In their homerooms, the apprentice-teachers were all positioned as *"struggling" readers*. In both the homeroom and the Title I room, some students could generally be described as *good students* and *teacher pleasers*, while others performed as *tough guys* or *tough girls*.

While Billy might have anticipated a positive reaction from his classmates, in reality, they generally ignored him. Billy was often a loner, and as such, he didn't have the social power among his peers that other *class clowns* or *attention seekers* could exert. Likewise, the other three students in his group generally performed as *good students* who worked hard in class and avoided trouble. Though Billy "annoyed other students" by hiding things, they continued working and found ways around the problems he caused; thus while he attempted to make power circulate in non-productive ways among his peers, his actions didn't get "taken up" the way he might have expected. In this situation, the weight of public opinion fell on the side of *good students*, rather than on one enacting a *goof off* identity.

**Consequences of agentic acts**. Though Billy was behaving in a way that I (as his teacher) characterized as resistant, there were relatively few consequences. Because the other students were able to ignore him, I did so as well, and the rest of us continued working. Billy was able to finish his transmediation project, though with less detail than I'd expected, and I did not assign a punishment. Given my deeper understanding of his view of the nature of productive work, I now recognize that the transmediation may not

have felt relevant to him. In effect, it was a commentary on work already accomplished (an explanation of his actions with his first grade students.) Perhaps a more relevant task for him would have been to create a social media project of a presentation to share with new apprentice-teachers. Sharing the project with peers or training the next group of apprentice-teachers might have felt more like "real work." Also, given Billy's difficulty with fine-motor control, working in an electronic medium might have helped him feel more successful than handwritten work or craft projects.

**Closing Thoughts**

Billy's experiences with The Apprentice-Teaching Project shed light on one aspect of the sociocultural perspective on literacy, the importance of considering students' purposes for reading when planning instruction. Likewise, this case study illuminates ways in which Billy's agentic actions appeared to be resistant, because his definition of productive literacy differed from mine. Literacy activities that included "real work" and accomplished actual tasks, such as concrete learning or teaching, supported Billy's school-productive agentic acts. This work has relevance for our ongoing work with readers in an era characterized by high-stakes tests, because such conditions frequently divorce class activities from the real-world situations in which literacy is more productive.

In the next chapter I will explore the ways in which the apprentice-teachers took up (or failed to take up) the use of metacognitive reading strategies as they were taught at Oakdale Elementary and in The Apprentice-Teaching Project.

# CHAPTER NINE

## MY EVOLVING UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE APPRENTICE-TEACHERS' USE OF METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES

*In The Apprentice-Teaching Project, you always have to stop and ask questions and make predictions from the title and the back of the book.*

*-Alyssa, Transmediation Narrative*

*You could put the strategies on a cube, and then have [the students] roll it, and have them use one of those strategies about the book.*

*-LaToya, Round 3 Preparation*

Previously, I described The Apprentice-Teaching Project by providing a detailed look at the preparation, teaching, and debriefing phases of Rounds One and Two. In this chapter I narrow the focus from the broad scope of the project to a specific topic: the ways in which the apprentice-teachers used, or failed to use, metacognitive reading strategies (which were a core element of the reading curriculum at Oakdale Elementary). In many cases it did not appear that the apprentice-teachers used reading strategies in the ways envisioned by researchers and authors of books of teaching methodology. I argue that the ways metacognitive reading strategies were taught in our school overemphasized the *process of reading*, to the exclusion of an *understanding* of texts' concepts, an *enjoyment* of literature and story, and the *use of information* for "real world purposes." As a result of the ways teachers, including me, taught about strategies, students began to see them as an "end" rather than as a tool to facilitate understanding.

This contrast is illustrated by Alyssa's and LaToya's quotes above. Alyssa explained that a reader gathers information from the text (title and back of the book) and

uses that information to think about a reading task prior to beginning it. She implied that readers have questions as they begin reading and that they make initial predictions about the text. Rather than being a tool to increase a reader's understanding of a text, LaToya's quote considered the strategies very differently. She suggested that the names of strategies be placed on a cube (die) and chosen on the basis of a roll of a die, implying that a strategy is randomly applied to a text, rather than being used at the point of need when reading.

In subsequent sections, I provide a short look at the teaching of metacognitive strategies, describe ways in which the strategies appeared in The Apprentice-Teaching Project, and discuss the links among the apprentice-teachers' use (or lack) of reading strategies and the theoretical foundations of this dissertation.

## A Brief History of the Teaching of Metacognitive Strategies

### The Proficient Reader Research

Throughout the 1980s various researchers focused on identifying the thinking strategies used by proficient readers (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Pearson et al., 1992), producing a body of work that has since come to be referred to as the proficient reader research. The researchers determined that those who read with high levels of understanding used a variety of metacognitive strategies to promote personal comprehension, while "struggling" readers often didn't; indeed, they sometimes didn't even expect reading to make sense. When "struggling" readers did realize they didn't understand, they could often identify only one tool or strategy for solving their difficulty.

The thinking strategies identified included monitoring comprehension and using "fix-up" strategies (clarifying), activating prior knowledge, generating questions, figuring

out unknown words, creating sensory images (visualizing), drawing inferences, determining importance, and summarizing and synthesizing. These thinking skills are now generally referred to as metacognitive reading strategies, because they are *tools with which a reader can consider her own reading process and comprehension*. However, the research studies in which strategies were identified were published in journals with relatively low readership among classroom teachers. In addition, while the strategies were named, the journal articles lacked the specific teaching methodologies that many teachers look for in professional resources.

**Moving the Reading Strategies into Classrooms**

The impetus for the explosion of reading strategy instruction came from Denver's Public Education and Business Coalition (PEBC), described by Daniels (2011) as "one of the most focused and influential think tanks in the country" (p. 5). Harvey and Goudvis (2007) explained that the PEBC was group of staff developers who worked on a "reading comprehension project that translated research findings into classroom practice" (p. xvii). The belief of Ellin Oliver Keene, an early leader in the PEBC, was that "if good readers used these strategies, perhaps we needed to be teaching them to struggling readers" (Tovani, 2004). After working in Denver-area schools, many of the literacy coaches and researchers went on to teach, conduct professional development across the country, and publish books through publishers such as Heinemann and Stenhouse. The broad availability of "conversational" books about strategy instruction, in the tradition of Atwell's (1987) dining room table, led to widespread study of the PEBC's practices in teacher-preparation programs, school district in-services, and professional book studies.

As a middle school reading specialist from 1997 to 2001, my approach to teaching students to use metacognitive reading strategies was strongly influenced by the first edition of Keene and Zimmerman's (1997, 2007) groundbreaking book *Mosaic of Thought*. Prior to this time, comprehension "instruction" actually consisted of assessment questions which followed basal stories. With the publication of *Mosaic of Thought*, the authors made reading comprehension explicit by taking "the lid off the reading process and [showing] the operation of the various skills that people need in order to read well" (Graves in Keene & Zimmermann, 1997, pp. ix, x). In my years as a middle school reading specialist, elementary Title I interventionist, and fourth grade classroom teacher, I purchased more than a dozen books by people associated with the PEBC.

When I began my tenure as a Title I interventionist and was told that the mandated curriculum was *Soar to Success* (Cooper, 1999), which drew on the strategies espoused by Keene and Zimmerman and others (Palincsar & Brown, 1986; Pearson et al., 1992), I was reasonably pleased – at least as pleased as I'd be with any mandated curriculum. The *Soar to Success* program had less scripting and more flexibility than many packaged curricula and I felt that I'd be able to work within its constraints. However, as I've unpacked the data from The Apprentice-Teaching Project, I've begun to have doubts about the efficacy of the implementation of strategy instruction.

## Ways Apprentice-Teachers Were (and Weren't) Using Metacognitive Reading Strategies

In this section, I examine ways in which the apprentice-teachers perceived metacognitive reading strategies. Using data from early in the project, I categorize apprentice-teachers' comments about the strategies along a continuum and discuss what

was missing from their understanding of strategies. I close by adding one category using data from the middle of the project.

**Early in the Project: Comprehension Was Missing from Students Talk about Reading Strategies**

During Lesson 1, the apprentice-teachers had many things to manage, including book selection, oral fluency, and developing relations with their students; therefore, I didn't include reading strategies as a teaching point. During Round Two, I wanted the apprentice-teachers to have opportunities to use strategies while reading, so I modeled an instructional technique called "read aloud/think aloud" and asked them to be more intentional about teaching predicting and questioning to their students. In Round Three, I planned multiple opportunities for the apprentice-teachers to discuss their use of strategies in reading lessons.

I recall my feelings of discomfort as I listened to the ways in which the apprentice-teachers talked about strategies. In field notes from early in Round Three, I wrote, "I was struck that the [apprentice-teachers] really focused on strategies teachers had talked about and didn't get into many good [teaching] activities" (2/3/09, Field Notes Prep, p. 1). During an early round of analysis, I commented, "[Odd] that strategies come up as an activity in and of themselves, rather than as part of reading" (Notation made 11/14/09 in the margins of 1/26/09 Preparation Summary 5N, p. 3). I began to feel concerned about the ways in which the metacognitive strategies were being taught in the *Soar to Success* program, at Oakdale Elementary in general, and by me in particular.

As this sense of unease deepened, I decided after the project ended to conduct a more finely-tuned thematic analysis. In the following sections, I describe the ways in

which the apprentice-teachers took up the language, though not necessarily the use, of metacognitive strategies. Four broad themes emerged which can be visualized along a continuum from teacher-owned to student-owned, and I've labeled these broad categories with statements that seem to capture the apprentice-teachers' general beliefs about metacognitive strategies.

**Strategies were something the teacher did**. In several conversations the apprentice-teachers seemed to indicate that strategies belong to the teacher, not to a reader. At one point, DeVontay simply said that one reading activity was to "Clarify," and when I asked the apprentice-teachers how they'd help their students learn to clarify, he explained that "you could just...tell them," and Salenia added, "If they don't understand a page, you explain it to them" (1/26/09, Preparation Summary 5N, pp. 2-3). LaToya observed that "the teachers would want to ask the questions to refresh [the first graders'] memory about the book, to see if they forgot about it" (1/26/09, Preparation Summary 6$^{th}$, p. 2), implying that questions are an assessment tool for teachers, rather than a reader's process of considering a text more fully. Likewise, though DeVontay's and Salenia's comments revealed that they both understood clarifying to be the process of "fixing-up," they also suggested that teachers are responsible for solving students' misunderstandings, rather than readers themselves.

**Students did strategies because they were strategies**. Moving along the continuum, there were also several instances in which the apprentice-teachers suggested using strategies during the lessons, but were not able to explain *why* the strategies would be useful. Alyssa said she could use the strategies that were written on her lift-the-flap book with her first graders (2/6/09, Debrief Summary 6$^{th}$, p. 3; see Appendix C for a

description of the book). LaToya suggested a game in which we'd put the names of strategies on the sides of a cube, roll it, and then use the strategy which was rolled (1/26/09, Preparation Summary 6th, p. 4). In both cases, the apprentice-teachers seem to suggest using strategies because they'd been taught the terminology, but they didn't seem to have internalized *why* a reader might want to use a particular strategy in an actual reading situation.

**Students could explain strategies**. In the preceding category, the apprentice-teachers named the strategies but didn't use them as thinking tools while reading; in this category they explained strategies, but still didn't use them. One instance was when a non-focal student gave a rote definition of a strategy, rather than a book-based example, saying, "The kids might have an idea about the book, they could make an inference of what's going to happen next" (1/26/09, Preparation Summary 6th, p. 3). LaToya did show growth from the beginning of Round Three to the end, explaining during the debriefing that her students would have to read the book in order to answer questions on her lift-the flap book (2/6/09, Debrief Summary 6th, p. 4). This comment showed that she was beginning to make a transition in her thinking about strategies – that they should be text-based and are used to help the reader better understand what was read.

**Students could describe how to use a strategy**. In this last category, the apprentice-teachers came closest to the ideal situation of linking metacognitive strategies to actual reading experiences. When LaToya said, "Break down the strategy. Use the strategy to figure out something about the book" (1/26/09, Preparation Summary 6th, p. 2), she hinted at the use of prediction but didn't use the label. In discussing a CLOZE activity (see glossary), DeVontay recognized that readers could figure out missing words,

"because then they can predict" to figure out what the missing word is (1/26/09, Preparation Summary 5N, p. 5). Finally, Aureesha also made this breakthrough, saying, "I asked [my students] why they thought the boy kept running away from the girl and they made the right prediction" (2/6/09, Debrief Summary 5N, p. 3).

**Comprehension Was Missing in Early Talk about Reading Strategies**

After I'd identified these categories of talk related to metacognitive strategies, I was struck by what was missing. In the professional literature on metacognitive reading strategies the assumption was that students would be taught to name and use metacognitive strategies to *improve their reading comprehension*. Thus, I would expect to see references to ways the apprentice-teachers used strategies in the context of *reading actual text*. Instead, the majority of their comments revealed the students' sense that strategies were "just something that teachers used" rather than concepts associated with specific thinking processes. In closely examining the apprentice-teachers' comments and their underlying thinking, I am again reminded that simply "following a script" doesn't ensure that the students learn what's being taught. A professional, well-informed teacher, such as a teacher engaging in action research, is much more important than one who complies with "fidelity" (O'Donnell, 2008).

**Middle of the Project: A New Category – Using but not Naming Strategies**

In Round Five, near the middle of the project, I began to see a new pattern in the apprentice-teachers' use of the thinking processes of reading; they explained something they'd understood without naming the strategy. In these cases, I usually named the strategy for the apprentice-teacher to help them link their thinking with the common name of the strategy. For example, in a discussion about possible Lesson 5 activities, one

apprentice-teacher said his teacher would sometimes “ask us what went on in that paragraph,” to which I responded, “He’ll have you *summarize*” (3/24/09, Audio Summary Prep, 6th, p. 2). In another instance, LaToya said that if a first grader didn’t know something, she’d say, “It probably didn’t sound right to you, so how about you go back and try it again;” I responded with, “Okay, so you’re thinking ‘sound right’ and ‘try again’ so you’re helping them learn to *self-monitor*?” (3/26/09, Audio Summary Debrief, 6th, p. 10).

I was also involved in an in-depth conference with DeVontay while we previewed several possible books. As I read about Katie Sue (victim) and Mean Jean (bully) in *The Recess Queen* (O'Neill, 2002), he suddenly asked if Katie Sue would turn and begin picking on Mean Jean. I used this as a teaching moment to illustrate how we could turn his question into a prediction of what would happen (3/24/09, Field Notes, Preparation 5N, p. 1) and explicitly used the language of strategy instruction, referring to our thinking by name: *predicting* and *questioning*. This instruction seemed to be effective, because it came at a point of need for the apprentice-teachers, rather than something that I or a textbook arbitrarily decided to cover. As such, these examples demonstrate ways the *curriculum* was *responsive* to the needs of the apprentice-teachers.

## Monitoring for Understanding and “Fixing Up”

Drawing on data from the middle and end of the project, I examine ways apprentice-teachers monitored their own comprehension and took steps to repair their understanding.

### Middle of the Project: Apprentice-Teachers had Difficulty Monitoring and Fixing Up

While preparing for Round Four, I hadn't yet arrived at the nuanced perspective about strategy use outlined above, so I continued to think about strategy instruction in my old ways. In non-apprentice-teaching lessons and in reading lessons throughout the school, teachers taught students to use sticky notes to track their thinking while reading. In Round Two, I had taught the apprentice-teachers to use sticky notes to mark spots where they wanted to make a teaching point during their first grade lessons. While conferring with Billy and LaToya prior to Lesson 4, I noticed that both had inserted sticky notes with suggested "think-aloud" comments in their books which didn't seem to enhance their comprehension.

**Billy's comments revealed his literal thinking as a reader, not his teaching ideas**. Billy's "think aloud" comments didn't seem to lead him toward effective teaching with his first graders; instead he seemed to still be using the sticky notes to track his own thinking about the story. Billy had chosen an "I Can Read" book (a style of very early chapter book generally written for young children who are just beginning to read independently) called *Kick, Pass, and Run* (Kessler, 1996) in which the characters find a mystery object which turns out to be a football. Table 9.1 shows the text, Billy's sticky note comments, and my interpretation.

| Text | Billy's sticky notes & my observations |
| --- | --- |
| p. 7 Rabbit was the first one to *hear* it.<br>p. 8 Duck was the first one to *see* it.<br>p. 9 Cat was the first one to *feel* it.<br>p. 10 "What is it?" asked Dog.<br>p. 11 Owl said, "It's an egg!"<br>*(The illustration on p. 11 shows Cat, Duck, and Owl standing around the mystery object – which to a human child is clearly a football. Their expressions appear to be cheerful.)* | **Trey think it is A egg**<br>*(Simple restatement of text.)*<br><br>**they like football**<br>*(Possible inference from illustrations.)* |

| p. 12 "An egg?" asked Frog.<br>"Yes, an egg," said Owl.<br>"It's an elephant's egg!"<br>"No," said Turtle.<br>"An elephant's egg is not brown."<br><br>From *Kick, Pass, and Run* (Kessler, 1996) | **A elofoot egg**<br>*(Simple restatement of text.)*<br><br>(3/10/09, AT 4 Prep Field Notes, p. 1) |
|---|---|

**Table 9.1 Billy's Sticky Note Comments about the Book *Kick, Pass, and Run***

I was first concerned by Billy's comments, because they simply repeated the words of the characters. At this point in fifth grade I would expect a student to express his own opinion of the characters, perhaps saying, "I can't believe they think it's an egg," or "Elephants don't lay eggs!" Secondly, though, I asked the apprentice-teachers to use the sticky notes to mark spots where they'd ask questions of their students, Billy's comments didn't seem to function as teaching points; instead, they reflected his literal-level thinking as a reader.

**LaToya's sticky note comments sparked a conference about her understanding**. While Billy's sticky notes reflect his own thinking as a reader, LaToya's appeared to be geared toward teaching points she hoped to initiate with her first graders; however, they revealed a poor understanding of her chosen book. This caused me concern on several levels. First, as a sixth grader reading a relatively simple picture book, I worried that she'd failed to reach the understanding that should have been possible. Second, I knew it would be more difficult for her to lead a meaningful conversation with her first graders if she didn't understand the story herself. Finally, I didn't want her to be embarrassed in front of her first graders if they realized that she didn't understand the story.

LaToya had chosen a picture book called *Finklehopper Frog Cheers* (Livingston, 2005) in which the main characters (portrayed as animals) attend a picnic, participate in a

race, and are teased by several other characters. This book was more challenging to understand than Billy's "I Can Read" book, because it had a more complex plot and level of characterization; however, should still have been well within the listening comprehension of first graders and independent reading comprehension of intermediate-aged children. Table 9.2 shows the text, LaToya's sticky note comments, and my interpretations.

| Text | LaToya's sticky notes & my observations |
| --- | --- |
| p. 1&2 The text opens with Finklehopper Frog setting out for a picnic. As he walks, he worries about whether others will make fun of his hat. | **is he cheerful** *(Question about character's feelings; Some evidence to support a possible inference.)* |
| p. 3 "Aw, Ruby Rabbit's going, too.<br>I guess I'll be okay.<br>"So even though I'm scared to go,<br>I'll do it anyway. | |
| p. 4 Along came Itchy Flea who howled.<br>"Hey Where'd ya get the hat!"<br>And Yowlereen said, "Hi there, frog.<br>Who let you out in THAT? | **What do you think Yowlereen is going to do?** *(Invites a prediction, but at this point there's little evidence on which to base such an inference.)* |
| p. 5 So Ruby smiled and winked, "Hey, cat,<br>you're lookin' fine today!<br>And, Itchy, thanks, you like the hat!" | |
| From *Finklehopper Frog Cheers* (Livingston, 2005) | (3/10/09, AT 4 Prep Field Notes, p. 2) |

**Table 9.2 LaToya's Sticky Note Comments about the Book *Finklehopper Frog Cheers***

The comments LaToya had written in her book were extremely helpful, because they gave me an indication that she had both failed to understand parts of the text and also not realized there was a gap. In our conference, we talked about her

misunderstandings and more reasonable conclusions. On pages 4-5, Itchy Flea (a dog) and Yowlereen (a cat) made insulting comments to Finklehopper. In response, Ruby Rabbit intentionally misunderstood the bullies and thanked them for complimenting the shyer Finklehopper Frog, thus turning the insults back on the bullies. Understanding this repartee did require an understanding of sarcasm, and on the basis of the discussion I had with LaToya, I think she recognized that Yowlereen was insulting Finklehopper. However, she didn't quite understand how Ruby Rabbit's response would have disarmed Itchy Flea's and Yowlereen's attempts to bully Finklehopper (3/10/09, AT 4 Prep Field Notes, p. 2).

On another page of the same book, I was concerned about LaToya's inferential understanding and ability to use visual images in conjunction with textual information. Near the end of the story, the illustrator depicted five images of Finklehopper getting progressively larger, conveying that he was jumping up the road toward the reader. Rather than interpreting these images as the same frog getting larger, LaToya marked the page with a question asking, "Do you think these are his children?" Under many circumstances, this might be a logical inference, but in this case, the textual information didn't support it. A major purpose for teaching metacognitive strategies is to help students become more independent in their reading, and the primary thing I strive for is helping my students notice when there's a break down in understanding. In this case, LaToya didn't realize that she missed important aspects of the story. If she had clearly understood the repartee at the beginning, she might have more easily understood a major theme of this story: don't respond to the bullies who hassle you, because they only have power if you give it to them.

**Apprentice-teachers didn't realize they didn't understand the meanings of new words.** During Round Five the apprentice-teachers and their students read books related to name-calling, bullying, and peer-pressure and subsequently worked to complete a think sheet (see glossary) on which they identified perpetrators, allies, bystanders, and victims (Christensen, 2003; Lewison et al., 2008). The version of the think sheet we used had descriptors for each of the roles, which I'd written with relatively sophisticated vocabulary. During this activity, I again noticed that many of the apprentice-teachers struggled to recognize faulty understanding of the meanings and pronunciation of words in the descriptive sentences. Table 9.3 shows the think sheet we used in Lesson 5.

| Victim | Perpetrator | Bystander | Ally |
|---|---|---|---|
| The target of the name calling or bullying; the person being marginalized. | The one doing the name calling or other discriminating behavior. | Someone who watches the event but doesn't take any action to stop the name calling or help the victim. | Someone who actively intervenes to support the victim or to challenge the name calling or bullying. |

**Table 9.3 Think Sheet about Anti-Bullying Books in Round Five**

When the apprentice-teachers explained the chart to their first grade students, I heard several miscues. For example, the apprentice-teachers pronounced "ally" as "alley," words with very different meanings. They also pronounced "marginalized" in a variety of ways, and didn't seem to understand what it meant. Finally, Salenia and another student substituted the word "predator" for "perpetrator" (3/25/09, Video Summary, Lesson 5, pp. 1, 3). Interestingly, this is a high-level miscue because the substituted word "works" in all three cueing systems – the meaning is very similar (semantics), both words are nouns (syntax), and both are graphically similar in the beginning and ending positions (graphophonics).

When preparing for Lesson 6, I opened a discussion about the think sheet, because I wanted the apprentice-teachers to know the traditional pronunciations and

correct meanings of these words. I asked them if they thought we should revise the think sheet before they used it in their next lesson. Initially, they thought that the phrases were fine as they were, because, as LaToya said, "if they ask about victim, you can just read the definition" (3/24/09, Audio Summary, 6th, p. 3). In an effort to emphasize the point that simply pronouncing words isn't the same as understanding them, I asked LaToya to read the definition of victim, and she pronounced "marginalized" as "margalized" with a hard /g/, and was unable to explain the meaning or give an example. At that point, the apprentice-teachers agreed that maybe a few words could be changed on their think sheets, and Table 9.4 shows those revisions. While removing the problematic words (marginalized and perpetrator) reduced the apprentice-teachers' exposure, they did gain experience with the technique of putting unfamiliar words in one's own words.

| **Victim** | **Bully** | **Bystander** | **Ally** |
|---|---|---|---|
| The person getting bullied on. | The person who picks on the victim. For example, someone who takes lunch money from someone else. | Someone who watches the victim get bullied. | Someone who helps the victim. For example, teachers, parents, friends, classmates, other witnesses who might not even know the victim. |

**Table 9.4 Revised Think Sheet about Anti-Bullying Books in Round Six**

**End of the Project: Apprentice-Teachers Began Fixing Up Without Teacher Input**

During Round Six, LaToya chose to read *Ker-Splash* (O'Connor, 2005), a comic book/traditional book hybrid about super heroes, and demonstrated the lack of understanding that can result when *self-monitoring* and *inferences* aren't used. After she'd read the book the first time, she closed it and announced that it had no bullying. She then told me about a few isolated events in the story, but clearly hadn't understood several of the cause/effect relationships between events, and more importantly, hadn't realized her lack of comprehension (4/8/09, Field Notes, AT Prep, p. 1). Alyssa, who had

read the same book, showed LaToya things that she had noticed in the illustrations on the wordless, comic book-style pages that alternated with the more traditional text-driven pages.

In contrast, perhaps the strongest evidence of the effective use of *self-monitoring and fixing-up* came from a non-focal student named Sanders. He read *The Sissy Duckling* (Fierstein, 2005) and appeared to be uncomfortable early in the story when it appeared that the father was the bully. As he progressed through the story, he met the main antagonist, Drake Duck. Ultimately, he wrote both Papa Duck and Drake Duck on the anti-bullying think sheet, though he still seemed uncomfortable with the notion that the father could be a bully (4/8/09, Field Notes, AT Prep, p. 2).

**Using Two Cueing Systems as Fix Up Strategies**

Just as there were occasions when the apprentice-teachers didn't independently fix up their break downs in comprehension, there were other instances when they over-used one strategy to the exclusion of others. In these cases, I sought opportunities to coach them toward using more effective tools.

**Sounding out as the main fix up strategy prior to mentoring.** One "fix-up" strategy involves figuring out unknown words, and the three cueing systems (graphophonics, semantics and syntax) are commonly used when readers encounter new words. When I asked apprentice-teachers what they'd say when their students came to a word they didn't know, LaToya and a non-focal student both said that they'd suggest that student "sound it out" (p. 6), a theme that continued for 49 conversational turns (3/26/09, Audio Summary, 6$^{th}$, pp. 5-8). Many of the apprentice-teachers fell back on the phrase "sound it out" throughout the project, affirming Compton-Lilly's (2005) assertion that

sounding out is a cultural model. They often didn't consider using word identification techniques that drew on the semantic cueing system, such as identifying possible words that would make sense in that spot or using context clues. Likewise, they rarely described specific types of sounding out strategies, such as chunking, covering affixes, etc.

**Mentoring students to use the semantic cueing system as a fix up strategy**. To broaden the apprentice-teachers' repertoire, I moved the discussion away from "sounding out," to the semantic cueing system, which is also efficacious in figuring out unknown words (7/5/14, Dissertation Notebook #7, p. 7). LaToya expressed her frustration about a student mis-calling words, saying her student would "keep reading and reading and reading, and then when he'd mess up a word, I'm like, Don, go back to the word and see if it sounds right. And he does, and says it sounds right and he'll keep going" (3/26/09, Audio Summary, 6th, pp. 8). I referred the apprentice-teachers' attention to a teaching chart on our wall and asked if they remembered the three questions listed there. These included: "Does it make sense?" "Does it sound right?" and "Does what you said match the print on the page?" After the apprentice-teachers had read the poster, I asked them what else LaToya could have asked her student. She responded, saying that she could ask, "Did it make sense?" (3/26/09, Audio Summary, 6th, pp. 9).

Another apprentice-teacher reported that when his student was reading the child said "grew," but the text said "threw;" the apprentice teacher said he asked, "Did that have a /g/ anywhere?" which drew on the graphophonic cueing system. As a group we decided that in the future he'd try to ask, "Did that make sense?" (semantic cueing system) rather than immediately drawing his student's attention to the letters (3/26/09, Audio Summary, 6th, pp. 10).

## Effective Tools for Monitoring and Fixing Up

Pearson et al. (1992) and Tovani (2004) both argued that teachers and reading curricula should reduce the number of reading skills and strategies included in instruction; after looking at the results regarding monitoring and fixing up, I concur. I found that reducing the number of strategies, focusing on the thinking processes of reading, understanding the role of perseverance, and encouraging social interactions were useful tools for the apprentice-teachers as they gained confidence in their reading.

**Focusing on the thinking processes of reading and reducing the number of strategies.** I noticed repeatedly that the apprentice-teachers may not have been aware of the deeper meanings in the texts they read. This may have occurred because they were unfamiliar with words and pronounced them incorrectly, because they were unfamiliar with the meanings of words, or because they failed to perceive relationships among ideas. Perhaps their greatest reading difficulty was failing to recognize when their comprehension had broken down; in light of these data, I argue the most important metacognitive strategies are to *monitor* one's own comprehension and take steps to *fix up* understanding when it breaks down.

Though I'd had hints as early as Round Three that overt strategy instruction wasn't efficacious, those concerns crystalized in Round Five when I told a colleague that "several [apprentice-teachers] talked about using the strategies *after* reading – as opposed to being a thinking process that they used *during* reading to increase their depth of understanding." My colleague responded, "so it's an ends versus means issue," helping me solidify my own thinking that the apprentice-teachers seemed to see "strategies as

something that is a *result* of reading, rather than part of the process of reading" (3/22/09, Reflective Memo, p. 1-2).

By the middle of the project, I found that the most useful comprehension instruction occurred when I emphasized thinking, not strategies. I used just three questions (Clay, 1993) as a *fix-up* strategy to draw apprentice-teachers' attention to the meaning (semantics) and sound (syntax and graphophonics) of the text (K. Goodman, 1996; Y. Goodman et al., 1987). These questions were based on the three cueing systems and included *Did that make sense*?, *Did it sound like English*?, and *Did the letters and sounds mostly match*? By limiting the fix-up process to just three questions, I hoped to emphasize the true "end" of reading – better understanding.

**Perseverance and "puzzle solving" as requisites for comprehension.** The contrast between the non-focal student, Sanders, and LaToya demonstrates one mental disposition that is essential for effective comprehension of unfamiliar or challenging texts. When she read *Ker-Splash*, LaToya closed her book with a note of finality after reading it declaring that it had no bullies; because we'd been reading books about bullies, bystanders, and allies for more than a month and I'd shared this book in the context of that unit, I would have expected her to revisit the text and illustrations to solve the puzzle of the apparent lack of bullies. Sanders showed more "stick-to-it-ive-ness as he read, recognizing that Papa Duck probably wouldn't be the only bully, and demonstrating a willingness to revise his initial thoughts about the roles of characters in the story.

Both Sanders and LaToya encountered "puzzles" when they read, but Sanders took steps to independently *fix up* his understanding. He had a sense of stamina and confidence in his own problem-solving skills (*agency*). He understood that reading

should make sense, recognized when something didn't (*self-monitoring*), and took steps to solve problem the problem (*fix-ups*). Furthermore, he had the intrinsic motivation to pause and do the thinking work that was necessary. His sense of success when he figured out the problem was palpable.

**Social interactions as a tool to facilitate comprehension**. There is strong evidence in the preceding examples that social interactions can support students as they learn to recognize and repair comprehension difficulties. It is notable that none of the apprentice-teachers acknowledged (or perhaps realized) that they didn't understand the meanings of the words on the anti-bullying think sheet until we talked together about the definitions of the terms. While Sanders solved his problem through re-reading and thoughtful reflection, LaToya's difficulty was solved in a different way; rather than independently applying a fix-up strategy, Alyssa served as a mentor and pointed out textual elements which had helped her make inferences about the plot and characters. This conversation between was beneficial to both girls as they noticed ways the characters changed in *Ker-Splash*.

## Summarizing, Identifying Themes, and Higher Level Thinking

In the middle of the project, I began looking for ways to incorporate literary skills typically required for intermediate-readers, such as theme, into the apprentice-teaching curriculum.

### Apprentice-Teachers *Summarized* Instead of Identifying *Themes*

During Rounds Four and Five, I noticed that the apprentice-teachers tended to either express main ideas or summarize stories when asked to discuss themes. For example, Alyssa explained that in *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon* (Lovell, 2001), the main

character was so small that everyone picked on her. It wasn't until after we'd talked more explicitly about lessons the author might want the reader to learn that Alyssa was able to explain that one theme might be "you should be able to do what you want, no matter what other people say" (3/24/09, Audio Summary, 6th, p. 5). Likewise, a non-focal student summarized *Simon's Hook* (Burnett, 1999).

**Explicit Reading Strategy Instruction May Have Limited Higher-Level Thinking**

I found evidence that overt strategy instruction may have limited the range of the apprentice-teachers' thinking. During Round Four, I assumed that the apprentice-teachers summarized because they didn't yet understand the concept of theme; it wasn't until later that I hypothesized that it could be a side-effect of the school's focus on metacognitive reading strategies. Summarizing and recognizing themes require distinctly different ways of thinking. When summarizing, readers generally need to simply recall the most important information from a text and restate it in a logical order. Identifying possible themes, though, requires more sophisticated thinking, including inferring an author's purpose, making connections with life experiences and other texts, and generalizing the experiences of literary characters to the life experiences of readers. By over-emphasizing the use of summaries in non-apprentice-teaching lessons, I may have given too little time for readers to discuss and understand the range of themes in the texts they were reading.

Another way in which strategy instruction may have limited higher-level thinking was the apprentice-teachers' failure to take connections to deeper levels. When the apprentice-teachers discussed the word play that caused difficulties in orally reading *Finklehopper Frog* (Livingston, 2004) and *The Recess Queen* (O'Neill, 2002), a non-focal student said that the texts were similar (3/26/09, Audio Summary Debrief, 5N, p. 3.

I accepted this connection at face value. In retrospect, I wish that I had responded with a question about how connecting these texts could help him. In this case, he might have said (or I could have suggested) that both authors used tongue twisters and made-up words in their stories. Realizing that the rhyme schemes in *The Recess Queen* helped readers figure out unfamiliar words might have led the apprentice-teachers to transfer those fluency strategies to *Finklehopper Frog*, and vice versa.

## Identifying the Qualities of Good Readers

While the apprentice-teachers were improving as readers by the end of the project, in discussions of characteristics of good readers, I was struck that they routinely identified fluency and word recognition as skills of effective readers. What was lacking was a recognition that comprehension or understanding are crucial.

### Apprentice-Teachers Identified Fluency and Word Recognition

During the debriefing conversations for Round Six, I explicitly asked the apprentice-teachers how they had been improving as readers over the course of the project (4/9/09, Debrief, 5$^{th}$ boys, p. 19-21; 4/10/09, Debrief, 5$^{th}$ girls, p. 4). Most of the apprentice-teachers thought their ability to say unfamiliar words had improved. For example, Aureesha said that before “I couldn’t read as fluent as I wanted to. I was embarrassed because I couldn’t read as good.” A non-focal student said that he had been “learning how to say those words in *The Recess Queen*, like ‘lolly-push-um,’” and DeVontay said that he could now “focus on the word I’m reading, then focus on the word that’s coming after” (which I interpreted to mean that he could identify subsequent words.) The apprentice-teachers also believed that the pace and speed of their reading was better. DeVontay thought he had “sped up on my pace a little bit,” while a non-focal

student said she was reading "more slowly and carefully." Finally, the apprentice-teachers believed that they were now able to read with more expression. DeVontay explained that "you can't just have your own voice, you got to, like, make it sound like [the characters are] talking."

### Comprehension Wasn't Recognized as an Important Reading Skill

The vast majority of the strengths that the apprentice-teachers attributed to good readers focused on word recognition and oral reading fluency, and I did not find a single instance of better comprehension. Building on my insights from Round Five, in which I began to understand that the apprentice-teachers viewed the strategies as an end, not a means, perhaps the question becomes, "A means for what?" Had we – me in this project, other teachers in my school, and teachers at so many other schools using explicit strategy instruction – somehow failed to convey to students that the most important part of a reading experience is to understand?

Given that the most important part of reading is to understand texts and their relation to readers' lives, I now believe that we should step back from the isolated instruction of strategies and invite our students to have more discussions about the meanings inherent in texts. When misunderstandings are brought to light through those conversations, teachers can then use *responsive curricula* to help students learn *fix-up strategies* that will address those in-the-moment confusions.

## Discussion of Metacognitive Reading Strategies

In examining the apprentice-teachers' sense of agency with regard to metacognitive reading strategies, I will consider productive acts of agency by several apprentice-teachers while also arguing that for the most part, the students didn't take up

strategies as mediational tools. I also revisit the *cultural process model of learning* (Gee, 2004b) as a classroom condition that facilitated positive agentic actions. I close this chapter with a brief discussion of what the pioneers in strategy instruction say now.

## Agentic Acts and the Role of Reading Strategies in The Apprentice-Teaching Project

In this section, I use abbreviated forms of two questions drawn from the framework for agency: *What acts of agency were exhibited?* and *What mediational tools were taken up by the apprentice teachers?*

**Displaying productive agentic actions while reading.** It is difficult to observe readers' agentic moves as they strive to comprehend what they are reading. Though meaning is constructed in light of the varied sociocultural contexts in which readers engage, the thinking of readers is often invisible to observers and occasionally to readers themselves. Over the course of the project, I was able to closely observe the reading of several students. In Round Four, Billy failed to note the humor inherent in the characters' misunderstandings about the football in *Kick, Pass, and Run* (Kessler, 1996); in Rounds Five and Six, LaToya did not appear to understand the significance of the characters' comments in *Finklehopper Frog* (Livingston, 2004) or the events in *Ker-Splalsh* (O'Connor, 2005). In contrast, Sanders, a non-focal student, was able to draw on his prior knowledge to understand the father's changing role in *The Sissy Duckling* (Fierstein, 2005). Johnston's (2004) work around students' sense of agency sheds light on these reading events. He argued that "when a learner has built a narrative around his unsuccessful experiences in literacy that puts him in a passive role, there is no responsibility for failure" (p. 38), while "children with a strong belief in their own agency

work harder, focus their attention better, are more interested in their studies, and are less likely to give up" when frustrated (pp. 40-41).

While all three students participated in The Apprentice-Teaching Project because they were identified as "struggling" readers, Sanders exhibited a sense of agency that neither Billy nor LaToya did. He recognized that he was "an actor" in his world (Holland et al., 1998) and was able to leverage his existing skills and sociocultural knowledge to make sense of the text he was reading. While there could be many reasons that neither Billy nor LaToya demonstrated an understanding of these books, I argue that one possible reason is that they had not yet developed a sense of agency regarding their reading processes. The Apprentice-Teaching Project was intentionally designed to foster students' positive agency; however, most of the students had not yet had enough experience to exert agency with regard to reading, and up to this point in their school careers, neither Billy nor LaToya had experienced teachers who had fostered that agency.

**Reading strategies were not consciously taken up as a mediational tool.** One component of agency is the use of mediational tools by which community members act upon their environment; metacognitive strategies could be viewed as potential mediational tools. I argue that though teachers at the school were attempting to teach students to use strategies as mediational tools, that instruction was divorced from "real world" reading tasks. Furthermore, direct strategy instruction may have limited students' sense of agency because their use was presented in a scripted and artificial way. As a result the students did not take up strategies as mediational tools, though some students did begin to use terms related to the strategies.

### Classroom Conditions: Revisiting the *Cultural Process Model* for Learning

Gee (2004b) argued for the *cultural process model* of learning, explaining that this model applies for tasks that are relatively specialized, such as literacy, and that require overt instruction and ongoing participation with other members of a community.

**Reading strategies were divorced from "real world" reading.** Explicit teaching of reading strategies has become so stilted that it has removed our students from the "club" (F. Smith, 1987) of literate people. Returning to Gee (1996, 2012), who asserted that master-apprentice relationships are part of the cultural process model, I argue that it is much more important for our students to feel that they belong to a passionate group of readers and writers, than it is to provide explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. As demonstrated by the ways in which the apprentice-teachers talked about reading strategies and my emerging understanding that many of them perceived the strategies as ends, rather than means, it is clear that strategy instruction is not helping many "struggling" readers improve their comprehension. Furthermore, such instruction may be distancing them from the "club" of active readers.

### What the Pioneers in Strategy Instruction Say Now

Recognizing that I am calling into question teaching practices presented in more than a dozen books and used for nearly two decades, and acknowledging that the hallmark of ethical researchers and teachers is to grow and change, I thought it fair to explore the more recently published comments of the original proponents of strategy instruction. My concerns about the ways in which strategy instruction was implemented in my own classroom and school community are echoed in the wider professional literature. Daniels (2011) described a 2009 meeting of some of the original staff

developers, teachers, and authors associated with the PEBC, saying that "people expressed a mixture of satisfaction, pride, surprise, and concern about the extent to which comprehension strategy instruction had become a national movement" and "wrung [their] hands over stories of 'strategies gone bad' – being taught for their own sake" (p. 6). In a similar vein, Thomas Newkirk, in the foreword of the second edition of *Mosaic of Thought* (Keene & Zimmermann, 2007) explained that "strategy instruction was never intended to be a complete reading program; it was part of a curriculum in which there should be extensive independent reading and regular opportunities to hear great literature read aloud – *for the sheer pleasure of it*. And they never – ever – saw using strategies as an *end in itself*" (p. xii, emphasis added). Keene (2008), in *To Understand*, explored what it means to understand something, and addressed some of the concerns I had about the apprentice-teachers perceiving strategies as an end. Finally, Harvey and Goudvis (2007) recognize some of the difficulties with explicit strategy instruction in the second edition of *Strategies that Work.*

**Closing Thoughts**

In this chapter, I presented a brief overview of the history of the research and instruction surrounding metacognitive reading strategies and explored the ways in which the apprentice-teachers used and failed to use these strategies throughout the project. I argued that the apprentice-teachers seemed to see the strategies as an *end*, something done after reading, rather than a *means*, a tool to help readers increase understanding. I presented cases in which students either brought or failed to bring a sense of agency to their reading tasks. One of my goals for this study was to identify ways to open spaces for school-identified "struggling" readers to engage productively and positively with school-

based literacy tasks. I argue that rather than opening spaces, the overt use of metacognitive strategies closed such spaces, removing joy from reading, taking students' attention away from the larger purposes for reading, and failing to induct them into the "literacy club."

In the next chapter I present the final mini-case study. Using data from reading assessments and interviews, an analysis of some of his written work, and a close look at his transmediation project, I introduce DeVontay and explore the impact of The Apprentice-Teaching Project for him.

CHAPTER TEN

MINI-CASE STUDY of DeVONTAY: IT WAS ALL ABOUT THE FIRST GRADERS

*I learned that if you're reading a book, and you don't show the kids the pictures, they're going to get mad.*

*[My student] liked [*Eddie Longpants*], because [Eddie] was tall, and he liked the pictures, and how it kind of rhymed, and the jokes in the story.*

*DeVontay, Rounds One and Six Debriefings*

**Figure 10.1 DeVontay Reading with his Students**

**Getting to Know DeVontay**

Because I'd built a rapport with DeVontay (Figure 10.1) when I'd been his fourth grade Title I intervention teacher, he was one of several students I hoped would be an apprentice-teacher when I began planning for the project. By the beginning of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, DeVontay, a fifth grader, had already been retained at least

once, was frequently in trouble, and struggled in all academic areas. He was also described as a "thug" by at least one staff member, because he walked around with "sagging pants" and often used a tone of voice that some perceived as disrespectful (3/11/09, AT Lesson 4 Field Notes, p. 5). In contrast, in The Apprentice-Teaching Project, he received compliments from the first grade teacher for his reading and interactions with students; she observed that DeVontay seemed to be more mature and acted like a different person in this environment compared to how he sometimes behaved when with his peers (3/11/09, AT Lesson 4 Field Notes, p. 5).

DeVontay's interest in being a role model for the first graders was apparent as early as Round One when he commented that reading to them was a good idea because they "look up to us" (11/20/08, Debrief Transcript 5N, p. 1). While DeVontay generally behaved in school-appropriate ways during apprentice-teaching activities, especially when the first graders were present, there were instances in which he made less appropriate choices. For example, as the project progressed, DeVontay wrote less and less on his lesson plans and reflections. However, for DeVontay, his Title I intervention time was all about the first graders. As the epigraphs for this chapter show, he was very interested in choosing books his students would enjoy and performing the read-aloud well.

In this mini-case study, I describe DeVontay's performance on beginning and ending of the year reading assessments and explore his perceptions of reading and himself as a reader. I also describe a series of "telling moments" which illuminate his varied identities as a "cool dude" with his peers, "pouter" when reprimanded, and "teacher" to the first grade students. Finally, I examine his transmediation and the oral

narrative that describes the transmediation project. Through this close examination of DeVontay's work and actions, I hope to understand how the project impacted a student who had been highly marginalized by the traditional literacy activities and assessments at our school.

## Reading Assessments

**Reading a-z level.** At the beginning of the school year, DeVontay's reading level on the Reading a-z Protocol (Holl, 2002) was two levels below that expected. It progressed one level, the expected rate, during the first semester and didn't improve during the second semester. He ended the year three levels below the grade-level expectation according to the Reading a-z Reading Level Protocol. While DeVontay's reading achievement, as measured by this assessment, did improve marginally during the course of the year, he ended the year further behind the district's expectations because the definition for proficiency had also increased, thus the gap between DeVontay's "level" and the expected level widened. DeVontay did not meet the school's goal of accelerated growth for "struggling" readers, because he didn't improve enough to close the gap between his and the expected performance.

**ARI comprehension and miscue assessment.** When completing *The Analytical Reading Inventory* (ARI; Woods & Moe, 2006) at the beginning of the year, DeVontay had a solid understanding of a fifth-grade passage, answering all eight of the comprehension questions with confidence. However, he struggled with word recognition, reading with an accuracy rate of 96% (instructional level). While he made eight self-corrections, demonstrating that he was monitoring for meaning and syntax (the sound and grammar of English), the high rate of self-corrected miscues slowed his pace, making the

reading feel laborious (and decreasing the likelihood of solid comprehension). On one notable miscue, he initially read /sensational/ as /scientist/ (which has the benefit of being an actual word), revised this to /sen-sen/ (a non-word), and then read the word correctly (indicating that he was both familiar with the word sensational and understood the context of the sentence). When reading a sixth-grade passage, DeVontay struggled significantly with understanding and word recognition. He answered just four-and-a-half of the eight comprehension questions correctly, with significant difficulties with inferential understanding. Though his overall rate of miscues placed this passage between an independent and instructional level for him, DeVontay had 11 self-corrections. The process of mis-reading and then self-correcting himself required significant processing at the level of individual words, reducing the attention that DeVontay could give to the ideas conveyed in the text, thus hindering his overall comprehension. It is important to note DeVontay's patterns of self-corrections at the beginning of the year indicated his understanding that reading should be meaningful. The large number of self-corrections demonstrated that he was monitoring for meaning, syntax, and letter/sound correspondences (graphophonics). While too many miscues and self-corrections interrupt the flow of reading and can detract from the overall level of understanding, DeVontay's effort and perseverance in making multiple self-corrections was a reading strength.

DeVontay's oral reading and comprehension continued to show complex patterns at the end of the year. I first asked him to read an ARI passage at the sixth grade level, on which he answered just three of eight comprehension questions correctly (frustrational level) but scored at the instructional level (96%) for word recognition; these contradictory results indicated that though he was able to pronounce the majority of the words, he did

not understand the concepts presented in the narrative biography. In contrast, when reading both seventh- and eighth-grade passages, he easily understood the texts, scoring at the independent level for comprehension (answering eight and seven questions correctly respectively) and reading at about the instructional level based on word recognition (95% and 96% respectively).

In examining DeVontay's level of comprehension on the three ARI passages, it is important to note that while the sixth-grade passage was a biography of a surgeon who passed away in 1950, both the seventh- and eighth-grade passages were about boys in realistic, school and community-based settings. It is logical to infer that DeVontay's improved comprehension on these ostensibly more difficult passages occurred because he was able to relate to the characters in the texts. It should also be noted that the official procedures for the ARI indicated that I should have stopped the assessment after DeVontay scored at the frustrational level on the sixth grade passage; if I had followed the specified procedures, I would have lost valuable data about DeVontay's reading capability.

In summary, the ARI assessments indicated that DeVontay was "on grade-level" at the beginning of the year and "above grade-level" at the end of the year. In contrast, he appeared to be below grade-level on the Reading a-z assessments, regardless of when they were administered. It is significant that the context and topic of the assessment passages made a difference; when the texts were within DeVontay's range of experience and interest, he did very well, but when he wasn't interested or didn't have prior experiences to draw on, his comprehension suffered dramatically.

### Burke and ARI Reader Interviews

In this section I discuss DeVontay's perceptions about reading and his opinion about The Apprentice-Teaching Project using his responses on the Burke Reading Interview (BRI; Y. Goodman et al., 1987) and the interview portion of the *Analytical Reading Inventory*. Near the beginning of the project, DeVontay said "I think I'm [a better reader] than I was last year. I read a little more, I read faster, and I know lots of words" (10/21/08, BRI). Similarly, on the ARI question about what he did well as a reader, he said, "I take my time. I don't just speed through it and skip words," and reading "makes me feel kind of good from last year. I was skipping and giving up. Now I…" (and his response trailed off with no specific example of his reading behavior now; 10/21/08, ARI interview). During these beginning of the year interviews, DeVontay also seemed confident about his ability to help others read, saying that he'd help them "break down the word, and see if there's a word in the word, like *be* or *like*. Sound it out and put it together to see what the word makes" (10/20/08, BRI).

In contrast to the early part of the year, DeVontay generally seemed to have less confidence about reading by the end of the year. In May, when I asked if he was a good reader, his response was contradictory. He began by saying "Not really…but, I think yeah, a little bit." To support his initial stance that he was not a good reader, he said, "because I know certain words, but then not other words. When I see a word, I don't practice, or say it over and over." To support his opinion that he might be a good reader, he said, "When I read a word, I know it, next time I see it, I remember it. But if it's a big word, I won't remember it" (5/12/09, BRI).

DeVontay's comments about "knowing words" seemed to indicate less confidence at the end of the year, but his responses about how reading made him feel seemed to demonstrate a more positive affect toward reading. When I asked how reading made him feel he said he would "just read, and then [he'd] start to get into it" (5/13/09, ARI interview), which seemed to indicate that if he read enough he'd begin to feel good about reading. He would read "something over and over, faster and faster, [staying] on a steady pace" and think about the "sound of reading;" then reading "[got] more interesting, like to do a voice," and "I concentrate on how fast [I read], so it sounds good" (5/13/09, ARI interview).

DeVontay's responses about helping others changed markedly from the beginning to the end of the year also. While his early responses had included specific suggestions about decoding words, by the end of the year he simply said that he'd help others by teaching "them how to pronounce the word." When prompted for more, he replied in a frustrated tone, "Help them sound it out. Or if I don't know it, I don't know it" (5/12/09, BRI).

DeVontay's emphasis on figuring out and *knowing words* demonstrates a striking emphasis on the word-based view of reading. His comments indicated that he believed his reading proficiency was determined by his ability to accurately decode, pronounce, and remember words. His belief about the importance of fluency was revealed by his sense of success when describing his ability to "do a voice" and read at a steady pace. It is important to note that DeVontay's reflections about his strengths and weaknesses as a reader completely disregard his ability to understand more advanced texts (those from seventh and eighth-grade textbooks) when they *focused on characters with whom he*

*could relate*. DeVontay's level of comprehension was strongly influenced by the context of the text, but his beliefs about successful reading focused nearly exclusively on accuracy and fluency, disregarding his own understanding of the texts.

**A Telling Moment: Chillin', Pouting, Teaching**

My most vivid memory of DeVontay came during Round Three. His behavior seemed to "flip on a dime" from chillin' with his friends, to pouting at his teacher, and finally to teaching his students. The first graders did not arrive for Lesson 3 at the scheduled time, and the apprentice-teachers found themselves at loose ends. In the course of the eight-minute delay, DeVontay went through several rapid transformations. After waiting for just a few minutes, I noticed that he was chasing another apprentice-teacher, Aureesha, and throwing pillows at her. When I chastised him and told him that he needed to read while he waited, he draped himself across several chairs, blocking access to the shelves of picture books. When I further reprimanded him and told him to allow others to get books from the shelves, he left Room 25 and returned to his homeroom. After a few moments, I followed him, rubbed his back, and gently reminded him that his students would be counting on him. He soon returned to Room 25 and taught his first grade students. As soon as the first graders walked into our room, his entire demeanor changed. Instead of showing the slouched body and pouting face, he stood straight, greeted his student, and began introducing the book and reading the story, demonstrating great maturity.

In this rapid sequence, DeVontay showed how quickly his actions could shift from one moment to the next. First he seemed to be actively resisting school-sanctioned literacies; rather than reading calmly or making final preparations for his lesson, he

pursued a natural leisure activity for a young man – chillin' with his friends. Next, when chastised, he visibly drooped and acted hurt, showing an overt withdrawal from the learning community – pouting toward his teacher and leaving the room. Finally, he appeared to be fully engaged as soon as the first graders arrived at our room; he actively greeted his student and conducted his lesson – enacting his role as a model and teacher. This quick shift in demeanor and behavior was consistent with DeVontay's behavior during other parts of his school day. He was often "caught" making school-defined poor choices (not working, expressing aggressive frustration, or distracting classmates) and expressing his frustration in ways that led to further negative consequences (losing privileges, being sent from the room, etc.) In this case, his strong desire to be a role model for his first grade students seemed to facilitate his re-entry into school-sanctioned literacy events.

## DeVontay's Transmediation and Narrative

DeVontay struggled to engage in productive work during the class periods devoted to the transmediation projects. As a result, when we ran out of time, he felt that his project wasn't yet complete, though he did consent to discuss it during our narrative interview.

**DeVontay's transmediation.** DeVontay's transmediation project (Figure 10.2) was created using a large (22"x28"), blue poster board. The center of attention is a large, metallic silver "R." Directly above the "R" is a heading with the word "Sport" in an oval frame drawn with three finger or toe shapes on the left and right sides. The lower third of the canvas is bare except for a red and black plaid ribbon that forms a border along the bottom and top. On the left side, entering both the top and bottom quadrants, DeVontay

has written the sentence “Sports is for speeds, fluency and paste [pace].” It is striking that in a sentence ostensibly about sports, he used the word fluency, which is more generally associated with reading. In the top, left quadrant DeVontay placed an image of an Air Jordan basketball tennis shoe and a red dollar sign; in the top, right quadrant, he placed three plastic leaves connected by stems and a black dollar sign. Finally, he trimmed off the corners of the poster board, giving the canvas a rounded appearance.

**Figure 10.2 DeVontay’s Transmediation**

DeVontay’s project had a distinct horizontal layout, a sense felt more strongly because the lower third is nearly bare. Following Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) theory, I “read” this visual text from left to right – given information to new information.

The dominant image on the left is the shoe, leading to the possible inference that DeVontay sees basketball and stardom (i.e. Michael Jordan) as a given. It is more difficult to interpret the leaves on the right side, though their connection to nature seems clear. If the leaves can be seen to represent aesthetics and emotion, then it may be possible to interpret the leaves as a representation of DeVontay's emerging understanding of the ways in which fluency and expressive reading can increase one's enjoyment of reading.

Reading DeVontay's transmediation along the vertical axis can yield at least three interpretations. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explained that the information in the bottom of a visual text represents the "what is" or current, real situation and the top section gives the "what might be" or ideal vision (p. 186). DeVontay included virtually nothing in the bottom of his canvas (just a portion of the sentence "sports is for speeds, fluency, and [pace]). In contrast he placed the "R," which I assumed stood for reading or reader, the shoe, the leaves, and the dollar sign all in the top, or ideal, quadrants of the transmediation. The contrast between the emptiness of the lower section and the variety of images in the top is striking, especially considering that when DeVontay was working on the transmediation project he had just finished two frustrating rounds of high-stakes tests, during which he had simply put his head down and hoodie up, refusing to complete the tests. In light of Kress and van Leeuwen's framework and my knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the creating of the transmediation, I made the possible interpretation that DeVontay saw himself or his current situation as "nothing," given that the tests may well have added to his sense that his knowledge and skills had little value.

A second, contrasting interpretation is also possible if one reads the vertical axis as a progression toward reality. In this case, the emptiness in the lower quadrants can be interpreted as representing where DeVontay was in the past, and the journey to the upper quadrants bringing the reader/viewer closer to DeVontay's current reality. The shoe, leaves, and dollar sign can all be interpreted in hopeful ways, leading to the possible conclusion that he sees himself moving toward the reality that his reading is better now. This interpretation is corroborated by comments he made on his early Burke and ARI interviews about his reading in fifth grade being better than it was in the previous year.

Finally, a third explanation of the emptiness at the bottom of his canvas relates to the lack of appealing magazine images. DeVontay was very aggravated when he saw a transmediation made by an apprentice-teacher in another class. That young man had brought copies of *Sports Illustrated* that he'd had at home; thus he had far more access to illustrations of high-status shoes and sports equipment than were available in the teacher-donated magazines (mostly *Good Housekeeping* and *Midwest Living*) that I'd made available in class. He initially assumed that I'd purchased the copies of *Sports Illustrated* but not saved any for him, but was slightly mollified when I explained that the other student had brought his own magazines to school. Though there are numerous ways to interpret his transmediation using visual analysis, the explanation could simply be that he felt no personal connections with the images in the teacher-donated magazines.

Albers' (2007) framework for Visual Discourse Analysis outlines six dimensions through which visual texts are analyzed, of which one is *Discourses*. The most easily interpreted images on DeVontay's canvas, the shoe, dollar signs, and title, seem to indicate that he associates with a Discourse of the Sports Aficionado and participant.

Likewise, he appears to be conscious of status (Air Jordans are high-status shoes among the guys at Oakdale Elementary) and the need to have money in order to be a member of the high-status club. Though the dominant Discourse represented in DeVontay's transmediation is sports, the central positioning of the "R" points to his potential membership in the Discourse of Readers.

In contrast to Billy's and Salenia's transmediation projects, the appearance of DeVontay's transmediation seems to demonstrate less *social acceptability* (Albers, 2007). Rather than using his class time primarily on school-defined productive work, DeVontay had chatted and argued with another apprentice-teacher, adding to the sense that he could have done more; as a teacher, it's very difficult to separate the evaluation of the physical product with the process of doing the work. Visually, the disparate images and empty space at the bottom of the canvas give the project a half-completed feel. Likewise, the lack of characters made it difficult for me (as one viewer) to understand how the transmediation told about The Apprentice-Teaching Project or reading. Finally, there is no apparent reference to reading, students, or books, except for the large "R" in the center of the image.

**DeVontay's interview and narrative**. While DeVontay's physical transmediation seemed to have less apparent *social acceptability* than any of the other apprentice-teachers', his narrative (Figure 10.3) had far more acceptability, due to its length (361 words) and use of "readerly" and "teacherly" language. It was striking, though, that when I first asked him to do the interview, he muttered that he wasn't done with the transmediation and needed more time. With some grumbling, he finally started to tell me about his canvas (5/22/09, transmediation interview audio recording).

My transmediation is about sports. Sports is about speed, fluency, and pace. It helps how your reading is and how it sounds. It helps you sound out bigger words.

From the apprentice teaching project, it helped little kids learn how to read and helped me learn how to read. It helped me by, because every time I chose the book, I practiced reading it and I read books that I didn't think I would read. I read books that I didn't think I'd read. I didn't think I'd be interested, but then I read the books and I started to get interested. It helped all of us that was reading, because it helped us on the way we read and the way we expressed the books. Like the way it sounded and the way we expressed it. Then we liked the book and we helped other people like the book, from the way we expressed it.

I have some shoes on my transmediation, for the length of how you read, and how you read, and why. Then I got an R on there, for Reader, or for Reading. R stands for two words – read and write. Then, the flower – it shows how you express it. Like when you're reading a book, sometimes it can be a happy book or a sad one, a good book or a bad one. The flower shows how you express your feelings and how you feel about the book.

Then, these dollar signs, the Ss at the top stand for – I don't know, for the style. I got the ribbon on the bottom that shows that reading is a good thing. But I don't like reading.

You need reading though, so when you get older and you need a job and you fill out an application, it's going to help you on your reading and your style. Then, when you grow in your reading and you increase and you end up using bigger words and knowing how to spell and say bigger words, then you can read bigger words.

If you come across a word you don't know, you can ask someone or break it down.

**Figure 10.3 DeVontay's Transmediation Narrative**

Just as a main visual feature of DeVontay's canvas was the word "sports" positioned as a heading or title, the first sentence in the narrative was, "My transmediation is about sports." However, the vast majority of the narrative was not about

sports, but about reading. A word-count analysis is instructive (Figure 10.4) in determining DeVontay's key themes. Though the full narrative was 361 words long, I deleted 155 articles, conjunctions, prepositions, and pronouns, leaving 206 words for analysis. Words that had to do with reading (variations of read, book, and word) accounted for 19.4% of the analyzed text, while variations of the word sport (including shoes) accounted for just 1.5% of the analyzed text. Throughout the narrative, DeVontay used the Discourse of a Reading Scholar (or teacher of reading) 17 times, explaining that good expression and practice are important, readers figure out unknown words, and sometimes one might become interested in unexpected books. In contrast, he used the Discourse of Not-a-Reader just once, when he explained that the ribbons represented that reading is a good thing, but "I don't like reading."

transmediation is *sports*. *Sports* is speed, fluency, pace. helps how reading is how sounds. helps sound out bigger ***words***.

apprentice teaching project, helped little kids learn how read helped learn how read. helped, every time chose **book**, practiced reading read **books** didn't think would read. read **books** didn't think would read. didn't think 'd be interested, then read **books** started get interested. helped all was reading, helped way read way expressed **books**. Like way sounded way expressed. Then liked **book** helped other people like **book**, way expressed.

have some *shoes* transmediation, length how read, how read, why. Then got R there, Reader, Reading. R stands two ***words*** – read write. Then, flower –shows how express. Like when are reading **book**, sometimes can be happy **book** sad one, good **book** bad one. flower shows how express feelings how feel about **book**.

Then, dollar signs, Ss top stand – don't know, style. got ribbon bottom shows reading is good thing. don't like reading.

need reading, so when get older need job fill out application, is going help reading style. Then, when grow reading increase end up using bigger ***words*** knowing how spell say bigger ***words***, then can read bigger ***words***.

come across ***word*** don't know, can ask someone break down.

**Word/Concept Analysis**

Full passage = 361 words;
Words cut = 155
Analyzed passage = 206 words

Read: read, reader, reading
23 incidences= (11.2%)

**Book**: book, books
11 incidences= (5.3%)

***Word***: word, words
6 incidences = (2.9%)

19.4% of words = reading related

*Sport*: sport, sports, shoes
3 incidences= (1.5%)

___ = Discourse of Scholar
(17 incidences, (with duplicates omitted)

[ ] = Discourse of Non-Reader
(1 incident)

**Figure 10.4 Word and Concept Analysis of DeVontay's Transmediation Narrative**

DeVontay used two extended metaphors in his narrative: one about the relationship between sports and reading fluency, and the other about the relationship between flowers (leaves) and enjoying reading when using good oral expression. The casual reader of his visual text would probably discern the first metaphor because DeVontay wrote the sentence, “Sports is about speeds, fluency, and [pace]” on his canvas. During the interview, he added the explanation that “It helps how your reading is and how it sounds.” Though the pronoun referent for “it” was unclear, DeVontay seemed to be saying that reading more helped him improve. In the third paragraph DeVontay used another metaphor to explain how the leaves (which he called a flower) symbolized the ways in which one expressively reads happy or sad books, and the fact that the way one reads a book conveys one’s feelings about the text. The evidence of the visual and narrative components of the transmediation give weight to the interpretation that DeVontay was connecting sports and reading, even though these don’t intuitively seem to be linked.

DeVontay’s narrative also gave an unequivocal endorsement of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, saying that it helped both him and the younger students. He explained that in the course of the project he practiced reading, thus improving his fluency; read with expression; and chose books that he didn’t think he’d be interested in. He concluded by saying that he liked “the book” and helped other people like it too. This is a powerful statement about the benefits of reading from a student who refused to take most of the end-of-year standardized tests (5/27/09, field notes).

In conclusion, the visual analysis of DeVontay’s transmediation coupled with his scholarly narrative about the project overwhelmingly support the efficacy of The

Apprentice-Teaching Project for him. His current reality, as conveyed in the upper quadrants of the transmediation, revealed an attempt to bridge the gap between the socially acceptable activities of sports and fashion ("style," as represented by the shoe and dollar sign) and the expectations for school-defined success in literacy activities (the leaf, representing oral reading expression). DeVontay was very aware of his family's expectations that he read well so that he could get a good job. At the same time, he was cognizant of the value his peers placed on high-status objects such as shoes, music, and stylish accessories (i.e. necklaces with dollar signs). Finally, he understood through multiple negative experiences with school-sanctioned literacy events (grade-level assignments, high-stakes tests) that his reading skills were often insufficient. DeVontay's transmediation seems to convey an attempt to use sports as a metaphor to help him build a bridge from the social conventions for African-American guys to the somewhat more socially risky role of leader and model for younger students through teaching and reading.

**Should The Apprentice-Teaching Project be Continued?**

As with the other apprentice-teachers, DeVontay indicated on both his transmediation narrative and in the concluding reading interviews that he thought the project should be continued. He thought it helped the younger students because they "liked the book you got and then they remembered it." He thought it helped the apprentice-teachers because it "helps [us] on the way [we] read and figure out words. We practice and read one or two times. We know words because we practiced" (5/12/09, BRI). DeVontay also shared Salenia's recognition that the first graders could help the older students, because "some of them know the words, and if I miss or skip one, they tell

you" (5/12/09, BRI). In light of DeVontay's comments in his transmediation narrative and during the debriefing conversations for each lesson, it is logical to infer that The Apprentice-Teaching Project was beneficial for DeVontay in two ways. First, as an apprentice-teacher, preparing for his lessons provided authentic reasons for him to practice reading; in addition the first graders were able to help him identify words. A second, though less obvious reason, was that as an apprentice-teacher, DeVontay had a valuable avenue for being a school leader – one he was often denied, given his reputation as a "thug" among some school personnel.

**Reflections about DeVontay**

DeVontay was one of the students I specifically requested for The Apprentice-Teaching Project, because I'd developed rapport with him as his fourth grade intervention teacher. As an African-American boy who had already been retained at least once, I knew that his school trajectory was fragile. I had high hopes for his academic self-esteem as a result of participation in this project.

DeVontay's school experiences starkly affirm Ferguson's (2000) work with African-American youth in urban schools – research which helped me, as a White, middle-class teacher understand DeVontay's actions in a very different light. She wrote that "in school, routine practices of classification, the ranking of academic performance …, the distribution of rewards and punishment construct the 'truth' of who we are" (p. 53). DeVontay received different messages of "truth" in different arenas of his life. From his family, he heard that reading and a good job were important; from the media, he understood that sports and high-status objects were appealing; from most of the school

community, he received messages of failure; and from his first grade students, he recognized messages of affirmation and proficiency.

At the beginning of this project, when DeVontay entered fifth grade, he seemed to share my confidence and hopes. His responses on his reading interviews showed that he felt more skilled than he thought he'd been as a fourth grader. However, a number of unfortunate factors converged to undermine DeVontay's fifth grade year. First, DeVontay's initial fifth-grade teacher was replaced in December (her spouse transferred), leading to a potential sense of abandonment on DeVontay's part. Second, he frequently received messages of failure and incompetence through low test scores and poor grades on class assignments. Finally, he received an increasing number of discipline referrals as the year progressed, and he missed more school, including nearly all of Round Five, as a result of school and bus suspensions. While most of DeVontay's school-defined misbehavior prior to spring break took place in non-apprentice-teaching settings, the fourth quarter saw an increase in his negative behaviors during apprentice-teaching activities, as noted in the "telling moment" when he was chasing Aureesha and during the closing activities when he didn't work consistently on his transmediation.

In contrast to the negative moments in DeVontay's school day, there is evidence that he valued his status as a role model for the first graders. During the debriefing of Round One, he said that reading to the first graders was a good idea because one day they'd look up to the apprentice-teachers. Also, the way that his behavior shifted moment-to-moment during Round Three (as described in the "telling moment" section) seems to indicate that he valued his role as a teacher.

Unfortunately, these bright moments may not have been enough to offset the daily negative messages DeVontay was receiving. Participating in The Apprentice-Teaching Project (one week out of three, seven rounds in seven months) wasn't enough to offset the weight of evidence and experience that led to a perception that "you can't do this, you're a failure," as represented by the blank spaces on the lower quadrants of DeVontay's transmediation.

Ferguson (2000) described two ways in which African-American males tend to be depicted in the United States today: the criminal and an endangered species (p. 20). Just as Ferguson opened her book, *Bad Boys*, with an anecdote about a school administrator pointing to a student and commenting, "That one has a jail-cell with his name on it" (p. 1), I'd heard another teacher at my school describe DeVontay as a "thug." In this sense, he certainly fit the societal depiction of *criminal*. On the other hand, I saw him as a member of an *endangered species*; just as efforts to help endangered animals are impacted by competing interests, my attempt to "save" DeVontay through The Apprentice-Teaching Project was impacted by many societal and school conditions that were outside my sphere of influence.

## Discussion

While Ferguson's (2000) work provides one lens through which to view DeVontay's experiences, it is also helpful to examine them in light of the broader body of work on which this study is based. The sociocultural perspective of literacy sheds light on the fallacy of assigning "grade-level" designations for texts, and recognition of the social identities and power relations underlying DeVontay's various agentic acts can help teachers and researchers view those acts in more productive ways.

## Sociocultural View of Literacy

Given that proponents of the sociocultural perspective on literacy assert that "meaning in language is tied to people's experiences of situated action in the material and social world" (Gee, 2001, p. 715), it seems clear that readers' understanding of texts would likewise be impacted by their experiences with the texts' topics. DeVontay's seemingly inconsistent performance on the ARI and Reading a-z assessments illuminates my concerns with the arbitrary nature of "leveling" texts.

**Arbitrary leveling of texts**. DeVontay's performance on the reading tasks he did as part of *The Analytical Reading Inventory* contradicted his performance on the Reading a-z Level assessment used by his classroom teacher. In my reflections about DeVontay, I noted that while he successfully read ARI passages that were judged to be at the eighth grade level, he struggled significantly with Reading a-z and ARI passages rated at fifth and sixth-grade difficulty; I argue that this range of performance could be due to his level of background knowledge about the topics addressed by the texts and his level of engagement while reading. Such sociocultural factors are often not addressed when educators and publishers choose texts to align with the Common Core State Standards. It is striking that the standards' authors actually say, "preference should likely be given to qualitative measures of text complexity when evaluating narrative fiction intended for students in grade 6 and above" (Core, 2014b, p. 8); likewise Appendix A of the Common Core Standards outlines three dimensions to consider when choosing texts, including qualitative, quantitative, and reading and task considerations. However, critics of the Common Core Standards are concerned that quantitative factors (i.e. sentence and word length) are being privileged over qualitative factors (i.e. readers' experiences, level of

abstraction, emotional load; Hiebert & Mesmer, 2013). DeVontay's experiences with the texts used in these reading assessments provided a stark reminder of the need to consider sociocultural factors when choosing texts, rather than assigning levels simply on the basis of number of syllables and sentence length.

**Acts of Agency by DeVontay**

Ahearn (2001) suggested that "a nuanced understanding of the *multiplicity of motivations* behind all human actions should be at the core of our definition of agency" (p. 116, italics added), just as Lalu (2000) asserted that we should look at agency "in ways other than in terms of the *autonomous subject*" (p. 49, italics added). Drawing on the definition I put forth in Chapter Two, I understand agency to be the ways in ways in which people work within their contexts to *position themselves* to allow for the *making and remaking of identities*. Thus, "social identities are…constructed through the interactions people have with each other" (Bloome et al., 2005, p. 101), and it is crucial to consider the social context and other participants present when attempting to understand agentic acts. While an individual may be performing the act, his or her *motivations* are influenced by the power relations circulating in the setting. DeVontay's actions, as described in the "telling moment," illuminated the range of ways in which agency can be expressed in a very short period, thus my description that his behavior "flipped on a dime." Because these acts of agency illustrate the *multiplicity of motivations* at work in each school encounter, they can be mined for rich insights about the ways such acts are characterized by others, possible consequences, and classroom conditions to support school-productive agency.

**Characterizing DeVontay's agentic acts.** As described in the "telling moments," DeVontay went through several rapid behavioral transformations while waiting for the first graders to arrive for Lesson 3. When I turned from looking down the hallway and saw DeVontay chasing and throwing pillows at Aureesha, my immediate reaction was to characterize his actions as *goofing off* or *flirting*. Though I saw this extra time as an opportunity for the apprentice-teachers to continue to prepare for Lesson 3, DeVontay may have believed that there was no need to perform as a *serious student* since the first graders weren't yet in the room. Using this time to be a *cool dude* or *relaxing kid* probably made sense to him. After I scolded him and he physically left the room, I characterized his actions as *resistant*, though he might have perceived them as *saving face*. It is only when he returned to the room and performed as I expected him to that our possible perceptions of his roles may have converged with descriptions of *responsible student* or *teacher*.

As previously noted, people *will* behave in agentic ways; as a teacher I hope to understand the beliefs and motives underlying my students' acts of agency in order to better understand how to create conditions which will foster school-productive agency. It is important to recognize that I might characterize students' agentic acts differently than others, and that our relative positions and goals will impact the ways in which agency is described and defined.

**Examining the social identities underlying DeVontay's actions.** While the term *social identity* is sometimes thought of as membership in a particular group, or the enactment of a specific persona, such as *teacher's pet*, I use it as Bloome et al. (2005) define it: descriptions of "subtle, situated, and dynamic social relationships" (p. 101). I

hesitate to name or label any of these social identities because doing so implies a “sense of permanence” (Bloome et al., 2005, p. 104) which certainly wasn’t the case as DeVontay performed several social identities in quick succession during the events described in his “telling moments.”

Though I generally used the language of mentorship with my students, I changed the dynamic when I chastised DeVontay; the way in which the arrival of the first graders acted as a fulcrum in this series of events was striking. Prior to their arrival, we can envision DeVontay on the lower end of a playground see-saw: he enacted the *social identities* of *clown* and *flirt*. He was “chillin’ with his friend.” In the middle scene, when he flounced out of the room, he had been reprimanded twice in a row, and perhaps embarrassed in front of his peers. In both these cases, I infer that my reactions reminded DeVontay dramatically that he didn’t actually hold much power, so his *social identity* became *aggrieved student*. After the first graders arrived, his position on the see-saw shifted to the upper end, and he was able to enact the *identities* of *teacher* and *expert*. His ideas were listened to with respect and, thus, he engaged in a mature, thoughtful way in the apprentice-teaching activity. Moje and Lewis (2007) argued that we “need to focus on how identities are *shaped by* and *shaping of* social and cultural contexts” (p. 6; italics added). In retrospect, I recognize the way in which my use of the language of chastisement shaped DeVontay’s reactions (to leave the room for a few minutes), just as his choice to return with a *teacherly* demeanor then shaped his apprentice-teaching context. This anecdote supports the assertion by Bloome et al. (2005) that “students can be positioned in various ways through language” (p. 139).

**Examining the power relations in play during DeVontay's actions.** In attempting to understand students' acts of agency, it is important to consider how those acts are characterized and the social identities enacted by the actors; in addition, it is crucial to consider the ways in which power moves among the various actors in a given context. In each apprentice-teaching situation, the power dynamics shifted according to the particular combination of apprentice-teachers, first graders, and adults present at the time (Foucault, 1978/1990). While most of the apprentice-teachers could generally be described as *good students* and even *teacher pleasers*, DeVontay and a few other apprentice-teachers occasionally carried their less school-acceptable behaviors into the apprentice-teaching activities. These included performances as *tough guys* who participated in "trash talk" and failed to complete their work. During the "free time" before the first graders came, DeVontay may have been vying for high social status in the "tough guy" group by flirting with Aureesha; however, when I reprimanded him, it may have felt dangerous for DeVontay to begin to act in teacher-acceptable ways, because a member of the *tough guy* group was present (Ferguson, 2000). In contrast, when the first graders came, he gained more power as a *responsible teacher* than he would have had as a *tough guy*. DeVontay's "telling moments" richly illustrate the notion that "social identities evolve and can be contested within and across events" (Bloome et al., 2005, p. 139).

## Closing Thoughts

In Chapters Six, Eight, and Ten, I've presented mini-case studies of Salenia, Billy, and DeVontay using data from their reading assessments, interviews, transmediation projects, and field notes. Each apprentice-teacher shed light on a different

aspect of the sociocultural perspective on literacy and agency. Salenia demonstrated that ongoing practice was important, with the implicit understanding that such practice be accomplished in the context of meaningful activity. I argued that Billy's actions appeared to be resistant because his definition of productive literacy differed from mine; he needed literate activities that were "real work" and accomplished actual tasks, such as learning or teaching. Finally, DeVontay demonstrated that far more was occurring in his head than was exhibited in his class work, and that even when one portion of a school experience is productive and valuable, it may not be enough to maintain interest across the breadth of the school day and year. Within this nuanced understanding of each focal student, I also discussed larger implications for our ongoing work with readers at a time when educational policy is calling for increasing standardization (i.e. the Common Core State Standards) and accountability in the form of high-stakes tests. These implications include the importance of the "social" in the sociocultural view of literacy, students' purposes for reading, the pervasive nature of the word-based view of reading, and the arbitrary nature of the leveling of texts.

Just as in Chapter Nine I explored a single theme, metacognitive reading strategies, I'll follow a similar pattern in the next chapter. Using data from across The Apprentice-Teaching Project, and relating to the six focal students, I'll explore the factors that fostered engaged reading among the apprentice-teachers.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## FACTORS THAT FOSTERED ENGAGED READING

*Like, reading starts to become relaxing to me, because, like, I get really into a book. I get to read, and then I'll know everything, exactly what happened. As long as I like the book, and I get really into it, and then I really like it.*

*-Salenia, Round 5 Debrief*

*Reading can be fun. If you pick a book that you like, and not one that was chosen for you.*

*-Aureesha, Round 6 Debrief*

The value of reading, writing, and other literate activities is widely recognized. Krashen (1993) reported that "more reading [resulted] in better reading, comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling, and grammatical development" (p. 12). Beyond this improvement of academic skills, increased reading has also been associated with the development of empathy (Chiaet, 2013) and an ability to critically examine the world (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2012). Though teachers and researchers agree that our students need to choose to join the "literacy club" and develop the habits of engaged reading, we also know that simply telling them to read more hasn't worked. Many students may not perceive value in literate activities or have not found intrinsic satisfaction from reading and talking about books. This study of the apprentice-teachers' experiences sheds light on ways we can increase the likelihood that our students will choose to *enter the curriculum* and participate in school-based literacy practices.

As an avid reader, I engage in the Discourse of Reader and demonstrate traits other avid readers would recognize. Miller and Kelley (2014) use the term "wild" readers

to describe those who have taken on the Discourse of Reader and identified five traits that "wild" readers share. Wild readers dedicate time to read; self-select reading material; share books and reading with other readers; have reading plans; and show preferences for genres, authors, and topics. School-defined "struggling" readers often haven't assumed these behaviors, though studies have identified activities that look very similar to those of "wild" readers as tools to help less-than-proficient readers improve.

## What "Struggling" Readers Need: Books, Time, and Social Interactions

As students identified by the school as "struggling," the apprentice-teachers needed multiple opportunities to engage in school-based literacy practices. Common elements which help readers improve include reading extensively, having access to interesting books and time to read them, multiple opportunities to become fluent, and engagements in thoughtful literacy (Allington, 2006; Gallagher, 2009). Allington (2006) defined thoughtful literacy as the type of conversation, problem-solving, and evaluation that happens when several people have read the same text. Finally, Ivey and Johnston (2013, p. 271) found that "social activity" during which students developed dialogical relationships with characters, peers, and themselves "was central to engaged reading." The Apprentice-Teaching Project provided the participants with all these opportunities. During the preparation phase, they read widely, talked about books with their peers, evaluated books, and made their final selections. They finished their preparation by reading their chosen books several times to develop fluency. Finally, they talked about the books with their first graders and continued thoughtful literacy practices during debriefing conversations.

### Engaged and Disengaged Reading in The Apprentice-Teaching Project

While the apprentice-teachers did not begin the year as members of the "reading club" (F. Smith, 1987), and certainly hadn't yet assumed the Discourse of Reader, they occasionally demonstrated engaged reading. As they gained experience in their apprentice-teaching roles, I saw engaged reading more often, as seen in Figures 11.1 through 11.3. All the apprentice-teachers and most of the students were so engaged with the stories that they seemed oblivious to the photographer.

LaToya (Figure 11.1) is grinning and pointing at the page while both her students lean in eagerly to read and listen. She also received compliments from the first grade teacher, who commented that LaToya had good interactions with her students, great expression when reading aloud, and was one of her favorite students to listen to (3/11/09, AT Lesson 4 Field Notes, p. 5).

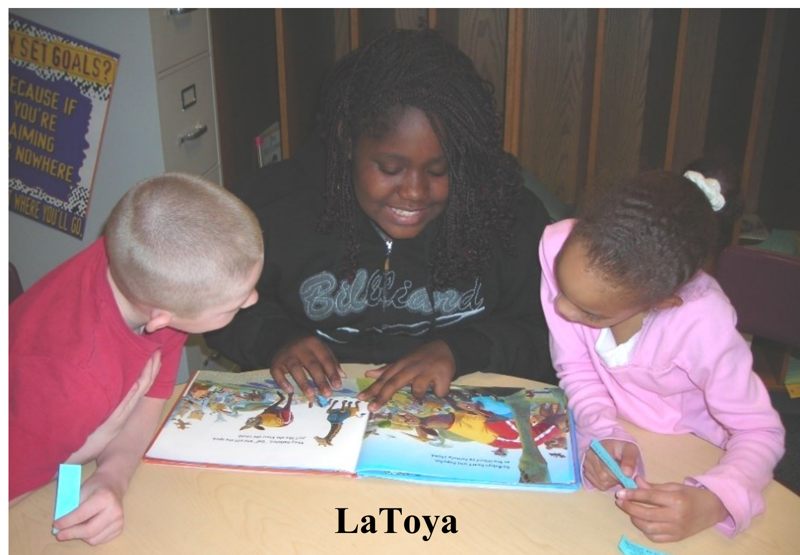


**Figure 11.1 LaToya and her Students Engaged in Reading**

Salenia (Figure 11.2) has her eyes focused on the text, is holding her book at an angle that is conducive to focusing on the print, and will shortly turn her book to show

her students the illustrations. Salenia explained a form of engaged reading in the epigraph for this chapter: when she likes a book, she can really get into it.

**Figure 11.2  Salenia and her Students Engaged in Reading**

Aureesha (Figure 11.3) has chosen to sit so her students can see the illustrations as she reads and is concentrating on fluent reading. She explained that picking one's own book is an important element of engaged reading.

**Figure 11.3  Aureesha and her Students Engaged in Reading**

In addition to what is visible in Figures 11.1 through 11.3, there are other observed behaviors that demonstrate engaged or disengaged reading, some of which I noted in my field notes:

> I was struck by the focus of [the apprentice-teachers] as they read …with [other apprentice-teachers.] In general, I saw involvement from the partner reader/listener, and efforts to self-correct miscues and make sentences sound reasonable (3/21/09, Field Notes Prep, p. 2).

And on another occasion I noted that Billy

> showed good effort, working through some of the tongue-twisting words…and good thinking…when he was able to point to evidence that Mean Jean bullied Katie Sue when she grabbed her collar and yelled at her (4/8/09, Field Notes, p. 2).

In contrast to engaged reading, Billy also showed disengaged reading “Billy seemed quite unfocused yesterday….I noticed him frequently looking around the room or flipping pages to see how many were left in the book” (4/7/09, Field Notes Prep, 5M, p. 2) and “Today Billy…didn’t track on the words in the book, and he was playing with the [three-ring] binders” (5/2/09, Field Notes Prep, p. 2). Recognizing these attributes of engaged and disengaged reading facilitated the data analysis process for the remainder of this chapter.

A foundational principle for this study was the understanding that students are humans who *have* agency; they don’t have to “take it,” and I can’t “give it.” However, I also understand that there things teachers can do that will increase the likelihood that students’ agentic acts are productive. I have been asking, “How can teachers structure the environment so that students’ agency is turned toward the tasks, ends, and actions that my professional knowledge says are efficacious?” (1/31/13, Reflective Memo, Journal #4, p. 5).

In the next portion of this chapter, I discuss four major topics: Fostering the desire to read among the apprentice-teachers, text features that impacted their enjoyment of books, factors that could squash their interest in reading, and recognizing varying types of pleasure while reading.

## Fostering the Desire to Read

In this section, I explore conditions that increased the apprentice-teachers’ school-productive agentic acts and fostered their identities as Readers. Those factors included student voice in the selection of reading materials, a broad range of reading choices, and personal and social connections.

**Student Voice: Choosing What Matters to You**

The apprentice teachers were drawn to books that they liked, had personal relevance, and had engaging topics. They also thought reading was easier when they'd had a voice in book selection.

**Liking the book.** The apprentice-teachers were more likely to engage in reading if they "liked" a book, or thought it was "good." Aureesha discussed the connection between students' book selection and liking a book, saying, "the book at the top [of my transmediation] stands for what book [they're] about to read… and [it's] a book they like, not a book that the teacher chose for them" (5/22/09, Transmediation Narrative). Salenia also saw the benefits of reading books one likes, saying "reading becomes relaxing, if I'm really into the book, if I like it" (3/26/09, Audio Summary Debrief, 5N, p. 14-15). She believed a reader who thinks "it's a good book" is more likely to show perseverance through difficult parts:

> People get frustrated over reading because the words are too hard, and they try to say a word, and they get a tongue twister, and like, 'I can't do it,' and give up, [but if] you think it's a good book [you'll keep reading.]

DeVontay thought that good oral expression was important to liking a book, saying, "[The project] helped all of us…on the way we expressed the books….Then we liked the book, and we helped other people like the book, from the way we expressed it" (5/22/09, Transmediation Narrative).

**Personal relevance.** I first noticed the importance of student voice regarding book selection in Round Four when Aureesha and LaToya were slow to embrace the idea of reading books in which sports played a central role. When previewing possible books,

Aureesha commented, “Why do we have to read about sports?” (3/11/09, AT Session 4 Field Notes, p. 1), and LaToya seemed to share her ambivalence (3/7/09, AT 4 Prep Field Notes, p. 1). Realizing that they’d only previewed books about baseball with White, male characters, I *hand sold* a different book to the girls. Aureesha and LaToya ultimately “bought in to” this round through a text they found personally relevant – *Allie’s Basketball Dream* (Barber, 1998) – in which an African-American girl broke gender stereotypes and improved her basketball skills.

**Engaging topics.** While the apprentice teachers generally read willingly throughout the project, the most passionate reading came when we read about sports, gender equity, friendship, and bullying. I believe the topics and themes were highly relevant to the apprentice-teachers’ lives, and thus led to more engaged reading and discussion.

Aureesha affirmed the importance of engaging topics when she said that she agreed with the grandmother in *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Mellon*, who had told Molly to just be herself. LaToya concurred, as she explained in her transmediation narrative:

> The reason why I picked this book is because *The Queen of the Scene* (Latifah, 2006) is a book that my kids inspired[1]….*The Queen of the Scene* should be going around to all the girls and boys to prove to the boys that girls can do what they can do. Most boys believe that girls are too afraid to play basketball or football” (5/22/09).

[1] Note: I believe that LaToya meant that the book inspired her students, rather than her students inspiring the author.

**Reading is easier when students have a say about the books they read.** When bringing closure to Round Five, Aureesha articulated the importance of students' voices when selecting books:

> I think that reading starts to become easier if you pick a book that you like. It starts to be easier than when people pick out something for you to read…When [you] don't like the book, and [you] be like, uh, this book is boring. And that's when [you] get mad about the book, and be like, 'I don't like reading' (3/26/09, Audio Summary Debrief, p. 14).

It's notable that Aureesha believed reading *was more difficult* when reading a book someone else had chosen. Likewise, feeling that a book is boring will lead the reader to dislike reading.

During the closure phase of Round Six, Aureesha added depth to her thinking, saying that in addition to being easier, reading becomes enjoyable when one has voice in selecting texts. She commented,

> Reading can be fun if you pick a book that you like, and not one that was chosen for you….Even if they say it's good, it might not be on the right level, and they probably don't like the same thing as you….It'll be fun [if you choose your own book] (4/10/09, Audio Summary Debrief, p. 4).

At the conclusion of the project, during the interviews about the transmediations, both Billy and DeVontay discussed students' voice in selecting books. Billy said, "The Apprentice-Teaching Project is cool because you get to choose books to read to first graders." and DeVontay said, "Every time I chose the book, I practiced reading it, and I read books that I didn't think I would read."

In summary, the apprentice-teachers clearly articulated the importance of choosing books with relevant, engaging topics that they liked. Student voice in the selection of reading material was crucial to an engaged reading experience.

### Book Choice: A Wide Range of Available Texts

A corollary to students' voice in selecting books is the need to have a wide-range of possible books from which they may choose. During The Apprentice-Teaching Project I observed several factors relevant to the process of choosing reading material. First, I needed to ensure that many potential texts were available, but having too many deterred student choices. Second, the apprentice-teachers needed to know about the potential books. Finally, meeting the prior two factors required effort, thought, and observation on my part.

**Many possible books from which to choose.** When preparing for Lesson 1, I took the apprentice-teachers to the school library to select books for their first grade lessons. However, there seemed to be too many books and the apprentice-teachers didn't know enough about scanning the shelves for favorite authors (if indeed they remembered the names of authors they'd enjoyed in the past), judging the length of time needed to read a book aloud, or judging the topic of the book from the spine. Some weren't even sure where the picture books were shelved. Based on this less-than-successful experience, I gathered a collection of 30-50 books from the public library, school library, and my own collection for subsequent rounds. Placing a generous collection of books in our classroom resulted in the apprentice-teachers spending more time previewing and reading potential choices and less time roaming the broad spaces of the library.

LaToya's and Aureesha's experiences with the sports-related books in Round Four illustrated the need for a broad range of books. The abstract notion of reading about sports was unappealing, and if the collection of possible books had been too narrow, it is likely they wouldn't have found books with which they could personally connect. Similarly, during Round Five, when a non-focal student initially read a rather long and didactic book about standing up to bullies, she said that she didn't want to focus on bullying during her lesson. I suggested other possible books from among the range of choices and she quickly warmed up to the topic.

This process of book selection on my part is one way in which I ensured that the *curriculum was responsive* to the needs and interests of the apprentice-teachers. On the basis of the topics they'd chosen, I used my range of experiences with reading aloud and my knowledge of children's literature to locate a variety of potential books.

**Acquainting the apprentice-teachers with the possibilities**. While a broad range of possible books was important, it was also crucial for the apprentice-teachers to know what books were available. As a group, we used several techniques to develop our collective knowledge about the possible books, including browsing, booktalking, hand-selling, and networking.

***Perusing the possibilities***. After the apprentice-teachers had identified possible topics and activities, I gathered our collection of books. Our next step was to "get to know" the books – a process which frequently looked rather chaotic. The collected books were spread haphazardly across a table, and the apprentice-teachers grabbed at those which caught their eyes. While I gave informal *booktalks*, the apprentice-teachers exclaimed over books and showed pictures or titles to others.

***Booktalks***. Lesesne (2003) described booktalks as ads to sell books to readers, with the goal of "[whetting] the appetite of the audience" and encouraging them to pick up new books (p. 115). I used booktalking extensively during the project, sharing the cover, title, and a tidbit about the story, characters, or conflict with groups of apprentice-teachers. This process was easy for some books, especially those that came from my personal collection. For other books, I had the same information as the students – the blurbs on the flyleaves or back covers. In those cases I modeled my process of previewing the books, looking at the pictures, and reading the jacket copy; in other instances I explicitly thought aloud about what I knew of the author and illustrator.

***Hand-selling books***. In some cases, one or two apprentice-teachers would fail to connect with a book, and I'd choose several to *hand-sell*. During Round Five, DeVontay had missed several preparation periods and was reluctant to explore the possible books on his own. Instead I sat with him and read aloud a few pages from several books. I emphasized the rhyming elements of *The Recess Queen* (O'Neill, 2002) and *Finklehopper Frog* (Livingston, 2004), the unique design features of *Eddie Longpants* (Levert, 2005), and the illustrations of *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Mellon* (Lovell, 2001). The process of hand-selling helped me hone in on the apprentice-teachers' personal interests, and often, when I was hand-selling to one apprentice-teacher, others would hear me and expand their range of possible books as well.

***Networking among the apprentice-teachers***. The importance of apprentice-teachers talking with each other and listening to others rehearse cannot be understated. In many cases I made return trips to libraries and bookstores to obtain additional copies of books that one apprentice-teacher heard about from another. Indeed, they were so excited

about the range of books available during Round Five's anti-bullying unit that the apprentice-teachers decided to repeat that topic for Round Six.

*Networking* and *hand-selling* were also important as the apprentice-teachers chose chapter books for their non-project-related independent reading. Just before Round Seven when Billy had been looking for a new book, a non-focal student reminded him of the book his homeroom teacher was currently reading aloud; the student told Billy that she had been reading another in the series, and he should try the series also (5/2/02, Field Notes Preparation, p. 2). These examples of non-project reading demonstrate the ways in which the apprentice-teachers transferred skills and selection strategies from the apprentice-teaching context to other aspects of their school and readerly lives.

## Personal and Social Connections

**Personal and emotional connections.** While the sense of "liking" a book or thinking it is "good" is amorphous, DeVontay recognized that readers' *emotional connection* to books can influence their opinions: "When you're reading a book, sometimes it can be a happy book or a sad one, a good book or a bad one." For example, during Round Four, two non-focal students recalled the book *Westlandia* (Fleischman, 2002) from the year before. As they advocated for its use, their level of engagement increased (3/5/09, Field Notes Prep, 5M, p.1, 3). I believe their warm memories and personal connections with this book increased their desire to use it again.

The apprentice-teachers also made personal connections with the characters of the books they read. When Aureesha, Salenia, and a non-focal student were sharing the joy of reading *The Recess Queen*, they noticed the character Katie Sue sitting under a see-saw reading a book about avoiding bullies. All three commented that she shouldn't be

sitting there, because she might get hurt (3/26/09, Audio Summary Debrief, 5N, p. 14), indicating personal involvement with the fate of the character.

**Social interactions.** The apprentice-teachers seemed to find value in the social interactions around the literacy practices in The Apprentice-Teaching Project. As early as Round One, LaToya said that "reading with the first graders was fun" because she knew several of the students from her neighborhood and bus (11/21/08, Debrief Transcript, 6th, p. 3). In his reflection from Round One, DeVontay wrote, "I wasn't reading to the book, I was reading to the kid" (11/20/08), indicating his awareness of the importance of the social nature of this project. After Lesson 5, a non-focal student reached this same understanding, saying "reading gets more funner when you are reading it to somebody, instead of just yourself" (3/26/09, Audio Summary Debrief, 5N, p. 13). Finally, when DeVontay and I were talking about the contrast between his reluctance to read independently and his enthusiasm with his first graders, he replied, "Yeah, I want to set a good example for them" (4/15/09, Field Notes Debrief, p. 5). The apprentice-teachers' interest in sharing their books with others confirms the findings of Ivey and Johnston (2013) whose participants discussed the importance of engaging in "interactions with the teacher and peers" (p. 268).

## Text Features Matter

Illustrations, word play, and humor all seemed to be features that were relevant to the apprentice-teachers. The apprentice-teachers made many references about books they "liked" and "good" books, raising my awareness of the characteristics they found engaging. Alyssa summarized many of these characteristics her transmediation narrative when she said, "You pick a book that's funny and interesting and has funny pictures"

(5/22/09); a non-focal student reiterated this sentiment, saying, “Kids like interesting books, not boring ones” (5/22/09, Transmediation Narrative). The challenge for the teacher, then, is to figure out what texts students will find interesting.

**Illustrations**

The visual appeal and level of detail of the illustrations in the picture books was frequently a factor in whether the apprentice-teachers were drawn to a particular title.

**Word Play**

Tongue twisters, made-up words, rhyme, rhythm, and repetition were all features that lent themselves to “fun” and word play. These same features seemed to encourage the apprentice-teachers to want to read the texts multiple times, causing them to break down in laughter when they stumbled (3/26/09, Audio Summary Debrief, 5N, p. 12-14). Incidentally, these are all features of predictable texts – texts that support young readers who are first learning to read (Rhodes, 1981).

**Humor**

LaToya thought humor was important because the first graders paid better attention “when it was funny” (4/10/09, Lesson 6 Written Reflection). DeVontay affirmed the value of humor when he explained that his first graders liked one of the books he’d picked because it had rhymes and jokes (4/9/09, Audio Summary Debrief, 5$^{th}$, p. 13).

**Books and the Features they Exhibit**

- *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Mellon* (Lovell, 2001) – *illustrations*, *humor*

Billy and several others made a point of sharing a two-page illustration of Molly Lou with her eyes bugging out and her hair standing on end on multiple occasions (3/21/09, Field Notes Prep, p. 4).

- *The Recess Queen* (O'Neill, 2002) – *word play*, *illustrations*, *humor*

  Billy enjoyed the word play in this text, because it "had a whole bunch of tongue ties in it." A non-focal student enjoyed both the word play and illustrations, saying his students kept going back and looking at the pictures and reading some of the rhyming words (4/9/09, Audio Summary Debrief, 5th, p. 14-15). A different non-focal student noted this book was funny because the author had "made up words to make them rhyme" and had "made a little poem" (4/9/09, Audio Summary Debrief, 5th, p. 17).

- *Ker-splash!* (O'Connor, 2005) – *illustrations*

  Alyssa thought the illustrations were really good, because they helped [the first graders] learn about bullies and [how to] imagine about the superhero" (4/10/09, Lesson 6 Written Reflection).

- *Loudmouth George and the Sixth Grade Bully* (Carlson, 2003) – *humor*

  In this clever book, an older student had been stealing a child's lunch, but the victim and a friend devised a way to retaliate by creating a disgusting sandwich.

- *Finklehopper Frog* (Livingston, 2004) – *humor, word play, illustrations*

**Squashing the Desire to Read**

Several factors, including books' length and textbooks, were factors which could squash the desire to read. In addition, I saw evidence that the Discourse of Not-a-Reader remained in play.

## Length of Books

A book's length came up several times, generally as a factor that caused the apprentice-teacher to reject it. For example, in Round Five, a non-focal student didn't want to participate in the anti-bullying activities because she felt the book she'd initially chosen was too long (3/21/09, Field Notes Prep, p.2). Likewise, when DeVontay was trying to find a grade-level appropriate chapter book to read independently prior to Rounds Six and Seven, he rejected several, saying "Do you know how long that will take me to read?" (4/15/09, Field Notes Debrief, p. 4) and that a suggested book would take forever to read (5/2/09, Field Note Prep, p. 5).

## Textbooks

Several of the apprentice-teachers expressed clearly negative opinions about textbooks during the transmediation interviews. Salenia said that one image on her transmediation was a book with a picture of a bear on it. The bear's hat had the word "sleepy," which "stands for like, a boring textbook, and [the students] are thinking in their mind, 'I'm bored, sleepy'" (5/22/09). Aureesha's transmediation included a red circle with a diagonal slash over an image of a textbook and the sentence, "Some teachers just love to use textbooks and make students sit in their desks, but 'Y'?" Finally, a non-focal student, when referring to the images of two children on his transmediation, said, "[This kid] is boring because he has, like, textbooks. [That kid] has kids' books, so she's interesting. Kids like interesting books, not boring ones" (5/22/09). The clear consensus among these three students is that textbooks are boring and teachers shouldn't use them; one apprentice-teacher went further with the specific recommendation to use "kids' books."

**The Discourse of Not-a-Reader**

Despite my many attempts to incorporate classroom conditions that supported engaged reading, there were still times when the apprentice-teachers disavowed reading. One subtle example of the Discourse of Non-Reader came from LaToya, when she expressed a desire to have her students draw or paint, "so the lesson would be more fun….Instead of just read, read, read (in a negative tone; 3/26/09, Field Notes, Debrief 6$^{th}$, p. 14). Salenia also hinted at a reluctance to read, saying "Do we haaave to read" (whiny tone; 5/2/09, Field Notes Prep, p. 5). On another occasion, LaToya was drawing instead of writing her reflections about Lesson 6, and said, "I don't like to read" (4/13/09, Field Notes Debrief, p. 5). DeVontay also overtly bought into the Discourse of Non-Reader during his transmediation interview when he echoed LaToya's comments, saying, "I don't like reading though" (5/22/09).

**Recognizing Pleasure While Reading**

The apprentice-teachers frequently expressed interest in adding non-reading activities (i.e. the lift-the-flap-book and graffiti board) to their first grade lessons. For example, when we Lesson 5, LaToya thought we should include art because having painting or drawing would make the lesson more fun, instead of just "read, read, read" (3/26/09, Audio Summary, 6$^{th}$, p. 14). Though the apprentice-teachers often made overt comments about fun and pleasure focused on game playing and art, as I listened to the audio recordings while working on the "Fun and Interesting Books" section, I was struck by the laughter and collaborative competition among the apprentice-teachers as they engaged in the word play of the texts. There was a sense of the type of pleasure derived from putting one's finger in a candle flame – you know it's going to hurt a little, but you

laugh as you're doing it. I argue that if we are to keep our students engaged in school-based literacy events, we need to create conditions which include various types of pleasure and satisfaction; furthermore, we need to help students *recognize* that they are feeling a sense of enjoyment.

In a study done with avid high school readers, Wilhelm, Smith, and Fransen (2014) identified four types of pleasure derived from reading. These included *intellectual, work, play*, and *social pleasures*.

**Intellectual Pleasure**

Gallagher (2009) urged us to differentiate between "liking a text and gleaning value from a text," when he explained that he didn't really "care if [his] students' liked" the classic book, *1984* (Orwell, 1949), but that they come to "see the value in reading" it. He argued that as a result of reading *1984* himself, he sees his government, propaganda, and language manipulation differently (p. 57). These comments illustrate *intellectual pleasure*, one of four types identified by Wilhelm et al. (2014). Intellectual pleasure, or that gained through "figuring things out" (p. 68), was demonstrated by Salenia and a non-focal student when they realized the words in *The Recess Queen* were hard, but they'd figured them out. They gained intrinsic satisfaction and a feeling of intellectual pleasure when they accomplished a reading task that was challenging. Finally, when dictating the transmediation narratives, Billy expressed his appreciation for learning new things from reading (5/21/09), and Aureesha commented that "when students take reading seriously, they can really express their thoughts" (5/22/09). These comments all reveal glimpses of the ways agentic people view learning and the intrinsic satisfaction that comes with accomplishment.

**Work Pleasure**

The authors described *work pleasure* as that which "one takes from using a text as a tool to accomplish something" (p. 48), which seemed to correspond to DeVontay's recognition that the texts and activities in The Apprentice-Teaching Project helped participants read more expressively(5/22/09, transmediation narrative), leading to pleasure from accomplishing a specific task. DeVontay also derived work pleasure from teaching others. Finally, Billy's desire to read in order to prepare for his first grade lesson, and the apprentice-teachers' growing understanding that they needed to practice their books prior to their first grade lessons constituted recognition of pleasurable work.

Salenia was expansive in explaining the importance of practice and perseverance, a form of work pleasure. In one conversation she said,

> practice makes perfect; [when you] pick a new book…and you start reading it and practicing it, [and] if you mess up a couple of times, just go back…like 50 times, don't give up….Then they get the hang of it, and they don't notice until they're done with the book, and they're like, 'I did it!' (3/26/09, Audio Summary Debrief 5N, pp. 7, 15).

On another occasion she said,

> When you get really focused into a book, then you'll start reading it more. Like you learn so much, you're so into the book, even if you don't know that word, you're reading and you know it" (4/10/09, Audio Summary Debrief, $5^{th}$ girls, p. 4).

**Play Pleasure**

Among the high school participants reading self-selected books in the study, *play pleasure* was most often seen when the readers "[left] their world and [entered] a story world" (Wilhelm et al., 2014, p. 32). DeVontay expressed pleasure from *play* in his transmediation narrative when he commented, "then we liked the book," implying that liking the book helped him become part of the story world which then led to further enjoyment. Salenia, Aureesha, and a non-focal student actively demonstrated enjoyment as they competed to read and re-read tricky passages from books like *The Recess Queen* and *Finklehopper Frog*. Within the context of the safe environment of our learning community, the apprentice-teachers derived pleasure from the slightly risky sense of "messing up." During this word play with tongue twisters, the apprentice-teachers experienced pleasure "in the moment," rather than focusing on *instrumental pleasure*. M. W. Smith and Wilhelm (2006) argue that this is a crucial distinction, because people are more likely to enter a "flow experience," when they feel the "joy of learning in the present" (p. 11), instead of participating because of some benefit the activity will bring in the future (such as passing high-stakes tests or getting good grades).

**Social Pleasure**

Finally, social pleasure, the enjoyment that comes from "using reading to connect with others" (Wilhelm et al., 2014, p. 86) can also be found in reading. This form of pleasure is akin to the recognition that "students became engaged in personally meaningful ways with books and others" (Ivey & Johnston, 2013, p. 264). Such social pleasure was demonstrated each time the apprentice-teachers recommended a book to someone else and when they explained that they were role models for the first grade

students. In addition, the personal connections that Aureesha and LaToya made with Allie, as a black girl, in *Allie's Basketball Dream* (Barber, 1998) demonstrated a form of social pleasure.

## Discussion

In this chapter, I examined factors that encouraged engaged reading habits among the apprentice-teachers. I explored four broad topics: fostering the desire to read, text features, squashing interest in reading, and recognizing types of pleasure while reading. In the discussion, I examine the data in light of the theoretical framework guiding this study, including the sociocultural perspective on literacy, agency, and apprenticeship.

### Sociocultural Perspectives on Literacy

While this study is placed firmly in the sociocultural view of literacy, an alternate view is the *autonomous* model (Street, 1992); as expressed by (Hicks, 2002), those working from this paradigm argue that "children approach literacy practices as autonomous reasoners who then individually construct knowledge about literacy practices" (p. 15).

**Social interactions.** The data from The Apprentice-Teaching Project clearly show the importance of the social interactions among the apprentice-teachers, between the apprentice-teachers and their first grade students, and between the students and book characters. The positive energy and laughter created as the apprentice-teachers read *The Recess Queen* (O'Neill, 2002) increased their desire to continue reading until they could accurately say the tongue-twisters and rhymes. The "work" of preparing for their lessons with first-grade students helped Billy and Salenia build the stamina to continue reading harder texts. LaToya and Aureesha drew on their cultural understandings of their

identities as young, female, African-American sports aficionados; these understandings helped them make connections with the character in *Allie's Basketball Dream* (Barber, 1998), which in turn helped to foster their desire to continue reading.

**Voice, Choice, and a Socially Interactive Environment Supported the Work of Adolescence.** Guthrie et al (2012; as cited in Ivey & Johnston, 2013) found that engaged reading was enhanced in classrooms that provided opportunities for collaboration and "autonomy support," for example, student choice about the texts to be read (p. 256). These factors stem from the natural work of adolescents as they navigate the path from childhood to adulthood; such work includes the development of a sense of personal autonomy (Irvin, 1998) and may result in increased independence and a "pulling away from parents" (Lesesne, 2003, p. 26) and other authority figures (i.e. teachers). The apprentice-teachers' interest in a broad range of texts confirmed Ivey and Johnston's (2013) conclusion that having a range of "relevant and engaging books to choose from" (p. 268) supported engaged reading among adolescents in the classes they studied. Responding to the needs of the apprentice-teachers by encouraging them to express their opinions about texts and providing a broad range of choices are two ways this study supported them in their nascent roles as adolescents and engaged readers. Finally, while peer relationships become important as children move toward adolescence, they are developing strong opinions of their own. In The Apprentice-Teaching Project, Aureesha reminded us that it's important for students to be able to read books they've chosen themselves, rather than one chosen by others, because "they probably don't like the same thing as you."

**Taking up the cultural practices of readers.** The apprentice-teachers came into this project as able readers, but they usually didn't choose to read or take up the *cultural practices* and identities of Good Student or Reader (Gee, 2004b); therefore, they didn't perform well in school-based literacy tasks. I argue that because the role of apprentice-teaching allowed my students to see themselves as readers, they were willing to work harder, i.e. to be more agentic, when confronted with difficult reading tasks. I further argue that the sociocultural literacy practices embedded in the project fostered the apprentice-teachers' desire and ability to appropriate the Discourse of Reader and join the literacy club (F. Smith, 1987).

### Agency among the Apprentice-Teachers

Drawing on the definition of agency developed in Chapter Two, I explore ways in which the apprentice-teachers positioned themselves to remake their identities as readers and used new Discourses and picture books as mediational tools.

**Apprentice-teachers positioned themselves to remake their identities.** During the preparation phase of Round Four, when other apprentice-teachers suggested we read books about sports, both Aureesha and LaToya took resistant positions to this topic. However, they assumed more academically engaged positions after they discovered a book in which they could "see themselves" in the main character and plot. In their cases, the girls appeared to *remake* their identities from *unhappy child* to *engaged student* as their positions with regard to the activity and texts changed. This confirms the sociocultural view of literacy described by Franzak (2006) as a practice "embedded in socially situated identity and activity" (p. 221). Aureesha and LaToya had to find a book

character through whom they could connect their identities as strong, African-American, young women with potential identities as strong students and teachers.

**Apprentice-teachers used several mediational tools, including new Discourses.** Mediational tools are those cultural artifacts used by members of a community to accomplish tasks. Holland et al. (1998) contend that these artifacts "evoke the worlds" of which they are part and "position individuals" within those worlds; furthermore, such artifacts can "shift" the "frame of activity", and are thus significant (p. 63). Wertsch et al. (1993) use the term "re-mediation" to describe the process by which people learn to use new mediational tools. This use of the term *re-mediation* provides a marked contrast to the traditional use of *remediation*, which, according to Merriam-Webster.com is the "process of solving or correcting a problem."

When viewed through the traditional connotation of *remediation*, students who don't read as well as a school expects are assumed to be broken and in need of correction, leading to the use of intervention programs such as *Destination Reading*, which claims to "remediate reading difficulties" through the combination of "an explicit instructional pathway [and] frequent assessments to help guide individualized, data-driven instruction" (Harcourt, 2013). In contrast, the use of the term *re-mediation* by Wertsch et al. (1993) is more in line with the term *revaluing* as used by Dudley-Marling and Paugh (2004) who argue that the question shouldn't be "what's wrong" with a student, but rather "what does [the child] need to learn in order to continue his development as a reader?" (p. vi). The participants in The Apprentice-Teaching Project needed positive experiences with reading, they needed to read books that they "liked," and they needed to have social interactions around their reading. There is evidence that they appropriated picture books

as physical mediational tools and increased their proficiency with an abstract mediational tool – the Discourse of Reading. These examples contribute to the body of knowledge in which mediated agency is defined as the process of "actively appropriating others' mediational means" (Wertsch et al., 1993, p. 349).

***Picture books as mediational tools.*** The descriptions and photos of engaged reading at the beginning of the chapter (Figures 11.1 through 11.3) and the text features of books that fostered engaged reading provided evidence that picture books became an essential component of every phase of The Apprentice-Teaching Project. During the preparation phases, the apprentice-teachers read multiple books before selecting and re-reading those they'd use with their students. During the teaching phase they read and talked about books with their first grade students. During the debriefing discussions they referred to the texts to illustrate the points they wanted to make about the books, their own reading, and their students' reading. Because the picture books assumed such an integral part of the project, they became mediational tools in and of themselves. As discussed further in the next section, the apprentice-teachers also used the Discourse of Reading with various degrees of success; one tool that enabled them to improve in the Discourse of Reading was the availability of engaging and culturally relevant books (cf. Gonzalez, Moll, & Armanti, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

***Apprentice-teachers' increasing facility with the Discourse of Reader***. When discussing Round One and Round Two, I explored ways in which the apprentice-teachers took up various Discourses. To bring this discussion in a full circle, I explore ways in which the apprentice-teachers appropriated the Discourse of Reader as a *mediational tool* to remake their *identities* from *bad reader* to *engaged reader*. Returning to Gee's (1996,

2012) notion of "big D" Discourses, I see the Discourse of Reader as a collection of behaviors and ways of speaking which would cause others to perceive the apprentices (fifth and sixth graders) as *readers*. Morrell (2004) explained that people can combine "specific social languages with specific ways of…acting…so as to *get recognized* as enacting a socially situated identity" (p. 37), in this case, that of reader. Gee (1996, 2012) used the example of "'real' Indians" to illustrate the idea that simply claiming an identity is not enough; one must be recognized in that identity by others who share that Discourse. Gee (2012) continued, saying, "being a real Indian is not something one can simply be. Rather, it is something that one becomes or is in the 'doing' of it, that is, in the performance" (p. 156). In this study, the apprentice-teachers behaved in an agentic way to shift their positions from being legitimate peripheral participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to active members in the Discourse of Readers. That is, over time they learned to "be" readers, and thus were increasingly recognized as such by themselves, their first grade students, and adults who visited our class.

As I described at the beginning of the chapter, the social language of readers includes internal and external processes with verbal and physical aspects. Readers understand, reflect on, and make social connections with the ideas in texts. In addition, at an external level, they communicate with others, both verbally and in writing, about what they're thinking when reading. Finally, engaged reading is characterized by eye focus, concentration, and the desire to understand or use the information in the text. It is notable that when not engaged in apprentice-teaching activities, many of the apprentice-teachers routinely had difficulty with all aspects of the Discourse of Reading at the beginning of the project; however, most of them began to appropriate aspects of this Discourse as the

project progressed. For example, during his first round, Billy selected books he wasn't invested with and did little to prepare for his lesson. Within a few lessons, he reread texts to improve his fluency and talked with others about the characters of the story. Finally, by the end of the project, he asked for time to read the books he'd selected, and in his transmediation narrative, he indicated that choosing books to read with first graders was "cool." Figures 11.1 through 11.3 show Salenia, LaToya, and Aureesha reading with their students and demonstrating focused concentration and the social aspects of the Discourse of Reader. Finally, the way in which Aureesha and Salenia chanted "tongue twisting" phrases demonstrated the "reading for pleasure" aspect of the Discourse of Reader.

***Continued use of the Discourse of Not-a-Reader.*** While all the apprentice-teachers did begin to use aspects of the Discourse of Reader, there were still occasions when several used narratives associated with the Discourse of Not-a-Reader. LaToya implied that "merely" reading wasn't enough; students also wanted to be involved in art work. Salenia and Billy asked, "Do we haaaave to read?" As I've looked at the wealth of data from throughout the project, I've wondered what conditions or factors could help students stop using the Discourse of Not-a-Reader. How many positive experiences are necessary before people fully appropriate the more school-productive Discourse of Reader?

In addition to wondering how long or how many positive experiences might be necessary to help school-identified "struggling" readers change their literacy narratives, I am also struck by the fragility of the apprentice-teachers' nascent use of the Discourse of Reader. Even while they appeared to be enjoying specific literacy tasks (both through The Apprentice-Teaching Project and in other school activities), when asked about their

reading preferences in isolation, both LaToya and DeVontay said that they didn't like reading. Could their identities as readers and teachers of reading have become more solidified if they'd had more school time devoted to the apprentice-teaching activities? Can a single negative experience with reading send the students into a tailspin which could undermine much of the progress made during The Apprentice-Teaching Project? This study supports Johnston's (2004) research into the ways that "choice words" of teachers can positively or negatively impact students' sense of agency in the school. It is essential, though, to remember that "struggling" students need many positive school-literacy experiences in order to "re-mediate" (Wertsch et al., 1993) their literacy narratives.

**Classroom Conditions and Acts of Agency**

Holland et al. (1998) asserted that when people "develop more or less conscious conceptions of themselves as actors" in their social and cultural worlds, their identities permit them to have "at least a modicum of agency or control over their own behavior" (p. 40). Moje and Lewis (2007) further argued that agency is "the strategic making and remaking of [identities] (p. 18), and Wertsch et al. (1993) added that the use of "mediational means" is one component of agency.

In this chapter, I attempted to identify classroom conditions that supported school-productive agency. The apprentice-teachers benefited from a wide range of choices, voice about what to read, and texts with preferred characteristics; each of these factors were important to increasing the sense of control the apprentice-teachers had over the reading tasks. Likewise, social interactions around and about books facilitated the "remaking" of identities and the students' opportunities to appropriate the Discourse of Reader (a

mediational tool). Finally, the apprentice-teachers had multiple opportunities to read a wide range of texts; if the apprentice-teachers had read only the books in the mandated curriculum, they would have had less material through which to make relevant personal connections.

Beyond the conditions of choice, voice, social interactions, and an attention to textual characteristics, I also argue that a trusting classroom environment was essential to engaged reading. When Salenia asked if she "haaad to read," she was near the beginning of a book with which she hadn't yet connected; as a result of the apprenticeship community we had developed, she trusted me enough to make the school-productive agentic choice of continuing to read until she got "to the good part."

**Apprenticeship with peers.** This study drew heavily on apprenticeship theory, as expressed by Morrell (2004), who argued that authentic learning "involved apprenticeship…and legitimate participation in relevant sociocultural activity" (p. 4), and reflected in the intermediate students' title – *apprentice-teachers*. Gee (1996) asserted that apprenticeship is important, because Discourses are best acquired when students are involved "in a master-apprentice relationship in a Discourse wherein the teacher scaffolds the students' growing…through demonstrating her mastery [in that Discourse] and supporting theirs" (p. 145). Gee seemed to assume that the logical mentor for students is the teacher – an adult who has the benefit of more life experience and professional knowledge. Likewise, prior studies of cross-age tutoring (Heath & Mangiola, 1991; Jacobson et al., 2001; Juel, 1991; Patterson & Elliott, 2006) also placed school-identified "struggling" readers in apprentice relationships with teacher-mentors.

Though Gee originally implied that students needed to be mentees of teachers, his position shifted slightly when he elaborated on his definition of mentors, saying they could be adults or “more masterful peers” (Gee, 2004b, p. 12). The participants’ experiences in this project support Gee’s broadened definition of mentors in the apprentice relationship. My students began apprenticing themselves with their peers when they discovered that peers might have knowledge which would shed light on a particular issue. For example, LaToya first discovered *Allie’s Basketball Dream* (Barber, 1998) and shared it with Aureesha, who drew on LaToya’s more extensive knowledge of the text as she began to make connections with it. Likewise, Aureesha was able to develop her ability to navigate the complicated rhymes and made-up words of *The Recess Queen* (O'Neill, 2002) through apprenticeship with Salenia. Peer-apprenticeship became an important way to increase learning opportunities in our apprenticeship community, increasing the number of “experts” and the capacity for creating successful literacy narratives among the participants.

**A skilled teacher is responsible for a responsive curriculum.** While peer-apprenticeship became important, a skilled, knowledgeable teacher is essential. The curriculum which led to classroom conditions that fostered engaged reading in The Apprentice-Teaching Project was driven by several factors. Working as a teacher, curriculum developer, and researcher, I broadened my knowledge about the apprentice-teachers, literature, and potential response activities throughout the project. Likewise, I invested considerable time outside school hours to prepare for the apprentice-teachers’ lessons and gather resources. Finally, the curriculum of The Apprentice-Teaching Project required significant amounts of class time which had to be carved out from the mandated

curriculum, test preparation, and testing. It is essential to understand that the experiences and opportunities offered through The Apprentice-Teaching Project came about because the curriculum was implemented by a *responsive teacher*.

**Closing Thoughts**

In this chapter I explored the factors and conditions that fostered engaged reading among the apprentice-teachers. Providing a wide range of texts and opportunities for students to have a voice in their selection of reading materials increased their willingness to participate in school-based literacy practices. Providing time and a trusting learning community followed the principles of a sociocultural perspective on literacy and supported students' growth in their use of the Discourse of Reader. In conclusion, I'll simply paraphrase Aureesha's extended commentary (3/26/09, Audio Summary Debrief Round 5, p. 14) on choice and voice:

- A book you like is easier to read.
- A book you choose is easier to read.
- You're less likely to like a book if someone else picked it.
- If a book is boring, you're more likely to "get mad at it."
- If you choose a book, you might start to like it.

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE APPRENTICE-TEACHING PROJECT

> *[The Apprentice-Teaching Project] helped all of us that was reading, because it helped us on the way we read and the way we expressed the book….Then we liked the book and we helped other people like the book….Sometimes it can be a happy book or a sad one, a good book or a bad one.*
>
> *-DeVontay, Transmediation Narrative*

In this teacher research study, I sought to create spaces in which school-identified "at risk" students could become agents of their own reading and learning. As expressed by DeVontay in the epigraph, participants in this project were able to focus on the enjoyment of reading; through his improved reading, DeVontay was able to make emotional connections with the books he read. By positioning my "remedial" students as apprentice-teachers, I had hoped to increase their opportunities for school-defined productive actions, thus increasing the time they spent in engaged reading and facilitating an upward trend in their school trajectory. Likewise, I expected that a close look at the classroom conditions would shed light on teaching practices which either fostered positive or triggered negative acts of agency.

In this chapter, I begin by briefly highlighting key aspects of The Apprentice-Teaching Project and the relevance of this study and positioning them in the context of current educational policy. In subsequent sections, I make connections between the findings of this study and existing research as presented in the literature review: the sociocultural view of literacy, apprenticeship theory, my working definition of agency,

and my role as a teacher researcher. The chapter concludes with emerging questions and suggestions for future research. The bulk of the chapter consists of significant findings and pedagogical implications; while this chapter will implicitly answer the research questions (p. 65) through the review of the findings and implications of the study, a discussion of specific research questions and related findings can be found in Appendix D.

## Significance of the Study

The Apprentice-Teaching Project fills several gaps in the current research. First, it applies sociocultural literacy practices in classrooms through a curriculum that assumes "all children are…smart," "revalues readers" (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004, pp. 101, 191), and provides previously marginalized students with opportunities to "redefine [their] competence [by transforming] negative perceptions of [their] abilities" (O'Brien et al., 2007, p. 53). Second, this study fills a niche in the existing research on cross-age tutoring projects by focusing on the tutors' learning, rather than the tutees'. Furthermore, rather than focusing primarily on quantitative outcomes in tutors' reading achievement, this study emphasizes the impact the tutoring role had on the apprentice-teachers' school-productive agency by examining various types of agency, as suggested by Ahearn (2001), and making issues of agency, power, and identity explicit, as called for by Lewis et al. (2007). Finally, though unanticipated, this study has implications for the ways students are taught about metacognitive reading strategies. Also unanticipated was the identification of factors that fostered engaged reading among the school-identified "struggling" readers who became apprentice-teachers.

## Current Trends in Educational Policy

This study was conceived in 2007, midway through the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB; *No Child Left Behind Act*, 2001), and conducted in the 2008-2009 school year. While many states have now received waivers exempting them from the accountability criteria of NCLB, the conditions of those waivers seem to be increasing the constraints on government-labeled “failing schools,” which are predominantly in high-poverty areas. Those waivers are often tied to *Race to the Top* grants which require states, school districts, and schools to adopt “college and career ready academic standards” (generally assumed to be the Common Core State Standards; CCSS); administer additional standardized tests; link teachers’ evaluations (and compensation) to students’ achievement on those standardized tests; and make provisions to close or “turn-around” low performing schools ("Race to the Top," 2009).

While the data for this study was gathered nearly five years ago, the findings continue to have relevance. Policy initiatives such as NCLB and *Race to the Top* have had insidious effects on the very schools they were ostensibly intended to help. The effects include the de-professionalization of teachers (Garan, 2004; Ravitch, 2010; Ritchie et al., 2012), a narrowing curriculum that focuses on tested material (Meier & Wood, 2004; Ravitch, 2014; Strauss, 2013), and a dearth of sociocultural literacy practices. In this study, I argue that professional teachers are crucial for the development of classroom conditions which support school-sanctioned agentic behavior on the part of students. Likewise, rather than a narrowed curriculum based on tested material, this study found that students need a *responsive curriculum* that includes more choice in their reading material and response activities. Finally, I argue that opportunities for increased

social interactions among students are an important element of classrooms which support productive acts of agency.

## Placing The Apprentice-Teaching Project in the Context of Existing Theory

This study supports and extends existing theories on learning as presented in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. These include the sociocultural perspective on literacy, apprenticeship theory, my working definition of agency, and responsive curricula.

### Sociocultural Perspectives on Literacy

Descriptions and implications of sociocultural views of literacy have been well documented in the literature (e.g. Franzak, 2006; Gee, 2001; Lewis et al., 2007), but this study pushes educators to consider reading curriculum and instruction for “marginalized” youth through a sociocultural lens. The Apprentice-Teaching Project has implications for understanding students’ purposes for reading, creating spaces for social interactions among students, leveling and selecting texts, and inducting students into the “literacy club” (F. Smith, 1987).

**Students’ purposes for reading.** This study highlighted several factors that prompted students to engage in reading. Billy read as a form of “work” to prepare for his first-grade lessons, Salenia often read to learn new things, and DeVontay read to improve his own performance so he could be a better role model. Teachers need to be aware of the multiplicity of students’ purposes for reading and plan activities that allow students to enter reading tasks by a variety of paths. The Apprentice-Teaching Study extends the *Reading Unbound* study (Wilhelm et al., 2014) which highlighted the importance of letting kids read what they wanted and identified different types of reading pleasure. Though the findings regarding intrinsic satisfaction when reading were similar in both

studies, the participants in the *Reading Unbound* study were described as “avid” and “committed” junior high and high school readers (p. 26, 28), while the participants in The Apprentice-Teaching Project did not identify themselves as readers at the outset of the project.

**Creating spaces for social interactions.** Social interactions were important in several ways during The Apprentice-Teaching Project. LaToya, Alyssa, Aureesha, Salenia, and Billy all appeared to feel pleasure in the act of re-reading challenging parts to each other; they laughed when they made miscues and read again and again until they got it “right.” In addition, the process of reading together appeared to help the apprentice-teachers become more skillful at monitoring for miscues and misunderstandings. Finally, the relationships built among the apprentice-teachers, between the apprentice-teachers and their students, and between the participants and book characters all led to more engaged, active reading, supporting Ivey and Johnston (2013).

**Leveling and selecting texts.** The apprentice-teachers’ reading achievement, as measured by their performance on the ARI and Reading a-z assessments, starkly emphasized the fallacy of placing “level” designations on texts. DeVontay’s mini-case study demonstrated the extent to which a student’s background knowledge can influence his comprehension. Just as artificially leveling texts is counter to the sociocultural perspective on literacy, so too does this theory have relevance for selecting texts. Students’ interests should be a greater factor in text selection than their “levels.”

**Inducting students into the “literacy club.”** Some reading activities in The Apprentice-Teaching Project had the effect of increasing the participants’ willingness to read; these included engaging texts, non-traditional literacy response activities, and social

interactions. Other activities seemed to decrease the participants' interest in reading, chief among which was the direct instruction of metacognitive reading strategies. I argue that the social factors present in those "engaging activities" are a key reason that the apprentice-teachers found them more compelling than activities focused on metacognitive reading strategies. It is crucial that teachers and school policy makers attend to sociocultural factors when designing curricula for students, especially those students who have been marginalized by dint of their level of achievement, race, language, socioeconomic status.

A composite narrative woven together from tidbits that captured the heart of each apprentice-teachers' transmediation narrative provides a powerful view of the full project through the apprentice-teachers' eyes (Table 12.1) and highlights the importance of sociocultural literacy practices. This composite provides evidence that the apprentice-teachers were beginning to associate themselves with the literacy club.

| Name | Story |
|---|---|
| Billy | The Apprentice-Teaching Project is cool. Reading is fun. You learn new stuff. |
| Alyssa | You pick a book that's funny and interesting and has funny pictures. You … have to stop and ask questions and make predictions from the title and the back of the book. |
| Aureesha | [Teachers] don't have to just use textbooks. [Kids should get to choose] a book they like, and not a book that the teacher chose for them. |
| LaToya | [The book] *Queen of the Scene* … is a book that inspired my kids. |
| Salenia | When you tell your first graders about the book, they will sit and listen. Don't be afraid to express what you're really thinking. If you just mess up on something, you can re-say it. |
| DeVontay | [The project] helped us on the way we read and the way it sounded and the way we expressed it. I read books that I didn't think I'd read. I didn't think I'd be interested, but then I read the books and I started to get interested. |

**Table 12.1 Composite Narrative about The Apprentice-Teaching Project**

## Apprenticeship Theory

While this cross-age tutoring project was similar to a number of others (Jacobson et al., 2001; Juel, 1991; Patterson & Elliott, 2006), the study itself was quite different, because I did not set out to evaluate The Apprentice-Teaching Project or buddy reading. While other studies examined the reading gains and motivation of the tutors and tutees, this study contributes to our understanding of the ways cross-age tutoring supported positive agentic moves among the tutors and apprenticed them into the "literacy club." Morrell (2004) argued that authentic learning "involved apprenticeship...and legitimate participation in relevant sociocultural activity" (p. 4), and Gee (1996, 2012) elaborated, saying "classrooms must constitute active apprenticeships in academic social practices" (p. 147). The Apprentice-Teaching Project provided one vehicle through which schools could use the *cultural process model* of learning (Gee, 2004b) to induct school-identified "struggling" readers into the literacy club (F. Smith, 1987).

Through their apprenticeship into the literate practices of teachers and readers, the fifth and sixth-graders involved in this project spent significant time engaged in reading, making agentic moves that extended their own learning, and using the Discourses of Reader and Teacher. During the early parts of the project, I was the primary mentor in the apprentice relationship. Drawing on my professional knowledge, I was able to make suggestions that built on my students' ideas (i.e. books about bullying, response activities, and transmediations). As the project evolved, though, the network of mentorship began to expand, with the apprentice-teachers making tentative moves as mentors while selecting, rehearsing, and understanding new books.

This study brings a sociocultural lens to the notion of cross-age tutoring, thus extending the findings of the meta-analysis conducted by Roscoe and Chi (2007). Working from a cognitive perspective, Roscoe and Chi noted that potential gains for older tutors, as determined by standardized measures, might have been limited when they taught material far below their level (Sprinthall & Scott, 1989, as cited by Roscoe & Chi, 2007). I argue that the benefits accrued to the apprentice-teachers went far beyond improvement on standardized achievement measures; these benefits included additional time spent reading, literacy activities that accomplished specific purposes, and intrinsically motivating reasons to understand the concepts of the books.

Roscoe and Chi also noted that tutors' skills and knowledge might not improve significantly if the duration of the program is too short (2007, citing Topping & Bryce, 2004). The Apprentice-Teaching Study does support this finding; the short duration and limited amount of time that I was able to devote to The Apprentice-Teaching Project was a significant constraint. While the participants had begun to use the Discourses of Teacher and Engaged Reader more consistently, several occasionally slid into the Discourse of Not-a-Reader. I argue that having additional time devoted to the project would have increased the likelihood that the apprentice-teachers maintained their more school-productive Discourses.

**Revisiting the Theoretical Framework for Agency**

The apprentice-teachers were able to exert agency in myriad ways throughout the project. These included choosing texts and activities while preparing first grade lessons, choosing where and how to read while teaching, and choosing whether and how to participate in debriefing activities. The range of choices available to the apprentice-

teachers was an essential component of The Apprentice-Teaching Project. It is notable that apprentice-teachers' agentic acts that could have been described *negatively* generally during the debriefing and writing segments of our activities; however, the majority of the apprentice-teachers' agentic actions would have been characterized positively by most teachers. Thus, The Apprentice-Teaching Project seemed to meet the goal of providing a supportive environment in which the participants could use literacy practices in school-defined positive ways.

In Chapter Two, I developed a working definition of agency. That definition was built as I prepared for the study on the basis of the work of multiple researchers and theoreticians including Holland et al. (1998), Lewis et al. (2007), Wertsch et al. (1993), and Gee (1996, 2012). As I draw toward the conclusion of this study, I believe this definition of agency continues to be an effective lens through which to view the apprentice-teachers' experiences. However, a close examination of their actions and comments has helped me understand nuances of this definition that I didn't perceive when I developed it. My involvement with the apprentice-teachers has added depth to my understanding of the multi-faceted nature of agency among school-marginalized students. The superscripts in the definition below indicate areas on which I elaborate in subsequent sections. I have also added or adapted several clauses, with those changes indicated with bold, underlined text, and deleted a clause, indicated by crossing it out.

> *Agency* is the ways in which *social actors*, functioning within *situated sociocultural contexts*, which inherently include *structures of power*[1], position themselves strategically[2] to *make and remake their identities*[3] through the use of *mediational tools* (such as Discourses and artifacts).

Likewise, agency is performed in varied *forms*[4], and **<u>can be *characterized* in various ways, depending on the *perspective* of the one defining agentic acts, his or her perception of the actor's *identities*, and how s/he *positions*[5] the actor. Finally, the potential short- and long-term *consequences*[6] will vary according to that characterization</u>**. ~~and with varied short and long-term *consequences*.~~

1) *Structures of power* – I initially considered *structures of power* from the position of a teacher – I hoped that by sharing power of curriculum development with the apprentice-teachers, they would feel more invested in the work of school. I failed to take sufficient account of the ways in which power also circulated among the students, i.e. the ways in which social power and peer status influenced the apprentice-teachers' actions.
2) *Self-positioning* – The apprentice-teachers *positioned themselves strategically* and <u>*moment to moment*</u>. Prior to analyzing this data, I failed to recognize the speed with which the participants would re-position themselves, on a nearly moment to moment basis. This understanding has implications for the ways in which teachers respond to students who appear to be engaging negatively in the classroom.
3) *Remaking identities* – While I entered this study with a mental image of the varied identities people bring to each situation, the participants' experiences helped me understand how important their myriad identities were to the apprentice teachers. They each brought social and peer-status identities to our learning community. However, it is unclear whether they entered the project

with an identity of “struggling” reader, or whether this was less an *identity*, and more a position assigned by the school. In their early interviews, some mentioned difficulties with reading, but few seemed to recognize that their reading achievement was significantly behind their peers (per standardized measures). However, as early as Round One, all seemed to “own” the identities of *role model*, *leader*, and *person-looked-up-to*.

4) *Forms* – The apprentice-teachers exerted agency in myriad ways. They suggested literary response activities; requested topics; suggested books; remembered books from previous reading experiences; wrote their lesson plans; engaged in conversations about their students, teaching and reading; rehearsed their books; came to my room at lunch, recess, and on adjusted schedules in order to prepare for their lessons; invited new students into their group; and shared their neighborhood knowledge of the first graders. Sometimes they also were reluctant to read; teased their peers; became frustrated with me or with our schedule changes; chose not to write; chose not to read during our scheduled lessons; or asked to change first grade students. As I discuss in the next segment, many of these agentic acts could be characterized in more than one way. Frequently, when I considered possible identities an apprentice-teacher might have been performing, I understood a potentially negative action in a more positive light.
5) *Positioning by others* – The Apprentice-Teaching Project strongly illuminated the ways in which acts of agency could be characterized very differently, depending on the perspective of and stance taken by the one doing the

defining, i.e. the way the teacher positioned the student. Even as the apprentice-teachers engaged more consistently in "productive ways," there were times, especially when literacy work was challenging, that several apprentice-teachers asserted identities in ways that were less acceptable to me, as teacher, and to the school. When teachers recognize that school-defined "misbehavior" is probably serving a purpose for the student, they may be less likely to assign punitive consequences for those students.

6) *Consequences* – I initially considered *consequences* from a teacher's viewpoint, just as I had the structures of power, and thought mostly of longer-term consequences, i.e. intrinsic satisfaction, discipline referrals, and promotion or retention in grade. In reality, the consequences were much more immediate; the apprentice-teachers seemed to focus on the social aspects of their interactions with peers and first graders. Recognizing the relevance of peer status and the students' desire to be role models for others is essential for teachers who work with school-positioned at-risk youth. Performing in a school-defined productive way has to be worth more to the individual than the social status that might be derived from "misbehavior" or clowning.

**Inferring identities facilitates the characterization of agentic acts.** In this dissertation, I've chosen to focus on the apprentice-teachers' acts of agency, because their actions were visible, unlike the identities they may have been performing. I argue that we can think of *agency* as comprising *what one does*, while *identity* is thought of as *whom one is*; because it is possible to observe actions, we can attempt to infer identities being performed. The definition of agency that guided the study became a framework through

which I could consider the apprentice-teachers' identities; more importantly, examining the apprentice-teachers' possible identities facilitated my understanding of the potential goals of their agentic acts. In attempting to identify classroom conditions that would support school-productive agency, I had to closely examine the apprentice-teachers' actions to determine if various instructional activities were having the desired effect. On several occasions, I initially *characterized* particular behaviors as *resistant*, but reflecting on identities led me to characterize some actions differently.

For example, during a conversation about metacognitive strategies, I initially perceived DeVontay to be trash-talking and enacting an *identity* of *cool dude*. However, it was also possible to interpret his comment toward another apprentice-teacher to "get out of my face" as an attempt to join the group conversation and distance himself from the side-conversation, thus enacting an identity of *good student*. Inferring a different identity led to a different characterization of the agentic act. As a result of this study, I have changed the ending of the definition as shown above in bold, underlined text.

**Contributions of Curriculum Developer and Researcher Stances to Teaching**

While I've attempted to differentiate among my varied roles in The Apprentice-Teacher Project in order to understand the impact of each role, my actions in the day-to-day work of the project were generally intertwined, with the researcher role strongly influencing my teacher and curriculum developer roles. There were times that the needs of one role were subsumed by the needs of another, and I had to make difficult decisions about which role to weigh more heavily. I argue, however, that all three roles – teacher, curriculum developer, and researcher – were crucial to the success of the project.

**Teacher.** The activities of teaching nearly always took precedence over the other two roles. There were evenings when I had to choose between research activities and teaching, i.e. elaborating on my field notes or making trips to multiple libraries to gather books; creating audio summaries or loading video clips for the next day's debriefing lessons. Decisions about the apprentice-teachers' participation were also influenced by my teaching role. On a few occasions, Billy and DeVontay made behavior choices that negatively impacted the classroom climate and interrupted others' learning. In those instances, I occasionally asked one of the boys to return to his homeroom or assigned a time-out in another room. In each of those cases, my researcher-self wanted the student to remain in our class so I could observe how he reacted to our activities; however, as a teacher, I decided the negative consequences for others' learning required that I have the student leave.

**Curriculum-developer.** Working as a *researcher* was crucial to my role as a *curriculum developer*. I concur with Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) who explain that we "need teachers who do research about their own work [and] who assume roles as co-constructors of knowledge and creators of curriculum" (p. 85). As a result of the conversations I had with the apprentice-teachers, I began to understand that my approach to teaching them about metacognitive reading strategies wasn't working. Though my understanding about the lack of efficacy of strategies crystalized after doing the detailed data analysis for this dissertation (long after the conclusion of the project), the process of writing field notes and reflective memos *during the project* led me to change my emphasis during later rounds. Likewise, the professional texts about agency I had read in my graduate student/researcher role helped me see the apprentice-teachers' acts of

resistance as messages about aspects of the curriculum and instructional activities, rather than as opposition to me personally.

**Researcher.** For the most part, I found the role of *researcher* strongly enhanced my *teaching moves* and *curricular decisions*. For example, I had initially included the debriefing conversations primarily as a tool to gather data about the participants' shifting identities as readers and teachers, though this was contrary to the advice of Hubbard and Power (2003), who advocated for data gathering tools that complement regular classroom activities. Though I intended them as data-gathering venues, I quickly found that the debriefing conversations were sites of powerful teaching. The insights I gleaned through observation and reflection also enabled me to adjust the curriculum with modifications to the ways I taught about strategies, invitations to the apprentice-teachers to talk more about critical issues in the texts, and the provision of further opportunities in which they could develop their use of academic language. In addition, these discussions became sites in which the apprentice-teachers could try on their identities as readers and teachers and exert agency in various forms. This finding supports Ritchie et al. (2012) who explain that "classroom talk has the power to form and shape children's identities as literate beings" (p. 9). I don't believe that I would have considered discussions of this sort in a typical teaching environment, but the teacher research study created the conditions for both the discussions and my close observations and record-keeping.

***Improving as a researcher***. Though working as a researcher clearly led to benefits for my teaching and curriculum development, there were also ways in which I felt I could have improved as a researcher. Primarily, I often felt that I was slow to reflect on and synthesize new data, and thus adjust instruction, curriculum, and research

techniques. Just as this study highlights the need for the apprentice-teachers to have multiple social interactions, I believe that I would have benefitted from being a member of an active teacher researcher group. Routine meetings would probably have pushed me to examine data in more systematic ways earlier in the research process. Likewise, discussions with others would have pushed my insights and shaped my teaching.

In conclusion, working as a *researcher* strongly impacted both my *teacher* and *curriculum developer* roles, enabling me to co-create a viable curriculum with the apprentice-teachers, develop opportunities for them to engage productively in school-based literacy practices, and glean valuable insights about the learning experiences of my students, who had previously been positioned as "struggling" readers and marginalized learners.

## Summary of Contributions to the Field

The Apprentice-Teaching Project contributed to the fields of agency and sociocultural literacy in several ways. The following list contains the key findings related to agency, identities, the Discourse of Reader, engaged reading, and the use of metacognitive reading strategies. (I discuss pedagogical contributions and implications in the next section.)

- Students' acts of agency will be influenced by their myriad identities, the membership of the group, and the benefits that accrue as a result of the agentic acts.
- The ways in which students' agentic acts are characterized are influenced by the position and perspective of the one labeling the acts, and the same act may be characterized differently by different people. For example, a teacher might

characterize an action negatively, but the student might view the same action positively if it garners positive attention from peers.

- The role of apprentice-teaching allowed the participants to see themselves as readers; thus they were willing to work harder, i.e. to be more agentic when confronted with difficult tasks.
- The participants recognized the power inherent in the apprentice-teaching role and used that power to begin to assume new Discourses, remake their identities as Readers and Teachers, and join the "literacy club" (F. Smith, 1987).
- People read for different purposes at different times, and those purposes don't always match a teacher's purpose.
- Relationships with others are an important factor in both fostering engagement and increasing learning.
- It is more important for students to feel that they belong to a passionate group of readers and writers than it is to provide explicit instruction in comprehension strategies.
- The approach schools and teachers have taken to instruction relating to metacognitive reading strategies has not been efficacious, because readers often aren't perceiving the strategies to be tools to deepen understanding of texts.

## Pedagogical Implications

In the following sections, I discuss three major pedagogical implications of The Apprentice-Teaching Project. First, the project became an antidote to the calls for systematic and explicit reading instruction. Second, the findings add to our body of

knowledge about the benefits of *responsive curricula*. Finally, there are implications about the need for students to have time and space to exercise agency.

**An Antidote to "Systematic and Explicit" Instruction**

One of the findings of the report from the National Reading Panel (NRP) was that reading instruction should be *systematic* and *explicit* (Panel, 2000), with the result that a plethora of scripted reading programs flooded the market. However, Cambourne (2002) argued that while explicit and systematic instruction can be appropriate and valuable, it must also be *mindful* and *contextualized*, because when teaching is "mindless and decontextualized…, it becomes dangerous …[making] learning much more complex than it ought to be" (p. 223). The Apprentice-Teaching Project did include some lessons that were explicit (i.e. the discussions of ways the apprentice-teachers could increase the first graders' engagement). Likewise, the project was systematic; I carefully reflected on each lesson and made adjustments in future rounds. However, I did not follow a script or year-long scope and sequence; I did not know at the beginning of the project that we would be using books about sports or bullying or that the debriefing conversations would become important teaching venues. In this sense, my teaching moves were both mindful and contextualized, because I made instructional decisions after careful observation of the apprentice-teachers' needs and interests. The findings of this study shed light on two ways in which systematic, explicit reading instruction has become pervasive: reading strategy instruction and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

**Constraints of reading strategy instruction.** Though I didn't set out to study readers' use of metacognitive reading strategies, this study has implications for instruction about strategies is taught in many classrooms.

***Strategy use became an end, not a means.*** Perhaps as a result of the ways in which I taught about the strategies, students indicated that they used many strategies after finishing a text, rather than as a tool to aid their comprehension during the reading process. In contrast, the social interactions apprentice-teachers had around texts fostered meaningful conversations about plot, theme, and unfamiliar words, with the result that they understood the stories without explicit strategy instruction.

***Non-apprentice-teaching instructional tasks didn't lend themselves to the work needed for deep comprehension***. The books and activities assigned for instruction about the reading strategies in non-apprentice-teaching lessons often weren't engaging or worthy of the work required for high-level comprehension. In contrast, because they wanted to be good role models for their students, the apprentice-teachers were generally strongly motivated to understand and fluently read the texts they had chosen for their first grade lessons.

***Explicit strategy instruction may have limited higher-level thinking.*** During the early part of the project, I may have over-emphasized the use of phonics, with the result that the apprentice-teachers and I didn't pay sufficient attention to their understanding of the texts the read. Likewise, because instruction about the strategies, both in the school and in non-apprentice-teaching activities, was isolated from actual reading, the students may not have realized that such strategies could be tools to deepen one's comprehension of the causal relations among events and emotional relations among characters. For example, the apprentice-teachers had a tendency to fall back on summarizing texts, rather than considering possible themes which could have helped the students make deep, meaningful connections among the texts and their own lives. I argue that teachers'

approach to comprehension instruction needs to change significantly. Students who have opportunities to read in engaging and authentic contexts and who have access to "in-the-moment" instruction are more likely to join the club of Readers.

***Implications for strategy instruction***. As a result of the insights I've gleaned from the apprentice-teachers, I've had to seriously reconsider the ways metacognitive reading strategies have been taught in my classroom.

*Noticing and naming*. Rather than explicitly demonstrating strategy use in a "model" text, readers may need brief mentions of a specific strategy *at the point of need* – that is when he or she is in the middle of reading a "tricky part" of a text. One technique I used repeatedly to help the apprentice-teachers recognize key features of their thinking while reading was *noticing and naming* (Johnston, 2004). This was a process in which I observed an effective bit of thinking on the part of a student (*noticing*), and then drew his or her attention to it (*naming*); my hope was that this would increase the students' awareness of efficacious thinking habits so they could use similar processes consciously in the future. Other instructional techniques such as over-the-shoulder or retrospective miscue analysis (M. R. Davenport, 2002; Y. Goodman & Marek, 1996) could also be useful for this type of *in the moment* teaching.

*A convergence of the social with strategies.* Social settings were efficacious in helping the apprentice-teachers realize that they hadn't understood texts' concepts or pronounced words in commonly accepted ways. Hence, the social nature of The Apprentice-Teaching Project increased the apprentice-teachers' ability to monitor and repair their comprehension, emphasizing the view that constructing meaning is a social act, not merely an "in the head" behavior (Street, 1992). Furthermore, though I saw some

evidence that the apprentice-teachers mentored each other, most of the support in repairing comprehension came from me. I suspect that the project could have been more successful if the mentoring relationships were broadened so that students were mentors for each other, with "authority" extending beyond the teacher.

**Cautions about texts and tasks of the Common Core State Standards.** Under the Race to the Top grants and NCLB waivers, most states are now required to adopt "college and career ready" standards, generally accepted to be the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The implementation guidelines for the CCSS offer recommendations for both texts and tasks that would not be supported in light of the findings from The Apprentice-Teaching Project.

***CCSS recommends texts with "greater complexity" and more non-fiction.*** The CCSS suggest that educators "ramp up the complexity of the texts [students] encounter" (Newkirk, 2013, p. 2) and choose a greater percent of non-fiction texts, both of which are cause for concern. Though picture books can address critical issues, they are often perceived to lack complexity; however, picture books were firmly established as crucial re-mediation tools among the near-adolescents in The Apprentice-Teaching Project. For example, Salenia was most engaged with fiction, and indicated that she learned *about reading* (i.e. word pronunciations and meanings) as she read. Likewise, while some non-fiction does include engaging characteristics such as interesting topics, illustrations, and word play, the topics' relative interest to individuals is highly subjective. Billy enjoyed learning while he read, however, he was highly selective about the texts he'd engage with.

***The CCSS recommends* text dependent *tasks.*** Another criticism of the CCSS implementation guidelines is that they suggest using a significant percentage of tasks and questions that are *text dependent*, i.e. tasks that don't require information or evidence from beyond the text (M. W. Smith, Appleman, & Wilhelm, 2014); students are also expected to read independently when answering questions. However, the apprentice-teachers demonstrated that they were most successful when they were able to draw on their own experiences when working toward understandings about the relations among characters and events. Furthermore, their ability to monitor their overall comprehension improved when they were working *with classmates*, rather than independently.

Though the CCSS implementation guidelines contend that readers need more complex, rigorous texts and more text dependent tasks, Newkirk (2013) contends the problem isn't that students don't read texts with enough rigor; rather, the problem is that they "cease to read voluntarily…and fail to develop the stamina for difficult texts" (p. 2). The apprentice-teachers had already stopped reading voluntarily (if they ever had), and through the use of engaging texts and meaningful work, they began to willingly read for at least part of their school day. This study supports the cautions against the suggested texts and tasks of the CCSS. I argue that increased student voice in the texts they read, broader range of text choices, and more socially-interactive environments in which to work toward deep understanding are even more crucial as text complexity is increased.

## Responsive Curriculum – Responsive Teachers

The *narrowing of curriculum*, especially for students in high-poverty schools and those identified as "struggling," has been well documented in recent years (Gallagher, 2009; McNeil, 2000; Meier & Wood, 2004; Sacks, 1999). As Gallagher (2009)

explained, school-identified “struggling” readers are more likely to be required to participate in “skill-and-kill” remediation programs, less likely to have access to interesting reading materials, and are often not given time to read extensively (p. 22). The Apprentice-Teaching Project is one intervention which addresses many of Gallagher’s concerns. The apprentice-teachers found engaging elements in the texts we read, and through the leadership opportunities afforded by the project, they glimpsed the benefits of membership in the *literacy club* (F. Smith, 1987).

The apprentice-teachers and I were able to co-create a curriculum with varied degrees of success. The curriculum evolved over time, with each element changing in response to our needs and interests. These elements included:

- Types of topics and texts chosen
- Literature responses used with first graders
- Ways in which I taught grade-level content (such as theme)
- Debriefing structures (photo elicitation, three pluses and a wish, videos)

Throughout this dissertation, I’ve used the phrase “responsive curriculum.” However, it’s important to note that the curriculum didn’t actually respond to the students, I did. The development and implementation of a responsive curriculum requires a master teacher who has the time and professional knowledge to make design changes in response to students’ needs and interests. Thus, the curriculum can’t be scripted in advance by people unfamiliar with the students, school, and community; it needs to be co-created by teachers and students working in concert. I found three elements of a responsive curriculum in The Apprentice-Teaching Project: social interactions among students; students’ voice and choice; and implications for the teacher.

**Time for social interactions among students.** This study contributes to the research on literacy as a social act (Lewis, 2001). I argue that all readers, but especially school-marginalized readers, need opportunities to read for pleasure and discuss their reading with peers, without regard for analyzing literature or applying strategies. Previous studies have found that adolescents and near-adolescents create social networks around compelling books when given the opportunity (Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Lewis, 2001). The Apprentice-Teaching Project opened up a space within which these "struggling" readers were no longer perceived as struggling, either by themselves or by their first grade students. Likewise, they built social connections to support each other in reading, comprehending, and teaching.

**More student voice and choice about texts and activities.** My task as a teacher was to create an environment in which students' agentic actions *ran parallel* with my goals of school-engaged literacy practices, *rather than counter to them*. This study supports others by indicating a need for student voice and choice regarding literacy (M. W. Smith & Wilhelm, 2006; Wilhelm et al., 2014). I argue that students are more likely to engage positively when classroom conditions provide opportunities for them to express their opinions (voice) and make choices about texts and activities, time to interact with others (social networks), and a framework within which to exert productive leadership.

**Responsive, knowledgeable teachers.** My role as the teacher and mentor was crucial to the evolving curriculum. While I expected my students to work at high levels, I also had to give them enough support that they felt successful. I recognized that their *position* as leaders in the project hierarchy was essential to their growing sense of school-defined positive agency. Johnston (2004) asserted that "children should leave school with

a sense that if they act, and act strategically, they can accomplish their goals" (p. 29) and it is this "sense" that he refers to as agency. As discussed in Chapter Two, Murrell (2007) described positionality as a role identity that is assigned to or assumed by an individual, and Holland et al. (1998) reminded us that when people are cast into particular positions, they view the world from those positions. In my roles as teacher and mentor, I intentionally created a framework through which the apprentice-teachers were *named* (positioned) as leaders, and thus *grew into* leadership in both reading and behavior. I supported students in this growth process by using *questions* and *noticing and naming* to draw attention to their school-productive agency.

My work as a teacher researcher was also an important part of the development of a responsive curriculum. While I wanted the apprentice-teachers to have power within our learning community, I recognized that I had significant power over many aspects of the project. Stepping back mid-course to do early passes through field notes and pausing to write reflections helped me evaluate ways that power and agency were unfolding in the project and additional ways that I could share decision-making authority. In this regard, this study adds to the body of research that advocates for practitioner research as a means to strengthen teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Shockley-Bisplinghoff & Allen, 1998). While teachers might not engage in formal teacher research groups, the dispositions of a researcher – observing, note-taking, reflecting, and reading professional literature – all contribute to *responsiveness*.

**Opening Spaces for School-Productive Agency**

Finally, The Apprentice-Teaching Project has implications about the need for and constraints to opening spaces for students to exert school-productive agency. In order to

create more space for agency on the part of my students, we needed consistent blocks of time in which to prepare, teach, and debrief after first grade lessons. However, it was often challenging to maintain our apprentice-teaching momentum in the face of the accountability requirements of NCLB and my state's public school accountability laws.

**Time and space for students to exert agency.** The apprentice-teachers' acts of agency varied along of a continuum of academic productivity; while it was difficult, I found that leaving space for their less-productive agency ultimately led to more school-defined positive agency. In considering both the productive and less-than-productive agentic acts of the apprentice-teachers, I argue that it's crucial for educators to leave space in classrooms for seemingly non-productive agentic acts. For each "negative" act, i.e. Billy's distractions in Chapter Eight and DeVontay's telling moment in Chapter Ten, I also observed the student turn himself around and return to positive classroom engagements. When given space to assert their frustration, opportunities to engage in social interactions, and voice and choice about texts and activities, students re-engaged with school literacy tasks. This study adds to the body of knowledge regarding conditions that support students' productive use of literacy (Alvermann, 2001; Jalongo, 2005; Vasquez, 2003).

**Schedule conflicts, standardized testing, and curricular mandates all blocked time and space for productive agency**. Three factors provided significant impediments to the implementing The Apprentice-Teaching Project and the concomitant space for students' productive use of agency. The first was schedule conflicts which required that I cancel apprentice-teaching classes. Second, the time spent taking and proctoring tests was significant; state, district and school testing expectations occupied large chunks of

potential learning time, confirming findings related to the negative impact of standardized testing on curricular choices (Sacks, 1999; Sleeter, 2005). Finally, the need to incorporate aspects of the district-required Title I curriculum and school-mandated initiatives consumed significant instructional time. These initiatives included metacognitive reading strategies, activities from professional book clubs, and test preparation lessons. This study confirmed findings about the narrowing of the curriculum for students in high-poverty schools (Meier & Wood, 2004). Though the findings of The Apprentice-Teaching Project support the creation of spaces within *responsive teachers* can create *curriculum* through which students have *voice*, *choice*, and opportunities for *socially-interactive responses*, schedule conflicts, standardized testing, and narrowing curricular mandates all hinder teachers' opportunities to create such classrooms.

**Closing Thoughts about the Pedagogical Implications**

I argue that *responsive curricula* and *responsive teachers* are essential elements of a classroom that fosters engaged and productive learning, because both allow students space to exert agency in a variety of ways. The power of the apprentice-teaching curriculum resulted from its *lack of* standardization, packaging, and prescription. Sleeter (2005) argued that "the ever-increasing degree to which curriculum has been prescribed [has resulted in teachers having] less and less space for anything except what is prescribed" (p. 1). McNeil (2000) elaborated, saying that standardization has made it increasingly difficult for teachers to incorporate complex "real-world" information into their courses, to draw on their own personal knowledge and their students' experiences, and to affirm the students' role in the co-construction of the learning experience (p. 195).

When I made observations about the efficacy of the apprentice-teaching curriculum and evaluated the types of agency exerted by the apprentice-teachers, I saw evidence of learning according to Gee's (2004b) definition that changes in social identities can represent learning; however, I didn't see evidence on standardized tests. Creating authentic environments in which students can positively engage in social literacy practices, exert agency in school-defined productive ways, and take up new Discourses and social identities as literate beings is essential. However, this will be difficult as long as policy makers continue to mandate increasingly standardized curricula.

## New Questions and Future Directions

At the moment, I have at least two facets of this project that I'd like to pursue further, both relating to Gee's (2004b) notion of affinity spaces, which could be used as both an analytic and generative framework which could lead to promising curricular developments. Gee (2004b) describes an affinity space as one which convenes around a particular endeavor or interest and lists 11 defining characteristics (pp. 84-87). Insofar as I attempted to make the curriculum of The Apprentice-Teaching Project responsive to the needs and interests of the participants, and that I recognized and named the actions that represented the apprentice-teachers' knowledge, I believe the apprentice-teaching community was beginning to take on some characteristics of affinity spaces. For example, in an affinity space, "content organization is transformed by interactional organization," or, in other words, content of affinity spaces is shaped and changed by the "actions and interactions" of the members (p. 85). In addition, "tacit knowledge is encouraged and honored" (p. 86). Analyzing existing data in light of Gee's 11 features

would help to identify the ways in which our learning community was approaching status as an affinity space.

In addition to being an analytic tool, the construct of affinity spaces could be a generative tool which could facilitate the development of additional features of such spaces within the apprentice-teaching community. For example, I was the primary mentor for the apprentice-teachers. What would happen if the mentorship capacity were shared? Gee asserts that in affinity spaces, “dispersed knowledge is encouraged” (p. 86) and “newbies and masters and everyone else share common space (p. 85). If this became an ongoing project, with apprentice-teachers participating for more than one year, they could become mentors for new groups of apprentice-teachers, thus broadening the number of leaders. If the apprentice-teachers had larger roles in mentoring each other, the effects on comprehension and positive agentic acts could be greater. Gauging the efficacy of that hypothesis would be another direction for future research.

**Concluding Remarks**

As I neared the end of this dissertation, I found myself looking over my bookshelf; I saw books that warn about current trends in educational policy – *Standardized Minds* (Sacks, 1999) and *Many Children Left Behind* (Meier & Wood, 2004). I also saw books that suggested visions for the possible – *Un-Standardizing Curriculum* (Sleeter, 2005) and *Teaching Children’s Literature, It’s Critical!* (Leland et al., 2012). I thought about everything my students, the apprentice-teachers, had accomplished in the fleeting seven months of this study. Salenia and the way her shyness blossomed into quiet confidence. Billy and the way his reading accomplishments caused me to re-examine the efficacy of the project for him. DeVontay and the ways his behavior

could quickly flow from engaged to resistant, his interest in being a role model, and the fact that he spent most of the last day of school helping me.

Creating classroom spaces in which our students can exert agency is important. However, in order to do this, teachers need to find ways to exert productive agency for ourselves. We need more voice about how to meet our students' needs and a wider range of curricular choices. As I reflect about this project and the varied possibilities explored on my bookshelves, I am reminded of Katherine Bomer (2005), her description of ways that she sought to "teach in the cracks" of the varied mandates, and the series of policy changes that ultimately pushed her out of the public school classroom. This study illuminated some the challenges of finding "cracks" in which to exert my own agency, but it also demonstrated the possibilities that can open up for the Salenias, Billys, and DeVontays in our schools – those students who have been labeled as "failures" but who have the capacity to be literacy leaders. Regardless of whether you, as a fellow teacher, implement a project similar to The Apprentice-Teaching Project, institute group conversations about miscue analysis (R. A. Moore & Gilles, 2005), or explore critical issues in trade books and news clippings, I invite you to join me in a quest to find cracks in which we can teach in ways that revalue both our students and our professional selves.

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## APPENDIX A

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Activate background knowledge**: Metacognitive strategy; this technique is based on the premise that readers bring information to their varied reading tasks. "Effective" readers use a variety of tools to discern the information they'll need to mentally retrieve in order to comprehend a text, and then do so. From the standpoint of metacognitive strategies (those thinking processes of "effective" readers), this phrase refers to a task done by the reader. However, the phrase is also used in pedagogy to refer to the processes that teachers use to prepare students for new learning.

**Analytical Reading Inventory (ARI; Woods & Moe, 2006):** An informal reading inventory with passages drawn from texts typically used at levels from primer to ninth grade levels. Assessment templates can be used to evaluate readers' use of the cueing systems and analyze the types of miscues made while reading aloud. Each passage also includes measures of comprehension, including retelling protocols and literal and inferential questions. Through an analysis of the reader's miscue patterns and understanding of the text, the teacher can estimate whether each passage is at an independent, instructional, or frustrational level for the reader.

**Autonomous view of reading:** a perspective that positions all thinking within the head of a single reader; often emphasizes the correct pronunciation of words (decoding) as sufficient to understanding a text (Street, 1992).

**Big books**: Picture books that have been printed in a poster-sized format; used for reading aloud with a class-sized group of students. Intended to help the teacher recreate the intimacy of reading aloud to a single child. Beneficial when the teacher

wants to draw students' attention to specific elements of language, i.e. rhymes, letter sequences, inflected endings, etc.

**Bloom's Taxonomy:** A classification of learning objectives rank ordered from "low level" to "high level;" levels include knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Proponents assume that questions at higher levels require a greater depth of understanding than questions at lower levels.

**Burke Reading Interview (BRI; Y. Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1996):** A series of questions designed to help the teacher understand a reader's perceptions of reading and him or herself as a reader. Responses to the questions help the teacher understand ways in which the reader leans toward a word-based perspective and meaning-based perspective of reading.

**Clarifying**: Metacognitive strategy; related to Monitoring Understanding; the process of figuring out unknown words, either through decoding ("sounding out") or making inferences about word meanings, and figuring out the overall meaning of a text, especially if one's attention has drifted.

**CLOZE**: An instructional activity in which a teacher covers key words in a text and asks students to figure out what could "fit." Readers use their knowledge of semantics (meaning), syntax (grammar), and graphophonics (letters and sounds) to determine words that could reasonably be substituted for the "blank."

**Comprehension**: The process of understanding a situation, movie, play, or text. Literal comprehension typically refers to the ability to understand and use information that was explicitly presented, such as the color of a character's clothing. Inferential

understanding refers to the reader's ability to "connect the pieces" in a text or to use background knowledge to fill in gaps in the information presented.

**Connections**: metacognitive strategy; making mental links between information in different parts of a text or between a text and prior knowledge.

**Cueing systems**: *See also semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic;* three systems of language that interact to convey meaning (semantics), with predictable structures (syntax) and letter/sound relationships (graphophonics) to readers and speakers.

**Decoding**: The process of "sounding out" words using the letters and sounds they represent. Readers also typically use their knowledge of syntax (grammar) and semantics (meaning) as they determine how to pronounce unknown words.

**Digraph**: A pair of letters used to represent a single sound, i.e. /sh/ or /th/.

**Fix-up:** Metacognitive strategy; another term for *Clarifying*; related to Monitoring Understanding; the process of figuring out unknown words, either through decoding ("sounding out") or making inferences about word meanings, and figuring out the overall meaning of a text, especially if one's attention has drifted.

**Graffiti board**: A response (either to reading or participating in an activity) which includes writing/drawing ideas on a large sheet of paper. Comments and images are often place in a seemingly haphazard manner, may be oriented differently in relation to others' images, and may represent "first draft thinking" (temporary spellings, emerging understandings, and non-traditional language conventions).

**Graphophonic cueing system**: Also known as phonics; the relationships between letters (and combinations of letters) and the sounds they make.

**Ideological view of reading**: A perspective that contends that there are arguments and points of difference over the meaning and use of literacy practices; those arguments are embedded in power relations (Street, 1992).

**Inferences/inferential**: Metacognitive strategy; using information presented in a text and information one already has to "fill in gaps" or "assemble puzzle pieces" to give a nuanced understanding of text. Inferences are used by readers to figure out potential meanings of unfamiliar words, to understand character motivations, to predict upcoming events, and to understand how two seemingly unconnected pieces of information are related, among other uses. Inferential question require the reader to make inferences to figure out the answer. See also comprehension.

**Know / Want to Know / Learned (KWL)**: A three column graphic organizer used prior, during, and after learning new information. Prior to reading a text or beginning a new curricular unit, the learner would add information to the first column to show what he already *knows* about a topic. He would next record questions or statements to express what he *wants to know* about a topic. Finally, after reading or studying, he would record what he's *learned* in the final column.

**Literal understanding**: *See comprehension.*

**Meaning-based view of reading**: A perspective that recognizes that one's understanding of text is influenced by one's prior experiences, level of background knowledge, ability to decipher words, level of vocabulary knowledge, etc. Related to the *sociocultural perspective*.

**Metacognitive strategies**: A collection of thinking processes (literally "thinking about how one is thinking") that researchers identified as characteristic of "effective"

readers; frequently used as the basis of comprehension instruction. One instructional technique is for the teacher to *read aloud* a text and pause at critical points to *think aloud*, demonstrating and explicitly discussing a thinking process (i.e. predicting, clarifying, questioning, visualizing, etc.) as a metacognitive strategy that can be used to improve understanding while reading.

**Mini-lesson**: A brief (10-15 minutes) lesson focused on a single, discrete topic, i.e. using commas for a series of words, introducing the concept of theme with a few vivid examples.

**Miscue data:** A miscue is a reader's unexpected response – a spoken word that did not match the word printed on the page. While some would call such a "mis-calling" an error, a term that has negative connotations, the term miscue is intended to value the reader's thinking. Miscue data come when a teacher listens to and records oral reading, noting when the responses are different than expected. The data can then be analyzed with attention to the three cueing systems – semantics, syntax, and graphophonics.

**Monitoring Understanding**: Metacognitive strategy; determining whether one understands what's been read. This involves literal understanding (basic facts & sequences) and inferential understanding (why characters acted in particular ways, how events are related).

**Picture book**: a book in which the illustrations and text work together to convey meaning, generally understood to be a story, as contrasted with non-fiction; generally short (as contrasted with chapter books), 32 or 64 pages long. The "appropriate" age range for picture books can vary widely, depending on the topic of the story.

**Predicting**: Metacognitive strategy; using one's knowledge of narrative structure, preceding events, and prior knowledge to make educated guesses about upcoming events and topics in a text.

**Questioning:** Metacognitive strategy; used to monitor and evaluate one's understanding of a text; the reader asks questions about a text and then ensures that she can answer them. One might ask about puzzling information, character motivations, and events that seem unclear.

**Read aloud/Think aloud**: *See also metacognitive strategies;* an instructional technique that involves reading aloud with brief oral modeling of the thinking that the reader is doing at that point to facilitate deep understanding of the text.

**Reading level:** Texts have been assigned a value of difficulty on the basis multiple criteria, including the sentence structure, number of words in the text and sentences, number of syllables in an average sentence, and the difficulty of the concepts addressed in the text. The levels range from A (texts with one to two short words per page, high predictability and repetition, and easy concepts) to Z (texts with hundreds of pages, many complex sentences, sophisticated vocabulary, and metaphorical language).

**Reading level assessment:** A process in which a teacher asks a student to read a text, retell key points, and answer specific questions. When assigning the student's "level," both word recognition (accuracy) and comprehension are considered.

**Reciprocal teaching:** A teaching process in which the expert (adult teacher) models metacognitive comprehension strategies for students and then expects them to take

increasing responsibility for modeling and teaching the use of strategies to each other (Palincsar & Brown, 1986)

**Semantic cueing system**: Also known as meaning; the meanings carried by the words in language.

**Sensory images:** Metacognitive strategy; related to *visualizing*; the process of generating images to represent material in a text. Images might show a character, a series of actions, or diagrams to show relationships among the information presented.

***Soar to Success***: The curriculum that was mandated by my school Title I School Improvement Plan; designed to help students increase their comprehension through the use of *reciprocal teaching*, four *metacognitive strategies* (predicting, clarifying, questioning, and clarifying). Program includes 18 pre-selected picture books of increasing complexity and a framework for each lesson that includes rereading familiar texts, previewing new material, reading, completing a graphic organizer, and discussion. Students are expected to model and explain the metacognitive comprehension strategies to each other (Cooper, 1999).

**Sociocultural view of reading:** A view of literacy and reading that views language as being tied to people's experiences in the world; recognizes that the reader's understanding of a text is influenced by his or her level of background knowledge, interest, social connections, etc. (Gee, 1999a).

**Story map**: A tool for helping a reader keep track of important elements of a piece of literature; organized in multiple ways, often as a web or in columns; literary elements include plot, characters, characters' changes over time, setting, theme, etc.

**Summarizing**: Metacognitive strategy; related to *synthesizing*; a process of pausing to sum up or retell what's been read mentally, orally, or in writing.

**Syntactic cueing system**: Also known as structure, the grammar of language; the relationships among words that govern categories of words (nouns, verbs, etc.), word order, verb tense, pluralities, and other inflected endings.

**Synthesize**: Metacognitive strategy; related to *summarizing*; a process of pausing to sum up what's been read mentally, orally, or in writing. *Synthesizing* is generally understood to be more sophisticated that *summarizing*, requiring the articulation of connections among multiple texts.

**Teaching chart:** A reference chart, usually written on a large poster or easel, made by a teacher, often in conjunction with students. The chart captures information that members of the learning community will want to refer back to throughout a unit or period of activity. (Sometimes referred to as *anchor charts*.)

**Temporary spelling**: Also known as invented spelling; the spelling of words in a "non-conventional" way; referred to as "temporary," because the reader understands that the author of the words will go back and change the spelling to the conventional form when the work is "published;" temporary spelling allows the author to focus on the message conveyed rather than on "perfect" presentation.

**Think sheet:** An open-ended worksheet designed to help students interact with the ideas in texts, rather than one seeking pre-determined, "correct" answers.

**Three Pluses and a Wish**: A process of feedback in which the responder shares three positive comments for each "wish" or area that could be improved.

**Title I**: A federal funding program for schools with high percentages of children living in poverty. The money is typically spent on additional services intended to help the children be academically successful. Such services might include counseling, instructional coaches, social workers, additional literacy or math teachers, extended-day tutoring programs, snacks, parent involvement activities, book give-aways, summer reading programs, or any other program that the school and district staff deem will increase learning opportunities for the children.

**Trade book**: A book written for the bookstore or library market (as opposed to the school/educational market); can refer to picture books, chapter books, graphic novels, fiction and non-fiction, etc.; may be illustrated or not.

**Transmediation**: The process of expressing what one knows in a form of expression different than the form in which it was originally learned, i.e. transferring knowledge from verbal language to a form of visual art (Short et al., 1996).

**Visualizing**: Metacognitive strategy; related to *sensory images*; the process of generating images to represent material in a text. Images might show a character, a series of actions, or diagrams to show relationships among the information presented.

**Word-based view of reading**: A perspective that privileges the correct pronunciation of words; may disregard the reader's interest in or level of background knowledge about the topic of the text. Related to the *autonomous perspective*.

# APPENDIX B

# SAMPLE OF A CONSTRUCTED NARRATIVE AND ACCOMPANYING DATA SOURCES

As described in Chapter Four, I used a process of Thematic and Narrative Analysis throughout this study. This appendix provides a sample of the constructive narrative for the preparation phase of Round Four. The two-page narrative excerpt is on the left, and the sources are on the right.

***Excerpts from the Constructed Narrative for the preparation phase of Round Four, pp. 41-43, 45-46.***

| Narrative | Sources |
|---|---|
| **Preparing for Lesson 4.** During the preparatory classes, I facilitated discussions among the three different groups of apprentice-teachers about the types of books and activities that they wanted to pursue during Round Four. As a result of the high-stakes testing schedule and absences, only about two-thirds of the apprentice-teachers were involved in the initial conversations about possible books and activities for this round, and of these, only one group really shaped our Lesson 4 activities. | Data Collection Notebook #1; pp. 45-47<br><br>Lesson Plan book, Week of 3/2/09-3/6/09<br><br>Excel "Data Summary" Spreadsheet<br><br>Cooked Field Notes, 3/6/09 AT Prep All, pp. 1-2 |
| ***Negotiating texts and activities among three groups meeting at different times.*** The first discussion about Round Four began in Billy's group, where I began by asking what ideas the members had about their next Apprentice-Teaching lesson. Billy started the conversation with a quick comment that we should play hide-and-seek, to which I quickly replied that hide-and-seek wasn't related to reading. A non-focal student remembered doing art projects after her teacher had read *Westlandia* (Fleischman, 2002) the previous year; she suggested that we all read that book and make our own projects. Two other non-focal | Data Collection Notebook #1; pp. 45<br><br>Cooked Field Notes, 3/5/09 AT Prep 4, pp.1-2 |

students quickly added ideas of their own: that we trace our hands as part of the project, and that we read about animals. Abandoning her idea of reading *Westlandia*, the first student then floated the idea of reading about sports (3/5/09, AT 4 Prep Field Notes, p. 2-3). Drawing on my own knowledge of possible activities, I again entered the *mentoring role* and described graffiti boards; I speculated aloud that this could be an activity which would combine the apprentice-teachers' ideas about an art activity while also incorporating writing.

As I re-read my field notes, I was struck that neither sports nor art came up organically in other two groups. When asked about books and activities, DeVontay suggested a location, the courtyard, rather than specific books. Aureesha quickly said that the courtyard would be too cold in March, so DeVontay fired back that we should go to the first graders' classroom, to which Aureesha replied that it was too small. This rapid fire exchange, in polite but almost competitive voices, is representative of the conversations that frequently occurred between these two strong-willed individuals. Managing to get a word in edgewise, Salenia returned our discussion to activities and suggested that we play the games we'd made in Round Three to which a non-focal student added that the first graders should write about what they'd read (3/6/09, AT 4 Prep Field Notes, p. 4). DeVontay also thought that we should go to the public library and use the computers to find books. …

***Selecting and rehearsing books.*** After discussing possible book topics and activities on the first day of preparation, the apprentice-teachers had three class sessions

Data Collection
Notebook #1; p. 46

Cooked Field Notes,
3/5/09 AT Prep 4, p.4

Lesson Plan book,
Week of 3/9/09-3/13/09

Data Collection
Notebook #1, p. 48

in which to rehearse their books and plan their reading and graffiti board lessons. …

*Slowly warming up to the negotiated topic and activity*. While Aureesha and LaToya generated ideas about Lesson 4…

Data Analysis
Notebook #6, p. 15

APPENDIX C

DESCRIPTIONS OF ACTIVITIES FOR ROUNDS THREE THROUGH SEVEN

In Chapters Five (Round One) and Seven (Round Two), I described the curriculum, apprentice-teachers' actions and comments, and my reflections about early parts of the project in detail. Chapter Nine, about metacognitive reading strategies, was also organized by round and included some information about the texts, teaching activities, and debriefing formats for Rounds Three through Seven. However, I thought readers might be interested in an explicit description of the curriculum associated with each of the seven rounds of The Apprentice-Teaching Project, and I provide that here. Table C.1 provides an overview of the activities of all seven rounds.

| **Rd** | **Dates** | **# class ses-sions** | **Topics of picture books** | **Teaching activity** | **Reading skill** | **Format of Debrief** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 11/17 – 11/21 | 5 | General | Read aloud | Reading fluently | Open discussion |
| 2 | 12/10 – 12/16 | 5 | Christmas | Read aloud & Think aloud | Predicting & Questioning | Open discussion |
| 3 | 1/26 – 2/7 | 7 | Valentines | Read aloud & Flip-book game | Comprehension; Bloom's Levels of Knowledge | Open discussion |
| 4 | 3/5 – 3/17 | 6 | Sports | Read aloud & Graffiti Board art | Main ideas & details<br>Theme<br>Symbolism | Individual interviews about graffiti board art work |
| 5 | 3/23 – 3/27 | 5 | Bullying | Read aloud and Bullying Invitation | Character traits & perspectives | Watch video clips of teaching & discuss |

| 6 | 4/7 – 4/13 | 5 | Bullying | Read aloud and Bullying Invitation | Character traits & perspectives | Watch video clips of teaching & Three Pluses and a Wish |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 4/27 – 5/6 | 6 | Free Choice | Read aloud & choice activity | Enjoying books together | Open discussion: What do you want to share about the AT Project? |

**Table C.1 Summary of Rounds One through Seven**

## Round One: Making Connections with Texts and Our Students

Round One took place just before Thanksgiving and lasted for five classes. The apprentice-teachers involved in Round One represented two of my seven intervention groups; of the six focal students, only Billy did not participate.

### Planning and Teaching Lesson 1

When I planned for the apprentice-teachers' activities in Round One, I was primarily concerned that they have positive experiences with reading and their students. We went to the school library to select books. Each student was free to make his or her own book choices, and many drew on vague memories of books they'd read or heard in previous grade-levels; thus, there was no common theme or topic to unify the selected books. The apprentice-teachers prepared for their first lesson by silently reading and then orally rehearsing their books. I asked them to keep a log of books they'd read and considered using in their lesson (see Figure 5.1, p. 93). In the minutes before Lesson 1, the apprentice-teachers chose the area they'd conduct their lesson. Several elected to sit on the floor with their students facing them or beside them. Others chose to sit at tables with their students in chairs to either side.

## Bringing Closure to Lesson 1

After the lesson, the apprentice-teachers were nearly unanimous in their sense that the project was worthwhile. Prior to engaging in the debriefing discussion, I asked the apprentice-teachers to write reflections (see Figure 5.2, p. 96) about their lessons. The debriefing conversations were informal and began with the simple prompt, “What do you want to tell me?” The major themes of these discussions included the apprentice-teachers’ perceptions of themselves as role models, ways they’d used metacognitive reading strategies, the first graders’ behavior, ways to make the read-aloud experience interesting, and the need to practice the books.

# Round Two: Responding to the Apprentice-Teachers’ Needs

Round Two took place in the week prior to our winter break and also lasted five periods.

## Preparing for and Teaching Lesson 2

This round was characterized by my efforts to respond to the needs I’d observed among the apprentice-teachers in Round One. During Round One, I’d noticed that the apprentice-teachers weren’t sure about how to teach their students about metacognitive reading strategies. Therefore, rather than beginning our preparation by selecting books, I elected to start with a demonstration lesson in which I modeled a technique called “read aloud/think aloud.” I showed how I could model my own use of two metacognitive strategies, questioning and predicting, as I read a Christmas-themed picture book aloud. I’d also noticed that the apprentice-teachers seemed to be overwhelmed by the number of books available in the library. As a result, I chose to gather Christmas-related picture books in our classroom and invited the apprentice-teachers to browse this smaller

selection of books. Having a more focused collection in a confined space facilitated my ability to conduct impromptu book talks and informal reading conferences as the apprentice-teachers browsed and selected books for Lesson 2.

### Bringing Closure to Lesson 2

The debriefing discussion for Lesson 2 was similar to that for Lesson 1; I simply starting by asking the apprentice-teachers what they wanted to tell me. While most of the apprentice-teachers felt their lesson went well, a few were concerned about the behavior of their first graders. Three major themes about the first grade students' behavior emerged in the debriefing discussions – they would behave if there were good books read in interesting ways, they would behave if the apprentice-teachers forced them to, and they would behave if the apprentice-teachers talked like teachers. We also briefly discussed things the apprentice-teachers felt they "couldn't" talk about with their first graders, for example, the decorated boxer shorts a rabbit was wearing in one book.

## Round Three: Learning More about Our Teaching Roles

Round Three started about three weeks after Winter Break and took place over a two-week span from 1/26 to 2/6. Because of several cancellations due to snow and a previously scheduled day of professional development for teachers, we had seven school days: two for professional development, three for preparation, and one each for teaching and debriefing. The data for Round Three consisted of 63 pages of documents including two field note documents, seven audio recordings and their summaries, seven teaching charts, and ten student reflections.

**Preparing for and Teaching Lesson 3**

**Professional development.** Prior to Round Three, I led conversations which resembled professional development with the apprentice-teachers who had been involved in Rounds One and Two. I asked them to brainstorm and discuss activities they remembered doing in various reading classes. My goal was for them to take more ownership for suggesting and planning lesson activities. In addition, I wanted the apprentice-teachers to begin to understand that teachers choose particular activities with specific learning goals in mind.

LaToya and Alyssa (see Figure 9.1, p. 186) talked extensively about playing games during reading classes. DeVontay and Salenia (Figure 9.2, p. 187) reiterated the importance of reading fluently and with expression and remembered activities in which words were missing from texts and they had to figure out what would make sense in that spot. All the apprentice-teachers used the terminology of metacognitive reading strategies; however, most failed to provide concrete examples of ways their teachers had demonstrated the use of strategies while actually reading.

After the two class sessions of professional development discussions, we had several days with no school – the result of weather-related closures and a previously schedule teacher in-service day. During this time I engaged in preliminary data analysis and decided to increase the number of apprentice-teachers. Two of the eight original apprentice-teachers had recently exited the project because they'd moved; at the same time, I also decided that I might want to continue the project into the next year. If that happened, I would want a larger number of fifth graders to carry forward into their sixth grade year. Thus, in Round Three there were twelve apprentice-teachers, including Billy

and three other new apprentice-teachers, spread across one sixth grade and two fifth grade intervention groups.

**Preparing for Lesson 3.** As a result of the professional development discussions, I knew the apprentice-teachers wanted Lesson 3 to feel game-like or include a "fun" activity. Also, since this lesson would be just a week prior to Valentine's Day, the apprentice-teachers thought their books should be about that holiday. Following the process that had worked well for Round Two, I gathered a collection of Valentine's related books from my personal library and the school and public libraries, and the apprentice-teachers chose and rehearsed their books. Concurrently, I was required to implement at least one instructional activity from our staff book study text, which included a section on creating questions using Bloom's Taxonomy. As a result, the apprentice-teachers and I collaborated to create a lift-the-flap game board with comprehension questions about their books drawn from each of the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy ("Bloom's Taxonomy," 2013). Figure C.1 shows Aureesha's lift-the-flap game board about *Don't Be My Valentine* (Lexau & Hoff, 1999).

**Figure C.1 Aureesha's Lift-the-Flap Book with the Interior Questions and Lifting Flaps**

**Teaching Lesson 3.** During the preparation sessions, I was explicit in asking the apprentice-teachers to think about their role as teachers, urging them to consider seating, book position, and ways to open the lesson. Though they were using the game as a

literature response activity, I continued to expect them to read to their first graders. Now that the original apprentice-teachers were comfortable with that aspect of their teaching, I believed they were ready to layer additional activities into their lessons. Without considering all the ramifications, I also expected the new apprentice teachers to both read aloud and do an activity.

The first grade students were unexpectedly late for Lesson 3, leaving the apprentice-teachers at loose ends for about 10 minutes. A major theme in my field notes for the day focuses on the apprentice-teachers' activities as they kept themselves occupied during the delay. All four of the new apprentice-teachers started the waiting time by simply sitting quietly and staring into space. My field notes indicated that they "seemed a little shell-shocked during the last 15 minutes before the lesson started" (2/5/09, AT Lesson #3, p. 4). In addition to sitting quietly, other apprentice-teachers read or "goofed off." The "telling moment" in the mini-case study about DeVontay (Chapter 10) details his actions during this waiting period.

As a result of the extensive conversations and negotiation during the planning phase of Round Three, the apprentice-teachers had developed two-part lessons that included reading aloud about Valentine's Day and playing a game using their lift-the-flap game boards. After reading their book, the apprentice-teachers planned to have their first grade students roll a die to choose which flap to lift, revealing the question beneath. After the first graders arrived, the lessons were rushed, but generally went smoothly. Several apprentice-teachers chose to stop reading midway through their books to allow sufficient time for the game.

### Bringing Closure to Lesson 3

As I had in Rounds One and Two, I asked the apprentice-teachers to write reflections about their lessons prior to beginning the debriefing conversations for Round Three (see Billy's reflection in Figure 8.2, p. 167). Throughout this dissertation, I have attempted to show adjustments I made in the curriculum to make it more *responsive* to the apprentice-teachers' interests and needs. The form of the reflection is one such adjustment. As shown in Figure 5.2, the form I made for the reflection for Rounds One and Two consisted of a single, wide column in which students wrote. I'd been concerned that some apprentice-teachers struggled with their written reflections and thought providing a space for me to respond might help them feel that there was an audience for their writing. Figure C.2 shows the revised format used in Round Three. I noticed a distinct difference in the volume of writing when comparing the reflections of the experienced apprentice-teachers (third lesson) and new apprentice-teachers (first lesson). I hypothesized that this difference might be due to the writing stamina that the experienced apprentice-teachers had developed over the course of the project.

# Apprentice Teacher Project

Name Aureesha Date 2/6/09

## Teaching Journal: After-Lesson Reflection

Now that you have finished your ~~second~~ third lesson, take a few minutes to think about how the lesson went. Consider these questions as you write:

📖 What did you learn about each of your students? 📖 What went well? 📖 What do you wish you'd done differently? 📖 Did any of the questions seem harder or easier for your students? Why do you think so?

**Your thoughts**

Some of my questions was hard and some was hard. When I first got started my students were listening very well I was fustrated at first when they come in late. I was mad that I got New students but then I got over it because it went very well.

**Comments from Mrs. Mullin**

Aureesha

You say that "some of your questions were hard and some were hard." I assume you mean that some questions were easy? This is really good insight. I wonder if you remember which questions were harder? What do you think made them harder? On our list of questions, do you think some categories are harder than others?

I was also frustrated that the students were late. That happens sometimes in schools... the schedule changes suddenly and everyone has to be flexible. You handled your frustration really well.

**Figure C.2 Aureesha's Reflections after Teaching Lesson 3**

Following the format from Rounds One and Two, I opened the Round Three debriefing conversations with the simple prompt, “What do you want to tell me?” As the discussion progressed, I followed up on student comments to elicit further information. Most of the new apprentice-teachers expressed their sense that the lesson had been beneficial for both them and their first grade students. Though several new apprentice-teachers had concerns about the behavior of their students, the experienced apprentice-teachers overwhelmingly felt that their first graders’ behavior had improved. More importantly, they attributed this improvement to their own actions, as Salenia demonstrated with this comment: “I think it’s because I had good expression” (2/6/09, Debriefing Summary 5N, p 1). This growth in both confidence and teaching skill among the experienced apprentice-teachers seems to indicate that they were growing into their roles as teachers.

**Round Four: Developing our Community of Learning Teachers**

Round Three concluded on February 6th, but Round Four didn’t begin until March 5th. After six class periods, it concluded on March 17th. The four-week delay between the two rounds was a result of intense periods of test preparation prior to the second of three high-stakes testing sessions. I began Round Four while we were still in the middle of a testing window, so my students and I were on an adjusted schedule. The data for Round Four consisted of 47 pages of documents including: four field note documents, one teacher researcher reflection, five audio recordings and their summaries, two teaching charts, 22 photos of apprentice-teachers with their first grade students, 12 photos of student work, and 12 student reflections.

**Preparing for and Teaching Lesson 4**

For Round Four, the apprentice-teachers chose to read books in which sports played a central role and also expressed an interest in doing an art project. In addition, I needed to incorporate information about fifth and sixth grade literary terms in our lessons. Because many of the selected texts explored similar themes that included not giving up, working as a team, and stepping beyond typical gender roles, I decided to include discussions of books' themes in our preparatory lessons. This also necessitated a change in the lesson plan template (see Figures B.4, p. 332, and B.5, p. 333), which now included sections in which the apprentice-teachers could consider possible themes for their books before teaching their lessons.

Initial reactions of several apprentice-teachers to using sports-related texts highlighted factors that fostered engaged reading. For example, LaToya and Aureesha both seemed reluctant to read books about sports until they found a text with a strong female protagonist who confronted gender stereotypes (see Chapter Eleven). However, after finding the "right" books, the apprentice-teachers seemed excited about Lesson 4, and they planned two-day lessons in which they read and drew on the graffiti board. The graffiti board was an effective literary response tool, because the apprentice-teachers and their students were able to create images expressing the themes of their books. Figure C.3 shows one image from the graffiti board.

**Figure C.3 LaToya's Graffiti Board Image**

## Bringing Closure to Lesson 4

While the preparation and teaching phases of the Apprentice Teaching Project remained fairly consistent across the seven rounds, the debriefing phase changed significantly as I sought ways to make the discussion and reflective writing more relevant to the apprentice-teachers. The debriefing conversations in Rounds One through Three had been conducted with small groups of apprentice-teachers. In contrast, for Lesson 4, I engaged each apprentice-teacher in individual conversations about the graffiti board images they'd created with their first. These conversations also touched on first graders' behavior and the apprentice-teachers' reading and thinking. From a research and data collection perspective, the one-on-one format allowed me to elicit comments from everyone, even those apprentice-teachers who were generally quieter in the full group. From a teaching and mentoring perspective, I was able respond to individual needs regarding reading skills and teaching pointers.

I also continued to make changes to the form on which the apprentice-teachers wrote their reflections. For Round Three, I shifted from a single- to a double-column format. With Round Four, I created individualized forms for each apprentice-teacher by adding a photo of the apprentice-teacher reading with his or her students. I had recently learned of a tool called *photo elicitation* (Collier, 1957) which was sometimes used to prompt research participants' discussions and reflections and thought the inclusion of an image on the reflection form might facilitate the reflection process for the apprentice-teachers.

While I'd seen a notable difference between the volume of writing of experienced and new apprentice-teachers after Lesson 3, in this round, I saw a dramatic improvement among 11 of the 13 apprentice-teachers' volume of writing; likewise, the readability and cohesion of the written reflections was better as well. Besides adding the photos to the reflection template, I made two other curricular changes that might have led to the improved writing. First, I'd written comments on each apprentice-teacher's Lesson 3 reflection. Second, I'd done the one-on-one debriefing conversation before the apprentice-teachers wrote their Lesson 4 reflection, in contrast to the pattern of writing first that we'd followed in the previous rounds.

### Round Five: Asserting Our Voices as Teachers

Round Five began on March 23rd, encompassed five class periods, and ended on March 27th, two days prior to spring break. The data for Round Five consisted of 102 pages of documents including: 3 field note documents, 8 teacher researcher reflections, 2 audio recordings of preparatory lessons and their summaries, 1 video recording of the

apprentice-teachers' lessons and its summary, 4 audio recordings of debriefing sessions and their summaries, 2 teaching charts, and 11 student reflections.

**Preparing for and Teaching Lesson 5**

The texts and activities used in Round Five grew organically from an activity I used with all my students (deviating from the *Soar to Success* curriculum). Using an invitation developed by Christensen (2003) and adapted by Lewison et al. (2008), I collected a large selection of books that dealt with bullying, name-calling, and peer pressure. As the students read the stories, they discussed the various roles enacted by the characters, how those roles changed over time, and how the story might have been different if the characters had taken up different roles. After participating in this activity as a student, DeVontay suggested that the apprentice-teachers could use the same activity in their upcoming first grade lesson. As a result of his suggestion and conversations with the other apprentice-teachers, Lesson 5 consisted of reading aloud anti-bullying books and completing the think sheet (Table 9.3, p. 198) about the roles of various characters.

**Bringing Closure to Lesson 5**

During Round Four I'd added a photo of an apprentice-teacher with his or her students to the reflective writing template and asked them to write *after* our debriefing conversations; both changes led to improved reflections. I wanted to use the same format for Round Five, but failed to take still photos of the lessons. As a result, I returned to the single column format I'd used for Rounds One and Two. However, I did purchase gel pens in a wide range of colors for the apprentice-teachers.

The debriefing conversation was significantly different in Round Five. Because I was worried about the efficacy of the apprentice-teachers' reflective writing as a data

gathering tool, (Reflective Memo, 3/25/09), I decided to expand on the idea of *photo elicitation* (Collier, 1957) by making video recordings of video small parts of each apprentice-teacher's lesson. I anticipated that the videos would become data for the study and would also serve as a way to strengthen the apprentice-teachers' reflections on their own teaching. During the debriefing conversations, we alternated between watching video of the apprentice-teachers' lessons and talking about the teaching and reading, with an emphasis on positive feedback for each apprentice-teacher from peers.

## Round Six: Drawing to a Close

Round Six began on April 7th (the day we returned from spring break), encompassed five class periods, and concluded on April 13th. The second semester had more constraints than the first, including four sessions of standardized testing – one immediately prior to Round Five and one which impacted the timing of Rounds Six and Seven. During the Lesson 5 debriefing conversations, the apprentice-teachers enthusiastically suggested that we use the anti-bullying books and activities again in Round Six because they'd heard their peers discuss so many engaging stories that they hadn't yet had the opportunity to read.

The data for Round Six consisted of 87 pages of documents including: 7 field note documents, 1 teacher researcher reflection, 1 audio recording and 3 video recordings of the apprentice-teachers' lessons and their summaries, 4 audio recordings of debriefing sessions and their summaries, 4 teaching charts, 11 photos of apprentice-teachers with their students, 11 photos of student work, and 22 student reflections.

**Preparing for and Teaching Lesson 6**

The apprentice-teachers had three class periods to prepare for their lesson. They used this time to revise the bullying think sheet, select and rehearse new books about bullying, and jot down initial thoughts about the roles of characters. Many of the apprentice-teachers had already chosen their new books from among those they'd seen their peers use in Round Five. When discussing possible response activities, several apprentice-teachers indicated that they wanted to do another drawing activity, so we decided to add a drawing component to the bullying think sheet. The apprentice-teachers taped an 11x17 inch copy of the think sheet to the top of a large piece of chart paper and used the space at the bottom to write about the theme and create illustrations based on their books.

Though there had been some discussions about the need to change some of the wording on the chart prior to Lesson 5, the think sheet hadn't actually been revised then. After Lesson 5 though, the apprentice-teachers were able to discuss ways that they'd used the fix-up strategy of putting things in their own words (Tovani, 2004) while working with the first graders. For example, Aureesha suggested that one should think of a bully when reading the word perpetrator (3/26/09, Audio Summary, 5N, pp. 6). Based on these conversations, the apprentice-teachers revised the anti-bullying think sheet (see Table 9.4, p. 199).

**Bringing Closure to Lesson 6**

Using video snippets of each apprentice-teachers' lesson as a prompt for the debriefing discussions had worked well after Lesson 5, so I used this approach again after Lesson 6. I invited guest videographers (available teachers) to record at least five minutes

of each person's lesson, and we watched these videos and made comments about each person's teaching.

## Round Seven: Our Final Lesson

Round Seven, which was perhaps the most challenging to schedule, began on April 27th, encompassed six class periods, and concluded on May 6th. After squeezing Round Six in immediately following Spring Break, I felt I had to begin doing intensive review for our state's high-stakes test and the additional standardized testing which served as the backbone for our School Improvement Plan. Schedules were disrupted school-wide for three-and-a-half weeks to accommodate the tests. Round Seven and the wrap-up activities, including the work on the transmediation projects, were also impacted by an H1N1 flu scare which caused extensive discussions about the possible need to close school three weeks prior to the scheduled summer break.

The data for Round Seven comprise of 48 pages of documents including: 2 field note documents, 4 teacher researcher reflections, 1 audio recording on a preparation lesson, 3 video recordings of the apprentice-teachers' lessons and their summaries, 3 audio recordings of debriefing sessions and their summaries, 5 teaching charts, 27 photos of apprentice-teachers with their students, and 11 student reflections.

### Preparing for and Teaching Lesson 7

Because this would be our last lesson with the first graders, I wanted to focus primarily on enjoyment not mini-lessons. I gathered a wide variety of picture books, including books that had been favorites in previous rounds and books the apprentice-teachers and I had mentioned in passing. For example Alyssa had been interested art throughout the project, so I brought a copy of *Mouse Paint* (Walsh, 1995). Rather than

repeating a response activity from a prior round, the apprentice-teachers suggested that they use activities that they'd used in their homeroom classes. These included an A-Z chart (listing a key word or concept from the book for each letter of the alphabet), a "Somebody Wanted But So" chart (a problem/solution chart organized by character), and a chart showing favorite parts of the story supported with the reason for one's opinion.

**Bringing Closure to Lesson 7**

I again asked available colleagues to act as guest videographers and record a few minutes of each apprentice-teacher's lesson, which we used these during the debriefing conversations. I played the video recordings and asked the apprentice-teachers to write "three pluses and a wish" (a feedback technique in which someone responds to another's work with three positive points and a "wish" for future improvement) for each of the other apprentice-teachers. After a quiet period of watching video and writing, we watched the video again and paused to discuss each person's pluses and wishes. The debriefing ended with the apprentice-teachers writing reflections about their own teaching and reading using the reflection template developed in Round Four (with new photos of the apprentice-teachers and students).

## APPENDIX D

## ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Each of the five research questions have been implicitly answered in the discussion sections of the findings chapters (5-11) and in the concluding chapter (12). In this appendix, I provide more explicit answers for each question.

### Question 1: What happened when school-identified "struggling" readers were positioned as experts by having them serve as teachers of reading for younger students?

One purpose of The Apprentice-Teaching Project was to open spaces in which the participants could develop their use of school-based literacy practices and become the "kinds of people" who read, write, and talk about books; in short, I hoped to create a school environment which would foster school-defined productive agency on the part of the apprentice-teachers. To a significant degree, I was successful in this goal. While many things happened when the apprentice-teachers were positioned as experts, I explored their agentic acts, the responsive curriculum, and my role as a teacher researcher in other sections. This section is devoted to an end-of-project snapshot of each focal student using achievement data and their words.[2]

#### Alyssa

According to the Reading a-z assessment, Alyssa showed negative growth, dropping two levels from the beginning to ending of the year and finishing three levels

[2] I pieced together a first-person paragraph for each student from responses to the Burke Reading Interview (BRI; Y. Goodman et al., 1987). The questions included: 10) Do you think you're a good reader?, 9) What would you like to do better as a reader?, and 6) If you knew someone was having trouble reading, how would you help that person? To differentiate the students' words from the stems of the questions, I've used italics for the apprentice-teachers' comments.

behind the district benchmark for proficiency. However, according to the ARI, she ended the year reading at the seventh grade-level, one year ahead of her current grade-level.

During her Burke Interview, Alyssa said, I'm "*not really*" a good reader, "*because I don't have…fluency*" and I "*don't know all the words*." I'd like to "*be more fluent*" and "*have great* [oral reading] – *like where you speak in different kinds of voices*." If I knew someone was having trouble reading, "*I would help them by splitting the word up – put my finger over one part, sound it out, put [the parts] together.*" I would also "*clarify – write [the word] on a sticky note and ask a teacher what it meant*" or "*look it up in the dictionary – what it meant and how to pronounce it*" (5/7/09, BRI).

Alyssa was identified as a "struggling" reader by the school, but like Salenia (Chapter 6), she read well when planning and teaching her students. She seemed to flounder when faced with traditional school comprehension assessments. As the project progressed, she grew in self-confidence, able to catch and hold her students' attention and guide them through stories with ease. The range of suggestions she gave for helping others is one indication of confidence as a teacher; indeed a visiting teacher described her as a "natural" and encouraged Alyssa to consider teaching in the future.

**LaToya**

According to the Reading a-z assessment, LaToya showed accelerated growth, increasing five levels over the course of the year, when just one level is the norm. She ended the year at the district benchmark. On the ARI, she ended the year at the sixth grade level, her current grade.

In her Burke Interview, LaToya said, "*Yeah*, [I am a good reader], *to a certain extent. I can't read eighth or ninth grade books, because I don't know hard words. I*

*might get stuck and say forget it.*” I’d like “*to re-read books. Before, I be in class, and I read, and I say, ‘uh oh’ and everybody shout. I don’t like reading out loud.”* If I knew someone was having trouble reading, I’d “*make sure – see if I know the word and help sound it out.*” I’d “*figure out what’s going on in the book*” (5/12/09, BRI).

LaToya’s oral reading improved significantly over the course of the project, providing one indication that preparing for and teaching lessons with younger students was efficacious. However, as indicated by her end-of-year performance on the ARI assessment, her comprehension didn’t progress at the same rate as her oral reading. Her comment that she would help others “figure out what’s going on in the book” demonstrates that she recognizes the importance of understanding the story. Though her focus while reading independently was inconsistent, LaToya’s stamina did increase. Likewise, she was able to build relationships with her students and always seemed to enjoy those social interations.

**Aureesha**

According to the Reading a-z assessment, Aureesha showed accelerated growth, increasing four levels over the course of the year, when two levels are the norm for fifth graders. Though she made accelerated growth, she ended the year one level below the district benchmark. However, according to the ARI, she ended the year reading at the seventh grade level, two years ahead of her current grade-level.

In her Burke Interview, Aureesha said, “*I think* [I’m an] *okay reader, because a good reader and a great reader are two different things. I can read and pick out a book,* [but] *I’m used to reading to myself.* I’d like “*to be more fluent. When I’m reading to someone I sound scared – stuttering a little bit. My grandma, she reads fluently, smoothly*

*off her tongue.*" If I knew someone was having trouble reading, "*if it was something I knew I could read and couldn't mess up, I'd* [have them] *re-read it, after I read it.* [I'd] *take my time to help them read it themselves"* (5/14/09, BRI).

Aureesha was identified for this project because her reading was often dysfluent, with an over-reliance on the graphophonic cueing system. Though she implies that oral reading is her major area of difficulty, she also struggled with comprehension, probably because her slow reading pace and frequent semantically-inappropriate miscues interfered with her overall understanding. The project provided Aureesha with an authentic context in which to improve her fluency while also providing opportunities to talk with others about character motivations and plot relationships. Aureesha's reading stamina and confidence improved throughout the project.

**DeVontay**

According to the Reading a-z assessment, DeVontay (Chapter 10) showed low growth, progressing just one level during the year, when two levels would be expected. According to the a-z assessment, his ending level was three below that expected for fifth graders. In contrast, he ended the year reading an eighth grade ARI passage successfully.

When responding to the Burke interview questions, DeVontay said, "*I'm not really* [a good reader], "*because I know certain words, but not other words…but, yeah* [I'm] *a little bit* [of a good reader, because] *when I read a word, I know it. Next time I see it, I remember, but if it's a big word, I won't remember it.*" I'd like to "*practice on fluency and on pace.*" I want to "*know a word and what it means when I say it or read it.*" If I knew someone was having trouble reading, I'd "*teach them how to pronounce the word. Help them sound it out, or if I don't know, I don't know*" (5/12/09, BRI).

DeVontay began the year with optimism for his future. His early interviews indicated that he believed he was reading better than he had in the previous year. As the school year progressed, his confidence waned. Though he engaged readily in apprentice-teaching activities at the beginning of the project, as we approached spring break, he willing rehearsed his selected books but withdrew from writing activities. In the wider school community, DeVontay also had an increasing number of discipline referrals for non-compliance and aggression. The project appeared to be a haven in which DeVontay was able to exert positive school leadership, but was not sufficient to offset the messages of failure he received elsewhere, as reflected by his statement "If I don't know, I don't know."

**Salenia**

According to the Reading a-z assessment, Salenia (Chapter 6) showed accelerated growth, increasing four levels over the course of the year, when two levels are the norm for fifth graders. Because she had accelerated growth, she ended the year at the upper-end of the district benchmark. In addition, according to the ARI, she ended the year reading at the eighth grade level, three years ahead of her current grade-level.

On the Burke Interview, Salenia said, *"Yeah* [I am a good reader], *because sometimes I do read fluently, but sometimes I stutter, like in a big class. If I don't know a word, I can sound it out and try my best to get it right."* I'd like to *"read more fluently and know big words – humongous* [words, like] *enthusiastic. But I'd know that because I've heard it, but if I haven't heard it, then I don't know it.*" If I knew someone was having trouble reading, I'd "*help them sound out the word.* [We could] *both ask the*

*teacher.* [I'd tell them to] *read every day, because practice makes perfect. Like give them a book to go home and practice*" (5/12/09, BRI).

Salenia was another student identified by the school as a "struggling" reader on the basis of standardized measures, but who did not appear to struggle in the context of The Apprentice-Teaching Project. While she seemed somewhat shy around her more assertive classmates early in the project, she grew in self-assurance as the year went on. She also became more assertive when teaching, learning to open her lessons in ways which engaged her students in the reading process. Salenia now seems to understand that by reading more ("practice makes perfect") she can positively impact her growth trajectory.

**Billy**

According to the Reading a-z assessment, Billy (Chapter 8) showed typical growth, increasing two levels, the norm, over the course of the year. According to the a-z assessment, he finished the year three levels below that expected for fifth graders. In contrast, he ended the year reading a sixth grade ARI passage successfully, one year ahead of his grade-level.

When responding to the Burke Interview questions, Billy said, "*No* [I'm] *not a perfectly good* [reader]. *I don't know some words. I get stuck, I read too fast. I* [could] *help the first graders read, because they needed a lot of help*." I'd like to "*read more fluently.*" If I knew someone was having trouble reading, I'd –"*I don't know. Help them sound out the word.* [If they didn't understand, I'd] *go back and see if we can find it, go back and read, and ask if…*[Well] *read more than once, like you could have skipped over something. Help you understand*" (5/12/09, BRI).

Billy struggled with all areas of literacy, including oral reading, comprehension, letter-sound relationships, writing, and handwriting. Of the six focal students he was the only one who participated in just five of the seven rounds. Though I initially believed that The Apprentice-Teaching Project had been ineffective for him, the process of analyzing the corpus of data has convinced me otherwise. As Billy learned what was expected, his volume of writing and willingness to rehearse books prior to lessons increased. His comment that he "reads too fast" indicates his awareness that slowing down would be helpful; additional time in the project might have helped increase his ability to pause, think, and more deeply understand what he read.

**So What Did Happen When the Apprentice-Teachers Were Positioned as Experts?**

The end-of-project Burke Interview provided a narrow glimpse of the apprentice-teachers' perceptions of The Apprentice-Teaching Project and themselves as readers; however, because these quotes are in the students' own words, these interviews are powerful. It is distressingly apparent that the majority of the focal students still perceive themselves as "not really good" (three of six) or "okay" (one of six) readers; just two believe that they are good readers.

Equally striking, though, is that *every single one of them* felt that they had something to offer to "someone who was having trouble reading." In addition, they all indicated competence with at least one aspect of reading, and they all gave specific suggestions for their own improvement as readers. It is significant that the majority of the apprentice-teachers were using the Discourse of Reader at least some of the time; in addition, the data from the Burke Interview show that they were often using the Discourses of Helper and Teacher – expressing a willingness to intervene when someone

else struggled – and the Discourse of Learner – identifying ways to improve and recognizing what one already did well. I argue that a sense of self-efficacy is one aspect of the Discourse of Learner, and that the apprentice-teachers were in the beginning stages of developing it.

### Question 2: In what ways were participants able to exert agency? What classroom conditions seemed to encourage forms of agency that led to productive engagement with school-based literacy practices?

The apprentice-teachers in this project were able to exert agency in myriad ways. On a superficial level, simply coming to Room 25 from the homerooms could be considered an agentic act (though, admittedly, there would be negative consequences for a student who refused to attend an intervention class.) However, for the sake of clarity, this list will focus on agentic acts that were specific to The Apprentice-Teaching Project.

**Acts of Agency while Preparing to Teach**

- Suggesting book titles & topics; choosing books
- Choosing the degree to which they'd "work" to understand a text
- Choosing if and when to ask for support (word definitions, pronunciations, background knowledge, etc.)
- Choosing how long and how much to rehearse
- Choosing (or not) to spend non-class time rehearsing in Room 25
- Suggesting and negotiating literature response activities

**Acts of Agency while Teaching**

- Choosing where and how to sit with students (at a table, in chairs, on the floor, face to face, or side by side)

- Asking for and storing previously read books for use when planned activities finished earlier than expected
- Asking mentor (teacher) for suggestions about how explain concepts to first graders
- Addressing first graders' off task behaviors in a variety of ways

**Acts of Agency during Debriefing Conversations, Written Work, and Teacher Assignments**

- Choosing to write or not write (reflections, lesson plans, book selection notes); choosing the degree to which writing would occur (sentences, phrases, conventions, doodles)
- Engaging in conversations (head up, clear voice with adequate volume, eye contact)
- Disengaging from discussions (side conversations, head down, hoodie up, back turned)
- Redirecting conversations to other topics
- Choosing how to respond to others' agentic acts (ignoring, smirking, telling the person to stop, joining the action)
- Tossing a ball; roaming the room; hiding craft supplies; poking, kicking, or otherwise disturbing others

One essential component of The Apprentice-Teaching Project was the range of choices – in texts, response activities, where to teach their lessons, etc. – available to the participants. It is important to recognize that most of the agentic acts which might be characterized *negatively* came during the debriefing and writing portions of each round. I

suggest that the debriefing phase of each round felt more like a traditional class environment, and that the written work was challenging for most of the apprentice-teachers. While I would not suggest eliminating these curricular elements, it might be possible to devise alternative means of completing them (group generated lists, word processed reflections, blogging, etc.)

Like any agentic acts, these could all be characterized in varied ways, depending on the perspective and position of the person defining them. Because one purpose of this study was to identify classroom conditions that would support school-defined positive agency, it is logical to evaluate these actions from the teacher's perspective. Most of the apprentice-teachers' acts of agency would be perceived positively by teachers; therefore, this project appears to have met the goal of creating an environment which facilitated students' use of school-productive literacy practices.

**Question 3: What narratives did the apprentice-teachers create around The Apprentice-Teaching Project?**

The apprentice-teachers' responses in the end-of-year Burke and ARI interviews hint at the narratives they constructed around the project and reading; those responses are detailed in the first section of this appendix on pages 351-356. The narratives created as part of the transmediation projects, completed at the end of the year, serve as another forum through which the apprentice-teachers' narratives can be heard. I asked the apprentice-teachers to tell me the story of their transmediations, what the symbols meant to the creators. Because this was a culminating project, I viewed the narratives about the transmediation as narratives about the project as well. While the students' narratives varied in length and complexity, most seemed to have some segment that revealed the

essence of what the project or reading meant to the individual apprentice-teacher. I've excerpted these quotes and added my interpretation, as shown in Table D.1.

| Name | Quote from Transmediation Narrative | My interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| **Alyssa** | This [part of my transmediation] shows that …you pick a book that's funny and interesting and has funny pictures. In The Apprentice-Teaching Project, you always have to stop and ask questions and make predictions from the title and the back of the book. | **The narrative is about…** the process of reading. Reading is about thinking and questions and predictions are tools for that thinking. |
| **LaToya** | My [transmediation] is about *Queen of the Scene* because [that] is a book that inspired my kids…. "Queen of the Scene" [the main character] should be going around to all the girls and boys to prove to the boys that girls can do what they can do. | **The narrative is about…** building a personal relationship with a book's protagonist and understanding the theme of the story. |
| **Aureesha** | The book at the top [of my transmediation] stands for [the] book I'm about to read. [Teachers] don't have to just use textbooks. [Kids should get to choose] a book they like, and not a book that the teacher chose for them. | **The narrative is about…** the importance of letting kids choose the books they read. |
| **DeVontay** | I read books that I didn't think I'd read. I didn't think I'd be interested, but then I read the books and I started to get interested….[The project] helped us on the way we read and the way we expressed the books. Like the way it sounded and the way we expressed it. | **The narrative is about…** a student reading more and, improving as a reader because he read more. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Salenia** | I learned that, don't be afraid to express what you're really thinking. If you just mess up on something, you can re-say it….I learned that when you tell your first graders about the book, they will sit and listen. | **The narrative is about…** having a positive influence on others and understanding that mistakes are okay. |
| **Billy** | Reading is fun. You learn new stuff….The Apprentice-Teaching Project is cool. | **The narrative is about…** reading being fun when one is learning new things. |

**Table D.1 Apprentice-Teachers' Narratives about the Project**

**Question 4: In what ways were the apprentice-teachers and I able to co-construct a curriculum that responded to their needs and to the goals of the project and school?**

The curriculum of The Apprentice-Teaching Project became a living entity with many day-to-day and round-to-round adjustments. In Chapter Three, I described a *responsive curriculum* as a process of negotiation by which teachers address the interests and needs of participants while also meeting the requirements of the school and district administration. A brief list of the ways in which the curriculum of The Apprentice-Teaching Project *responded* to students includes:

- Narrowing the book choices from Rounds One to Two and browsing books in our own classroom rather than the library for Rounds Two through Seven.
- More modeling in Round Two than One of ways the apprentice-teachers could incorporate metacognitive strategy instruction into their lesson.
- Reducing the amount of overt metacognitive instruction in Rounds Five through Seven.

- Including *noticing and naming* to 1) affirm the apprentice-teachers' instructional moves and 2) to help them recognize when they'd used metacognitive strategies appropriately.
- Incorporating literature response activities such as the graffiti board and Bloom's Taxonomy-based game as a result of discussions among a mentor (me) and the apprentices (the fifth and sixth-graders).
- Choosing books based on sports-related and anti-bullying topics as a result of suggestions from the apprentice-teachers.
- Adding photo and video elements to the debriefing (and professional development) discussions in later rounds.
- Adjusting the ways in which I structured the apprentice-teachers' written reflections after each round.

**Affordances**

- Space for strong engagement with school-based literacy practices.
- Opportunities for social interactions, which increased engagement and time for group problem-solving, especially around issues of monitoring and comprehension.
- One-on-one conferences which facilitated in-the-moment comprehension instruction.
- Opportunities to read widely, which increased the volume of reading, oral fluency, word-solving flexibility, and the range of strategies the students could bring to bear.
- Meaningful reasons for doing the work of comprehension and self-correcting.

- Provided an authentic venue for reading with expression.
- Varied opportunities for teacher to make changes on the basis of students' needs.

**Constraints**

- The project over-emphasized accuracy and fluency in oral reading (word-based view), which may have led to the apprentice-teachers' continued use of the phrase "sound it out." This may also have skewed the apprentice-teachers' perception of "good reading" away from a meaning-making definition and toward a skills or word-based view.
- I initially over-emphasized the metacognitive reading strategies.
- It was difficult to create opportunities for the required fifth and sixth-grade academic standards within the apprentice-teaching curriculum.
- I failed to encourage the apprentice-teachers to take up potentially critical issues, even those that would have been appropriate for first graders.
- The project was too short. Because it was sandwiched between segments of the mandated curriculum, test preparation, testing, and other school conflicts, the apprentice-teachers engaged in just seven rounds spread across seven months. I estimate that less than 25% of the time devoted to their Title I reading intervention was spent on activities related to The Apprentice-Teaching Project. I argue that the benefits would have been greater if this project had encompassed more than two-thirds of the apprentice-teachers' intervention time.

**Other notes**

I also identified several other considerations beyond the constraints identified above.

- A curriculum based on cross-age tutoring should not be the sole literacy curriculum for intermediate-aged students. While this project provided many chances to read engaging, supportive texts, the students should also have opportunities to read non-fiction texts, write responses which use intermediate-level paragraph and essay structures, and increase their stamina with close-to-grade-level chapter books.
- The teacher mentoring this project needs to be a well-read professional who can fulfill multiple roles and draw on a wide range of instructional activities (i.e. a range of book, the graffiti board, bullying chart, etc.).

The responsive curriculum that evolved over the course of the project gave the apprentice-teachers many opportunities to *become the kinds of people* (Gee, 1996, 2004b, 2012) who read for fun, thus increasing the likelihood that they would choose entrée into the club.

**Question 5: In what ways did the interactions of my varied roles – teacher, curriculum-developer, and researcher – impact the project and the study?**

This question is addressed on pages 290-293 in the final sub-section of the "Placing The Apprentice-Teaching Project in the Context of Existing Theory" section of Chapter 12.

*MARGARET BOLING MULLIN*
*mbmullin16@gmail.com*

## *EDUCATION*

2014 **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**, Indiana University, Bloomington
**Dissertation:** The Apprentice-Teaching Project: Agency among School-Identified "Struggling" Readers in a Cross-Age Reading Intervention
**Major:** Literacy, Culture & Language Education
**Minor:** Curriculum & Instruction

1996 **MASTER OF EDUCATION**, University of Cincinnati
**Major:** Educational Administration

1990 **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE**, Indiana University in Indianapolis
**Major:** Elementary Education
**Minor:** Reading

## *TEACHING, ADMINISTRATIVE & CONSULTING EXPERIENCE*

### UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Indiana University – Bloomington, Adjunct Faculty**

**X425/L525 Reading and/or English as a New/Foreign Language Practicum**
Distance Education; Undergraduate/Graduate combined section
Taught eight semesters from Fall 2009 to Spring 2012

**L545 Advanced Study of Reading and Language Arts, Grades 4-6**
Distance Education; Graduate Level
Taught six semesters from Summer 2007 to Spring 2012

**L559 Tradebooks in Elementary Classrooms**
Distance Education; Graduate Level
Taught five semesters from Fall 2009 to Spring 2011

**L517 Advanced Study of the Teaching of Secondary Reading**
Distance Education; Graduate Level
Summer 2008

**Indiana University – Indianapolis, Adjunct Faculty**

**E590 Parent and Family Involvement for the 21st Century**
Distance Education, Graduate
Summer 2010 & Summer 2011

**E449 / L559 Tradebooks and the Classroom Teacher**
On-site; Undergraduate & Graduate
Taught one undergraduate/graduate combined section in Spring 2009

**X470 / L502 Socio-Psycholinguistics for Teachers of Reading**
On-site; Undergraduate & Graduate
Taught four undergraduate sections from Summer 2006 to Summer 2009
Taught one undergraduate/graduate combined section in Fall 2008

**Indiana University – Bloomington, Associate Instructor**

**X460 Books for Reading Instruction**
On-site; Undergraduate
Taught five semesters from Spring 2006 to Spring 2008

**Doane University – Crete, Nebraska, Adjunct Faculty**

**Reading in the Content-Area Classroom**
On-site; Graduate Level
Summer 2001

**Reaching the Struggling Reader**
On-site; Graduate Level
Summer 2001

**Webster University – St. Louis, Missouri, Adjunct Faculty**

**Reading in the Content-Area Classroom**
On-site; Graduate Level
Summer 1998 & Fall 1998

## K-12 TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Urban School District in a large, Midwestern city**

**Elementary English as a New Language Teacher**, 2014-present

- Assessed needs of students and taught reading, writing, and math lessons targeted to their language needs.
- Planned and implemented new English Language Development curriculum based on WIDA standards and the district's ELA Units of Study.

**Fourth Grade Teacher**, 2010-2014

- Planned & taught lessons in all areas of the curriculum.
- Taught English Language Learners in context of classroom community.
- Served on the school's Lead and Achieve Committee and led grade-level implementation of the English/Language Arts Units of Study.
- Served on the district Literacy Task Force and ELA Curriculum Writing Cadre.

**Title I Reading Teacher**, 2005-2010

- Planned and conducted reading interventions for 3rd-6th graders.
- Implemented Readers' Workshop to increase student engagement and reading interest.
- Developed after-school programs including a science club and critical issues book club to increase opportunities for meaningful literacy.
- Served on the School Improvement Team; researched, wrote, and evaluated instructional and professional development strategies to increase student achievement.

**Wydown Middle School, School District of Clayton, Missouri**

**Secondary Reading Specialist**, 1997-2001

- Researched, developed, implemented, and evaluated the struggling reader curriculum.
- Led the Reading Cadre, a group of teachers who helped colleagues plan and implement content-area reading strategies; designed and implemented a school-wide, content-area reading program.
- Designed and conducted professional development on reading and writing strategies; wrote *Handbook of Content-Area Reading Strategies*; presented at various national conventions.
- Served on Clayton Literacy Committee and Curriculum Council Reading Subcommittee.

**Mariemont Elementary School, Ohio**

**Third Grade Teacher**, 1995-1997

- Encouraged students to be active learners through hands-on science and math explorations.
- Facilitated students' use of reading and writing strategies during Literature Circles and Writing Workshop.
- Served as a Xavier University cooperating teacher for one semester.
- Completed two administrative practicum experiences.

**Maple Grove Elementary School, Center Grove Community Schools, Greenwood, Indiana**

**Sixth Grade Teacher**, 1993-1994

- Conducted a Reading / Writing Workshop based on the Authoring Cycle.
- Incorporated picture books and novels into the Language Arts and Social Studies curriculum.

**Indianapolis Public Schools, Indiana**

**First Grade Teacher**; Lewis W. Gilfoy Elementary #113, 1991-1993

- Used a child-centered approach which incorporated literature, writing, manipulatives, and textbooks.

**Student Teaching / Reading Practicum**; George Buck Elementary #94, 1990

**Chapter 1 / Title I Instructional Assistant.** 1986-1989

## K-12 ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

**Urban School District in a large, Midwestern city**

**Elementary School Assistant Principal**, 2001-2004

- Led professional development for certified and non-certified staff, including workshops on curriculum alignment, reading strategies, vocabulary and collaborative scoring of writing.
- Assisted in the development and implementation of a curriculum and professional development program.
- Led efforts to improve student behavior, resulting in decreased student referrals over 4 years.

**Wydown Middle School, School District of Clayton, Missouri**

**Director of *Discovery Wydown* Summer School Program**, 2000

- Collaborated with teachers, building administrators, and the Community Education Office in the development of summer school program and classes.
- Marketed *Discovery Wydown* to the community, resulting in 85 middle school registrants which was 2.2 times the number initially projected.
- Recruited staff, managed the budget, and conducted program evaluation.

**Mariemont Elementary School, Ohio**

**Administrative Field Experiences,** 1996 & 1997

- Researched, designed, and wrote a staff handbook.
- Developed and wrote the *Mariemont School District's Flipchart of Emergency Procedures*.

**Center Grove Community Schools, Greenwood, Indiana**

**Chapter 1 / Title I Coordinator**, 1994-1995

- Analyzed student achievement data and prepared program evaluation reports for the School Board and State Department of Education.
- Wrote two successful Chapter 1 grant proposals, totaling $280,000; closed both fiscal years on time and within annual budget; wrote successful *Reading is Fundamental* grant for $3,000.
- Supervised and evaluated seven tutors; planned and conducted ongoing staff development; wrote *The Notebook of Reading Instructional Strategies* for tutors' use.
- Designed and led implementation of parental involvement program, including a reading club, take-home activity packs, parent gatherings, newsletter, and voice mail system.

## CONSULTING EXPERIENCE

**Consultant, Indiana Partnership for Young Writers**

**2010** Member of professional development team for the Indianapolis Public Schools Balanced Literacy Initiative.

**Consultant, Indiana Department of Education & CTB McGraw-Hill**

**1994** Wrote Classroom Performance Assessments which became one component of the state assessment system.

## *SCHOLARSHIP*

### MAJOR AREAS of PROFESSIONAL INTEREST

- Ways in which "at risk" students are positioned by schools and educational policies
- Language learners
- Promoting an interest in reading among children and teens
- Children's and Young Adult literature
- Teacher research

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCES

***The Apprentice-Teaching Project: Agency among School-Identified "Struggling" Readers in a Cross-Age Reading Intervention***; Dissertation Study, Principal Researcher (2008-2009).

In this qualitative study, I sought to open a space where previously marginalized fifth and sixth graders – those identified for remedial reading classes – could become agents of their own reading. My intermediate students and I co-created an apprentice program through which they became teachers of reading to first graders. In their roles as apprentice-teachers, participants learned new Discourses and remade their identities from school-identified "struggling" readers to Readers and Teachers, thereby joining the "literacy club." In general they exerted school-productive agency when confronted with difficult reading tasks, rather than remaining marginalized from school literacy communities. My teacher researcher stance allowed me to explore agentic acts among the students involved and identify classroom conditions which supported school-productive literacy.

***A Critical Study of the American Civil Rights Era with Elementary Students***; Principal Researcher (2007).

A teacher research project investigating ways in which school-identified "struggling" readers interacted with picture books exploring race during the Civil Rights era. Discourse analysis and open coding led to deeper understandings of students' meaning-making processes.

***The Use of Metacognitive Reading Strategies by "Struggling" Readers: A Case Study***; Principal Researcher (2006).

This study used semi-structured interviews and a reading task to investigate ways in which two students may or may not have used metacognitive reading strategies. Participants' observed and articulated use of metacognitive strategies were analyzed using *a priori* codes. The study led to better understanding of the participants' reading behaviors.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

***Discovering the Common Core***, District Focus Conference (Spring 2012)

***Apprentice-Teaching as a Cross-Age Reading Intervention***, NCTE-AR Winter Conference (February 2010); Literacies for All (July 2009); Multimodal Discourse Analysis Conference (May 2009)

***Creative Problem Solving for the General Education Intervention Process***, District Professional Development (October 2004)

***Book Study: Mosaic of Thought (by Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmermann)***, Clayton, Missouri Professional Development (March 2001, November 2001)

***Book Study: Strategies That Work (by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis)***, Clayton, Missouri Professional Development (March 2001)

***Book Study: Words, Words, Words (by Janet Allen)***, Clayton, Missouri Professional Development (February 2001)

***Book Study: Reading and the Middle School Student (by Judith L. Irvin)***, Clayton, Missouri Professional Development (January 2001)

***Comprehension Strategies for the Struggling Reader***, National Middle School Association (November 2000), Clayton, Missouri Professional Development (September 2000); Whole Language Umbrella Conference (July 2000)

***Reading Across the Curriculum***, International Reading Association Regional Conference (October 2000); Middle Years Conference, St. Louis, Missouri (August 1999); Mid-Missouri TAWL Conference (October 2000); Whole Language Umbrella Conference (August 1999); Various St. Louis area schools (Fall 2000, Spring 2001)

***Developing an Effective Middle School Reading Program***, Middle Years Conference (August 1999, 2000); International Reading Association (May 2000, 2001)

***Status: Wydown Middle School Reading Program***, School District of Clayton Board of Education (April 1999)

***Proposal for a Reading Program at Wydown Middle***, School District of Clayton Board of Education (March 1998)

***Multiple Intelligences***, University of Cincinnati: Seminar on Future Alternatives in Education (April 1996)

***Invite a Writing Riot***, Bloomington, IN Fall Language Arts Conference (November 1994); Indianapolis Area Reading Council (November 1994)

***Assessment Alternatives: Portfolio Overview***, Marion & Adams Elementaries; Sheridan, IN (November 1994); Indiana Department of Education IPASS Administrators' Conference (August 1994)

***To Inquire or Not to Inquire?  Is That the Question?*** Bloomington, IN TAWL Group (November 1994); Whole Language Umbrella Convention; San Diego, CA (July 1994)

***Let's Go Traveling: Integrating Literature and Bookmaking into the Intermediate Classroom***, Indiana State TAWL Conference (February 1994); Indianapolis Area Reading Council Winter Conference (January 1994)

***Using Whole Language K-5***, Indiana Teachers of Writing and Indiana State TAWL Spring Conference (April 1993)

***Shared Book Experience***, Indianapolis Area Reading Council and Indiana State TAWL Winter Conference (January 1993)

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## *SERVICE & RECOGNITIONS*

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### SERVICE

- School-wide Lead & Achieve Committee from 2010 to 2014.
- District *Literacy Task Force* from 2010 to 2014.
- District English/Language Arts curriculum-writing cohort from 2011 – 2014.
- Wydown Middle School *Reading Cadre*, a group of teachers who helped colleagues plan and implement content-area reading strategies from 1997 to 2001.
- School District of Clayton *Literacy Committee* and Curriculum Council's *Reading Subcommittee* from 1997 to 2001.

### PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITIONS & GRANTS

***Ruth S. Strickland Fellowship***
Awarded through Indiana University for doctoral students emphasizing children's literature (2007-2008 school year)

***Books Galore! Award for Developing Classroom Libraries***
Awarded by the District Education Foundation (September 2002)

***Nila Banton Smith Award***
***for Developing and Implementing an Effective Content-Area Reading Program***
Awarded by the International Reading Association (May 2001)

***Award for Effective Teaching of Reading***
Presented by the Bloomington Fall Language Arts Conference for a unit entitled *Let's Go Traveling: Integrating Literature and Bookmaking into the Intermediate Classroom* (Fall 1993)

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## *MEMBERSHIPS & CERTIFICATIONS*

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### PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

National Council of Teachers of English (1992-present)
NCTE – Whole Language Umbrella (1992-present)
NCTE – Assembly on Research (beginning in 2010)
NCTE – Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the NCTE (2014-present)
International Reading Association (1994-present)

Literacy Research Association (2008-present)
Indiana Library Federation (2014-present)
Teachers of English to Students of Other Languages (2014-present)

## CERTIFICATIONS

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|---|---|---|
| Elementary Education with Reading (Teacher) | Rules 46-47 | Expires 3/2021 |
| Library/Media Specialist (Teacher) | REPA | Expires 3/2021 |
| English as a New Language (Teacher) | Rules 2002 | Expires 3/2021 |
| Intermediate & Secondary Language Arts (Teacher) | REPA | Expires 3/2021 |
| Elementary Principal (Administrator) | Rules 46-47 | Expires 2/2016 |