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*This study examines and describes the changes in four teachers' beliefs and practices in literacy and literacy assessment over the course of a yearlong graduate level clinical experience. Four teachers who worked in the university literacy clinic as part of their graduate course work participated in this study. Two of the four teachers teach elementary-aged pupils in a public school, another serves as a reading resource educator at a public elementary school, and the fourth teaches high school-aged students at an alternative school associated with a public school. Findings indicate that teacher beliefs and their classroom instruction are often inconsistent due to a variety of variables such as the pressure to conform to a particular school philosophy and/or government mandates. In spite of these pressures the findings confirm that these teachers serve as the key evaluator of their students' literacy development.*

Research supports that teachers' beliefs about literacy influence their instruction and assessment practices in the classroom (Bliem & Davinroy, 1997; Johnston, Afflerbach, & Weiss, 1993; Lenski, Wham, & Griffey, 1997; Maxson, 1996; Pressley, 2006; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Mistretta Hampston, & Echevarria 1998; Reutzel & Sabey, 1996; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). Teachers' beliefs about literacy and their literacy practices are affected by a complex range of factors, including the "practical realities of the classroom" (Shapiro & Kilbey, 1990, p. 63), the limitations imposed by federal, state, and district policies, as well as the diverse views about a teacher's role and teaching methods (Valencia & Wixson, 2000). If a teacher's beliefs are not aligned with the instructional framework, then the teacher may not implement instruction effectively (Eisenhart, Cuthbert, Shrum, & Harding, 1988). Furthermore, a teacher may alter instructional practices to fit with her beliefs. A teacher may spend more time on instructional practices and classroom activities that she believes are more important or more valid (Winograd and Johnston, 1987). An example of this is the time a teacher devotes to sustained silent reading (SSR) versus the time she devotes to guided reading.

Effective teachers understand the interplay between instruction and assessment and consistently plan instruction based on classroom assessment results (Afflerbach & Moni, 1996; Hiebert & Calfee, 1989). Because of this, teachers should function as the primary decision makers and instruments of assessment in their classrooms (Deford, 1985; Hancock, Turbill, & Cambourne, 1994; Johnston, 1987; Pikulski, 1994; Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1988). In Hancock's argument for teacher as assessment tool, he reveres "the mind as the most powerful and useful evaluation instrument available" (1994, p. 62). He goes on to encourage teachers to become introspective, using the process of self-questioning to determine what they believe and why they do what they do (p. 66). Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy (2000) discuss the advent of reflective teaching and its accompanying methods of action research and reflective journal writing (p. 721). Informal, ongoing assessment provides a wealth of data that informs classroom decision-making. Assessment based on teacher observation provides immediate results, whereas the results from a formal assessment (i.e., a standardized test) may not arrive until after students have left a teacher's classroom.

Valencia (1997) discusses the decontextualized nature of standardized tests and indicates that most standardized tests emphasize lower levels of comprehension and are often presented to children in an unfamiliar multiple-choice format. Valencia also states that standardized tests do not involve students in the planning of the assessment and do not document small changes in student progress since they are administered infrequently. Thomas (2001), Winograd and Greenlee (1986), and Wixson and Pearson (1998) posit that standardized tests are "reductionistic" in that these tests emphasize product over process and limit what responses are acceptable. Additionally, Wixson and Pearson (1998) question the validity of standardized tests because they don't resemble authentic reading and writing.

Valencia (1997) states that we need "a range of classroom-based alternatives" to formal assessment. Unlike formal assessment, informal, classroom-based assessment has many contexts and allows students to produce real reading and writing. It also provides the opportunity for students to participate in self-evaluation and retain ownership of their literacy learning (Au, Scheu, & Kawakami, 1990). Informal assessment allows for continuous evaluation and provides immediate feedback to facilitate planning. Authentic assessment is necessarily aligned to instruction and students' needs (Winograd, Paris, & Bridge, 1991). It is based on multiple measures of student learning. Most importantly, Valencia (1997) synthesizes the key element of informal assessment when she writes that good assessment "fits the child rather than trying to make the child fit the assessment" (p. 5).

Lenski et al. (1997) propose that what teachers believe and what they actually do are quite different. Furthermore, even though teachers' beliefs may change, their practices often do not. Multiple factors account for this lack of congruence, or misalignment, between teacher beliefs and practices. Some of these factors may include teacher training that is deeply rooted in the behaviorist tradition, the limitations imposed by bureaucratic red tape, lack of professional development and administrative support (Gaffney & Anderson, 2000; Richardson et al., 1991; Shapiro & Kilbey, 1990; Wixson & Pearson, 1998), and issues of classroom control (Lenski et al. 1997; Maxson, 1996). Richardson et al. (1991) examine the characteristics of teachers who embrace a behaviorist

view of reading, which focuses primarily on the learning of isolated skills with decoding the ultimate goal. Historically, teachers favoring a skills-based approach rely heavily on basal texts, value product over process, and use decontextualized modes of assessment, such as the ubiquitous blackline master. In sharp contrast to this model is the still relatively young whole language or constructivist philosophy, which is widely regarded as "best practice" and promoted through today's more forward-thinking teacher education programs (Anders et al., 2000; Au, 2000; Lenski et al., 1997; Pressley, 2006; Pressley & Harris, 1997). Perhaps the most important distinction between these two opposing views of reading instruction is the heavy emphasis the constructivist camp places on the process of learning, which is accorded more value than the final product. The constructivist teacher functions as the knowledgeable tour guide, allowing her curious students to stop at opportune moments and admire the foliage on their scenic voyage of learning. The behaviorist buckles her students into their seats on the bus and drives with single-minded determination directly to their final destination; there are no opportunities for self-selected exploration, and if one blinks, one may miss the rich landscape zooming by the window.

Another factor responsible for the misalignment between teacher beliefs and practices is the limiting nature of education policies, which rob teachers of their "professional birthright" (Wixson & Pearson, 1998, p. 215). A current preoccupation with standards and accountability has left teachers and their students with little say in what goes on in the classroom (Carter, 2003; Eisenhart, et al., 1988; Thomas, 2001; Valencia & Wixson, 2000; Wixson & Pearson, 1998). Furthermore, this governing standards movement is also somewhat responsible for a preponderance of decontextualized instruction and inauthentic purposes for reading and writing (Thomas, 2001). Education policies have caused an epidemic of teaching to the test as well as what Thomas refers to as a "finish-line mentality," which flies in the face of constructivist principle (p. 64). If the ultimate goal of literacy instruction is to provide real reading and writing opportunities for students, then educational policymakers must involve teachers in the development of standards and allow teachers more freedom in what strategies they choose to implement to meet those standards. The consequence of policy dictatorship is rebellion and half-

hearted implementation from teachers whose beliefs do not mesh with current policy (Eisenhart, et al.).

Richardson et al. (1991) and Shapiro and Kilbey (1990) explain how lack of professional development and administrative support are partially responsible for the lack of congruence between teacher beliefs and practices. Even though teachers' beliefs may evolve over time, without a working knowledge of the practices that will allow them to implement new modes of literacy instruction, teachers may persist in their comfortably worn patterns of instruction. Richardson et al. (1991) go on to say that better training and professional development opportunities are essential for change since the introduction of new teaching models without training typically leads to frustration and resistance. Valencia and Wixson (2000) mention an example of implementation without professional development in their summary of a case study of high school English teachers implementing the Kentucky state portfolio. Shapiro and Kilbey (1990) add that teachers will feel comfortable embracing practices that are aligned with their shifting beliefs when they are given a safe, supportive environment built on administrative trust and respect. Unfortunately, in reality teachers are usually strong-armed into accepting and upholding new ways of thinking about teaching and learning by a visiting "expert," who typically begins a professional development session with a crowd-warming sentiment akin to "Everything you knew previously is wrong. I am here to show you the right way to do things in your classroom." This devaluing of teachers' experiences and beliefs is in direct conflict with the principal tenets of constructivism and is certainly not conducive to progress. Good professional development is reflective of teachers' beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences (Richardson et al.).

Teachers are also limited in what new practices they can implement by practical issues, including classroom control and the reality of limited resources (Shapiro & Kilbey, 1990). Maintaining a sense of order and control, especially for the novice teacher, is the decisive element in planning instruction (Shapiro & Kilbey, 1990). A lack of materials (such as texts) may mean that students are poorly grouped. A classroom only equipped with desks may make it difficult for a constructivist-minded teacher to capitalize on the social aspects of learning. In teaching, as in

business, time and money play a major role in an individual's likelihood for success.

## Methodology and Data Sources

This study examines and describes the changes in four teachers' beliefs and practices in literacy and literacy assessment over the course of a yearlong graduate level clinical experience. Participating in this study were four teachers who worked in a university literacy clinic as part of their graduate course work. Two of the four teachers teach elementary-aged pupils in a public school, another serves as a reading resource educator at a public elementary school, and the fourth teaches high school-aged students at an alternative school associated with a public school. The study took place at the university clinic where all four participants worked one-on-one with a struggling literacy learner. Additionally, the teachers were observed at the schools where they teach. The three teachers of elementary-aged students teach at the same elementary school where 53 percent of the student population is comprised of minorities. The fourth teacher works at an alternative school with 36 students who attend the school due to habitual discipline problems, truancy, risk of dropping out, and/or violation of a school board mandated policy such as possessing a weapon. The teachers were selected to participate in the case study because they were students in the same university literacy assessment and intervention graduate class, worked with one student in the university literacy clinic, and instructed students in literacy in a public school classroom. The four participants consented to be part of the study. Pseudonyms are used for all subjects involved in the study.

Mary, who has been teaching for five years, completed her degree in Elementary Education in 1998. She is currently teaching first graders, and has previously taught kindergarten. She is certified as a librarian and has four graduate classes to complete before she receives a Masters Degree. As part of the requirements for her degree, she took the two clinical literacy courses. In the university literacy clinic, she worked with a ten-year old Caucasian female fourth grader referred to the clinic by her parents.

Catherine, an elementary school teacher for six years, completed her degree in Elementary Education in 1996. She is currently teaching third graders. She took the clinic courses because they were requirements for the Masters Degree she has almost completed. Catherine worked with an eight-year old Caucasian male in the second grade. This student has received speech therapy and takes medication for Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD).

Anne teaches 9-12 secondary English at an alternative high school. She completed her secondary language arts certification in 1998, has been a teacher for five years, and is about to complete her Masters Degree. The clinic classes are part of the requirements for completing her degree. During the yearlong clinic sessions, Anne worked with a fourteen-year old African American male student referred to the clinic by his mother who is concerned that his reading difficulties will negatively affect his academic progress.

Jane is the Reading Recovery teacher at a local elementary school. She completed her degree in Elementary Education in 1998 and has previously taught first grade. The clinical classes are a required component for her Master's Degree. In the clinic, she worked with a seven-year old Caucasian male referred by his mother who is concerned that her son may possibly have a learning disability.

The university literacy clinic holds diagnostic and intervention sessions weekly during both the fall and spring semesters. From September to May, each student clinician works one-on-one with the same student. Students are referred to the clinic in a variety of ways, but most of the students are struggling readers and writers referred by classroom teachers or parents/guardians. During the weekly ninety-minute sessions, clinicians use a variety of assessments to delve into the strengths and weaknesses of their student. The results of these assessments, along with a plan of intervention to address the areas of greatest need, are shared with parents in a case summary report format. Then in the spring, weekly sessions of ninety minutes are spent carrying out the intervention plan and conducting ongoing assessment. During this time, another report is made to parents/guardians about the student's progress. Following the clinic sessions, student clinicians had sixty

minutes of instructional time with the graduate professor and two assistants. During this instruction, graduate student clinicians learned how to administer particular assessments, analyze and interpret data as well as engage in the use of numerous instructional strategies designed to benefit struggling literacy learners. The clinic practices and materials reflect a constructivist approach to assessment and intervention.

Researchers used a case study format because it allowed researchers to collect rich data in order to make assertions about the beliefs and practices of these classroom teachers. The methods and materials used for gathering data included the Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS) (Lenski et al., 1997), a measure of teacher beliefs and feelings about literacy and literacy instruction, open-ended interviews, field observations, and reflective journals (see Appendix A). Along with the instructor, the researchers read and provided feedback in each of the teachers' reflective journals. Each researcher interviewed and observed the same two teachers during the study. At the beginning of the study, in August, each teacher subject completed the LOS. This survey was administered early in the study in order to give the researchers an orientation to the literacy beliefs of the subjects. When analyzed, the results of the survey characterized teachers in three main categories: traditional teacher, eclectic teacher, and constructivist teacher (Lenski et al.).

Following completion of the survey, the researchers interviewed each study participant at their schools. The hour-long interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for later analysis (see Appendix B). At the conclusion of the study in May, researchers conducted another interview, the exit interview (see Appendix C). The interview questions were designed to inquire about the use of literacy assessment practices in the classroom, the teachers' literacy decision making processes, and changes in literacy classroom assessments and practices that were related to the teachers' graduate course and clinical work. The final interview also focused on the teacher subjects' perceptions of gains/improvements made by their student in the clinic and the students in their classrooms. Although the two researchers asked the same questions, no interviews were exactly alike because the questions were open-ended and study subjects were encouraged to speak freely about literacy topics important

to them and interviewers asked follow up questions related to these topics.

On site classroom observations totaled ten hours for each of the four teachers. Observations during sessions at the university literacy clinic comprised the majority of the field observation and totaled more than thirty hours for each study participant. These observations occurred throughout the course of the study beginning in October and concluding in May and were recorded as handwritten and word-processed field notes. As much as possible, the language of the teacher and the students was recorded verbatim and researchers used concrete, objective language to describe what they observed.

Participants kept reflective journals during the intervention phase of the clinical experience from January to May. Teachers reflected in writing on their instruction, student progress, and plans for future sessions with the client. In addition, weekly prompts and/or questions were provided by the instructor designed to encourage in-depth student reflection. Each week, study subjects responded about their client's development as a strategic reader, their own professional growth in the clinical experience, and instructional practices such as providing authentic practice, modeling, and other forms of direct instruction like activating prior knowledge and integration of new information with old.

Researchers consistently had access to all the data being collected as soon as it was transcribed or made available by the participants. Researchers individually read through all the data multiple times and met periodically during the course of the study to analyze data. As the data was collected, the researchers coded and analyzed them. When differences in coding occurred, the researchers worked together to reach consensus. In order to find salient features and patterns among the teachers, researchers used a classroom observation instrument and coding sheet that were field-tested in a five-year longitudinal study of the Early Reading Incentive Grant research project (McIntyre, Powers, & Bintz, 2001; Jones et al., 2003). Some of these teacher behaviors included instructional features like scaffolding, metacognitive talk, and modeling. Other features coded for analysis included the amount and kind of strategy and skill instruction, as well as student behavior and

activity such as choral reading, silent reading, and dialoguing. Consistency in the analysis of the data between the two researchers was high throughout data collection and all findings were supported with multiple observations with the researchers. Any finding that was not supported in this manner was further examined and clarified, and consensus was reached or the data was eliminated.

In order to ensure validity in the qualitative case study, researchers used two methods of triangulation and prolonged engagement. Both investigator and methodological triangulation were employed. Two researchers worked with the four teacher subjects throughout the study, and multiple qualitative methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, observations, field notes and journals) provided data for the study. Because researchers observed the four teacher subjects regularly for approximately nine months in both the literacy clinic and their classrooms, the researchers were able to build trust with the teachers and invest sufficient time to better understand the cultures of the clinic and the classroom.

**Findings**

The findings of this study support the notion that what teachers believe and how they instruct students in their classrooms are not always consistent. This inconsistency can be caused by several factors, including classroom management and environment issues, requirements and limitations set forth by administrative and district policies. By conducting interviews with each of the four subjects, the researchers analyzed the level of control that each instructional setting imposed on the individuals. In the course of gathering data, the researchers discovered that the instructional framework with which the teachers are most comfortable influences their instruction in the clinic and the classroom. Two of the four teachers rarely ventured beyond their instructional comfort zones, despite the new strategies for literacy instruction they learned in the clinic. However, the other two teachers made use of new literacy strategies with their clinic clients and in their classrooms. Lastly, the findings support the idea that teachers are in fact the most important assessment instruments of their students' literacy development.

*Finding 1: What teachers believe and how they instruct in their classrooms are often not consistent and are affected by classroom management and environment issues and requirements and limitations set forth by administrative and district policies.*

Mary

 Mary teaches a first grade class of racially and economically diverse students. In her responses on the Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS) (Lenski, et al, 1997), she provides some initial data that supports the first finding. Her scattered responses on the five-point Likert scale indicate an uncertainty about a majority of her literacy beliefs. On the survey, Mary's responses demonstrate a lack of understanding about the importance of reading comprehension instruction. The beliefs and practices that she strongly agreed or disagreed can be directly attributed to Mary's experience with Four Blocks. For instance, she indicated on the survey that she believes students must write text on a daily basis and teachers should read aloud to their students daily. She also claims to schedule time daily for writing and self-selected reading, both of which are Four Blocks components. However, despite these beliefs, observations in the classroom and the clinic revealed a lack of writing instruction. Thus, the researchers concluded that Mary often states that she follows the district mandated Four Blocks model, but her instructional actions were inconsistent with her beliefs.

 In interviews, Mary says that she doesn't feel that she has much control over assessment in her classroom: "The standard assessments that we give. . . I don't have any control over that at all. I just give what they [district administrators] tell me to give." Teachers received a half-day of training on the assessment (the GRADE) so they could "gear" instruction to meet the needs of individual students. Later in the same interview, Mary states that she received a CD-ROM which correlates the individual results to strategies that can be used to improve performance in a particular area. In the final interview of the study, Mary says, "The main decisions about what to teach are made for me." This latest district assessment requirement has caused a misalignment between Mary's current teaching framework and what new additions to her curriculum she must make based on individual test results.

Based on the researchers' coding of the classroom observations, Mary spent most of her time with students dealing with classroom issues and managing student behavior. Coding indicates that she is comfortable with the procedural aspects of her literacy lessons, but she infrequently provided scaffolding to individual students. A specific example of Mary's concern with procedural issues over affective behaviors was observed during a classroom observation. Students were moving to the carpeted reading area for guided reading. Mary passed out a book to each student and asked each one to check for missing pages. Six minutes of instructional time were lost as students searched their books for missing pages. Half the class discovered they were missing page nine. After choral reading of the story, Mary instructs children to choose partners for buddy reading based on who has page nine and who doesn't. This instructional decision is based solely on practicality and is in direct conflict with her responses to two statements on the LOS regarding grouping practices for reading instruction. Mary's decision to group students arbitrarily using the presence of page nine as the determinant for grouping is in opposition to her agreement with the following LOS statement, "I use a variety of grouping patterns to teach reading, such as skill groups, interest groups, whole group, and individual instruction." Additionally, journal entries and interviews reveal that this teacher perceives that issues such as length of instructional time, costliness, difficulty of implementation, and lack of additional personnel limit her willingness to implement new and different literacy assessments, including informal reading inventories, anecdotal notes, and running records. All of these brief scenes from the year-long study indicate that Mary has little cohesion between her beliefs and practices. In every aspect of the research study, evidence surfaced to support this teacher's inconsistencies and complacency with district requirements. Her clinical experience was clearly based on the classroom practices she employed with her first graders rather than effective instructional literacy practices needed for her struggling ten-year old client in the clinic.

Catherine

Catherine, who teaches a third grade class at an elementary school with a diverse student population, frames the work she does with her students around the Four Blocks. In the Literacy Orientation Survey

(LOS) she completed for the research study, all but two responses out of 30 were 1's (strongly disagree), 4's, or 5's (strongly agree). This initial self-assessment indicates effective alignment of Catherine's literacy beliefs about her constructivist classroom with Four Blocks. Data collected from interviews and observations continued to corroborate this early piece of information. Throughout the research study, Catherine's work in her classroom and the university clinic indicated that she effectively met the needs of her students; however, because she experienced success using Four Blocks with her third grade students, she did not move beyond that same framework in attempting to meet the needs of her eight-year old second grade struggling reader and writer in the clinic.

At Catherine's school, teachers are "highly encouraged to use" the Accelerated Reader (AR) program. This reading incentive program utilizes leveled books and computerized recall quizzes. Students receive points for correctly recalling information from the story. Usually students are rewarded with small prizes, such as a plastic spider ring from the Oriental Trading Company. In an interview, Catherine indicates that she believes the AR program places "little emphasis" on higher-level thinking. She goes on to explain that even though she is encouraged to use AR, she limits the significance and role it plays in her classroom to align with her mostly constructivist practices and beliefs. This example illustrates Catherine's ambivalence regarding administrative-encouraged use of the AR program. She has managed to incorporate the reading program into her instructional day, but she has done so in a way that is more consistent with her personal literacy beliefs and the instructional literacy goals she has set for her students.

In terms of classroom management and practical issues that affect implementation of new and different literacy assessments, Catherine explicitly states that, "When you have twenty-five children, [administering individualized reading assessments] is impossible unless you keep a child from a special class like music or P.E. It would probably take six months to test everybody if I did it myself. . . . The quick thing that I do–and I don't have a lot of faith in it–but I do use it a little–is the STAR test." This example shows that Catherine chooses the

most expedient method of assessment because what she perceives as time constraints prevent her from using a more authentic means of evaluation.

Mary and Catherine both failed to venture out of their instructional comfort zones in the clinic. Although Mary was burdened by what she perceived to be outside (district, school, and clinical) forces, Catherine effectively instructed her classroom students, balancing and modifying the same outside forces that Mary couldn't control. These two teachers' literacy beliefs and practices sharply contrast. Mary does not have clearly articulated beliefs; instead, she takes comfort in following whatever policies, mandates, and suggestions are made to her. Catherine, on the other hand, does have strongly articulated literacy beliefs. Despite school and district mandated policies, Catherine still manages to adhere to her carefully thought out beliefs about literacy, finding ways to modify these restricting practices (such as AR).

The other two teachers, Jane and Anne, were able to effectively mesh their literacy beliefs and their practices in both the classroom and the clinic. Even more importantly, the two were able to venture beyond the confines of their school environments and experiment with new and different literacy strategies, as well as examining their thinking about their current literacy practices.

Jane

Because Jane teaches in a Reading Recovery program that is trademarked and has its own set of assessments and instructional materials, she is bound by certain immutable guidelines, including reporting data to a national recording center, engaging in contact sessions with a teacher leader and administering the required assessment instruments. Despite these restrictions, Jane does not perceive a lack of control in instructional decision making. In fact, in an interview in October, Jane asserts that "As I assess children on a day-to-day basis, I can use pretty much whatever type of assessment I want to." She goes on to say, "I can alter things based on . . . what I need to tell me more about the children." Jane's fourth journal entry communicates the pressure she feels because she doesn't have many sessions left with her client. She writes, "I am always running out of time. I want to do what is most

effective for my client, and I may have to narrow my instruction in order to accomplish that." In this example from her clinic journal, the researchers believe this is indicative of Jane's deep reflection and her confidence to act on these reflections. In an interview, Jane responds to a question about student journaling in her classroom. She replies, "Really it's more of a time factor that keeps us from doing [journaling] than anything. I have them for thirty minutes." Later in the interview, Jane expresses her frustration by jesting, "We have thirty minutes to do this, and this, and this, and this, and you had better not get in my way [laughs], 'cause we're getting it done." These remarks about time indicate that Jane does feel and understand the restrictions that teachers face daily, but she continues to maintain her high standards for student performance in her classroom and the clinic. Although Jane is locked into a trademarked program, she still perceives herself as the influencing and guiding power for her students.

Anne

In contrast to the other three teachers, Anne believes that she has "total control...more control than you'd have in the regular classroom. So I get to decide basically what we do and how we do it..." Anne, in the same interview, discusses the limitations that her classroom setting imposes. She states that because her students eventually return to their home schools, "it [reading strategies] doesn't become part of their schema." She also indicates that, as is the case with all the other teachers in the study, time is a limiting factor in her diagnostic decision-making. Many of her students are on a second grade reading level and have a wide range of literacy abilities which influences her need for individualizing instruction. Anne also fantasizes about having two planning periods. She would use them to do in-depth assessments on her students. Classroom interruptions are a seemingly constant concern for Anne. During a classroom observation, Anne's class is interrupted by a telephone call and an assistant who retrieves a student for a medical check-up. Teachers at Anne's school must contend with an arbitrary class period dismissal that is governed by the availability of the office assistant. Even though Anne is not faced with school-mandated restrictions on her curriculum, the limiting factors of time and external interruptions still affect her instruction.

Interviews with Anne indicated that she had not received much reading instruction prior to the university clinical classes nor had she worked with a junior high school-aged student. "I don't know how to teach reading or how to fix it...So, I'll have to do some research." Because Anne's experience in the clinic was unlike her classroom teaching experiences in literacy, in order to effectively meet the needs of her client in the clinic, she was forced to move into what was for her uncharted territory.

Jane and Anne represent similar situations in that they both believe that limitations and restrictions minimally affect their instruction. Both also met the challenges of working in a new environment with a great deal of careful reflection and implementation of new strategies.

*Finding #2: The instructional framework employed by teachers influences their application of literacy instructional strategies in both the clinic and the classroom.*

Mary

Although the Four Blocks framework is a constructivist way of organizing literacy activities in classrooms, Mary perceives that it is a scheduling and organizing tool. When she describes her typical day in language arts, she focuses on the order, the amount of time, and the bathroom breaks that occur. Her concern for order is supported in all the classroom and clinic observations that occurred during the study. In Mary's first grade classroom, observation data indicates that she spends a significant amount of time telling students what to do and managing behavior. For instance, she frequently manages her students' behavior by saying "Give me five!" to bring them back to the task or "Pull a 'kool' kid!" when an individual student is unable to control his behavior. She also rewards quiet students with a treat. This attention to management may be a coping mechanism she employs in her chaotic classroom. Mary's adherence to this regimented schedule may prevent her from attempting new and different literacy strategies. In the clinic, which was a new situation for Mary, she found herself unsure about how to manage her young client. In clinical feedback from the instructor

given to Mary in October, information was provided to assist her in setting high expectations for student learning, ways of keeping the client focused during sessions and possible modifications needed in order to make effective use of the instructional time. Evidence of Mary's reluctance to leave her instructional comfort zone appeared on a number of occasions during clinical observations. The most telling omission from her clinical mini-Four Blocks framework was the absence of the Writing Block. Since the reading component takes precedence over writing in Mary's first grade classroom, she did not implement writing activities with her older, fourth-grade clinic student during their weekly sessions. To do so would have meant leaving the familiarity of her daily classroom routine.

Catherine

Catherine, who has been teaching for six years, uses Four Blocks effectively in her classroom. In a ten-minute timeframe, the researcher observed Catherine discussing prior knowledge, helping her students complete a graphic organizer, leading choral reading, and doing a book walk. Throughout this time period, students were engaged with the teacher and her instruction. In fact, when she came to the end of the graphic organizer, the students still had their hands raised to respond and many groaned because they didn't want to stop. In her clinical sessions, Catherine relied on the Four Block strategies that she employs in her classroom. She never implemented any new or different strategies learned in the clinic, and thus, she didn't venture beyond the familiar instructional interventions that work effectively for her.

Jane

In February, Jane writes in her reflective journal that "the lesson planning and the assessment continue to provide opportunities for my own growth in connecting instruction to needs diagnosed during ongoing authentic assessment." In March, in her journal, she writes "As with students at the school where I teach, I find the need to continue to model, offer opportunities for practice and ask (clinic client) to verbalize are key to his continuing to use the strategies that we work on." She implemented some of the same strategies in the clinic that she uses

regularly in her classroom such as running records. In the clinic where she had more decision-making power and choice, she found that she was employing new intervention strategies learned as a result of her participation in the clinic course.

<u>Anne</u>

Of the four teacher subjects, Anne had the least well-established instructional framework. She often employed a reading and writing workshop approach. Because she teaches older students and doesn't concentrate on teaching literacy through strategy instruction, her participation in the clinic required more preparation. In an interview, Anne says, "Everything I've pretty much done in there [the clinic] has been new because I'm a secondary teacher....So I'll have to do some research." In fact she makes virtually the same statement three different times in this interview session. The strategies that Anne learned about in the course such as context plus phonics had to be modified to fit the age of her clinic client. Not only was Anne learning new strategies, but she was also adapting them for a middle school student. For instance, in the Context Plus Phonics strategy introduced during the clinic class, students work with the Magic Chart. Rather than use this juvenile phrase, Anne renamed the chart "Word Detective."

*Finding #3: Teachers serve as the most important assessment instrument of their students' literacy development.*

<u>Mary</u>

In the classroom, Mary infrequently individualizes her assessments. She states in an initial interview that she "pretty much use[s] the same assessment with everybody." She also says "you just have to watch what they're doing in class.... I just basically make notes about what they're doing." She uses these anecdotal records primarily for accountability purposes. When she assesses writing her primary focus is on mechanics rather than meaning. During her clinical experience, Mary kept anecdotal records and wrote reports and case summaries about the individual assessments and interventions regarding her client. However, the researchers' most frequent written remarks in Mary's journal focused on the need for her to provide more analysis of her work and be more

reflective about her client's needs and her own effectiveness. As an assessor of her students' literacy development, Mary lacks the effectiveness and reflection necessary for helping her students make gains in their literacy growth.

Catherine

In contrast Catherine is a stronger primary assessor of her students. Her beliefs about classroom assessment and more formal assessment follow constructivist principles. Both her work in the literacy clinic and the classroom provide evidence that Catherine views her students as partners in the assessment process. During a classroom observation, Catherine's students were teaching fellow students using Four Blocks guided reading techniques modeled after lessons Catherine has taught most of the school year. Catherine mentioned two times during the class that she was making anecdotal notes about the students' work. At the end of the student-presented lessons, she asks how they feel about teaching. They reply that it makes them nervous. Then Catherine relates a story about presenting in front of her peers. She ends the class by letting students know that they have done a good job and "the roles have reversed." In an interview, Catherine indicated that she uses "projects as a culminating event" and performance tasks such as a diorama. She prefers these kinds of authentic assessments over paper and pencil based tests. In fact, she states later in the same interview that she "tries to do something that is not in a test form…because I'm not a good test taker." She also uses observation and anecdotal notes as primary assessment tools "because you can really learn a lot about a child by listening to what they have to say." As she discusses her use of the Accelerated Reader program, Catherine explains that she doesn't put much emphasis on points because "we don't want them reading for the points." She goes on to say that she doesn't use it for assessment purposes because it places little emphasis on higher-level thinking. Catherine emphasizes self-assessment for her students. She says, "that's [self-assessment] a key. Kids need to know how—what is expected of them and then if they are fulfilling all of the requirements in order to meet that goal." Conferencing and journaling are both ongoing means of reflection for Catherine's students as reflected by remarks made in an October interview. Her beliefs about informal assessment carry over to her work

in the literacy clinic. In her clinic initial summary report, she states in the summary of objectives section that she will focus on strategies to assist her student in becoming an independent reader and improve word recognition skills in authentic reading situations.

<u>Jane</u>

Unlike Catherine, who explicitly emphasizes student self-assessment and learner independence, Jane relies more on an analysis of her own teaching strengths and weaknesses. Since Jane is a Reading Recovery teacher, she is required to implement specific Reading Recovery assessment practices including The Observation Survey, the Concepts About Print test, and the Ohio Word Test. Additionally, Jane relies heavily on running records, teacher observation, and anecdotal notes for day-to-day classroom assessments. As evidenced in Jane's clinic records and reports, she used these informal assessment measures in her clinical experience as well. In an October interview, Jane indicated that she employs these ongoing assessments in her "day-to-day planning. I look at what they're [students] doing, and what they're ignoring, and I try to bring in a focus on strategies that they're not using that would help them, and I also use it sometimes to regroup." In her exit interview in May, Jane noted that she has "become a more reflective teacher... [who is] more confident in the use of a variety of assessments.... Many times, assessment tools are misunderstood and as a result they are used inappropriately. I'm trying to help change that." In contrast to Mary, whose lack of reflection hinders her ability to effectively assess her students, Jane's reflective logs provide rich data about her own growth. In her final log entry in April, she summarizes her growth: "This session continued to reinforce what I believe is my more well-developed awareness of the role of motivation....Motivation is the WILL. I know that in past reflections I've talked about my own growth in understanding assessment and adjusting instruction according to student needs." Jane is successful as the primary assessor of her students because she is deeply reflective about her students' needs and her own teaching and assessing methods.

Anne

Anne's primary means of assessment is "authentic writing assessment." For example, in the students' unit on *Of Mice and Men*, they could choose from any of the following for their culminating event: obituary, feature article, short story guide, rewriting the ending, or a rap song. Reflecting on her clinical experience, Anne comments that her "concepts of assessment have been changing." In the recent past, Anne indicated that she was concerned about what kind of grade she wanted her students to achieve; now, however, she plans assessment based on what she wants to know about the student. This way of thinking can be compared to Jane's similar reflective practices. Anne says "If it's, I just want to see if they're getting it, then I'll—I can play Jeopardy on the PowerPoint and do that just as well as giving them a pop quiz and then they get rewarded instead of punished for knowing it." Sometimes intuition has a part in assessment, and, for Anne, this is the case. Later in the interview, she remarks that she is "inherently intuitive about [her] kids." While Catherine doesn't describe herself as being intuitive about her students, she does rely on her own experiences as a learner when planning assessment. For example, Catherine plans assessments other than paper and pencil tests because "[she is] not a good test taker." In Anne's exit interview, she responds to a question about what she has learned from her clinical experience. She says "I think that I learned more about assessment—and that not all assessments are good and that assessment doesn't have to mean a [paper and pencil] test. I learned that watching a child read can give me some good information and they don't teach that in middle grades/secondary reading classes." She continues by noting that she doesn't "have to try to give assessments the way others do because that's not the only way." Anne demonstrated substantial growth in her understanding and use of assessment in both the classroom and the clinic.

**Implications for Instruction**

The findings of this research project offer insights for planning university literacy clinical experiences as well as field work in general for pre-service and in-service teacher preparation programs. In terms of teacher training and professional development, the study highlights the

need for more instructional preparation among middle and secondary teachers for working with struggling readers. Just as older students must continue to receive strategy instruction for reading to learn, so too do teachers deserve and desire continued instruction in current and promising literacy practices. Anne, one of the study subjects, indicated that her undergraduate preparation to teach English at the secondary level provided little strategy instruction for teaching and supporting the needs of struggling readers and writers. Her clinical work with a middle school student, as well as her teaching assignment in an alternative high school, revealed that secondary literacy strategies are often a forgotten component in pre-service teacher preparation.

Throughout the study, it became evident that teachers' literacy beliefs and instructional practices in the classroom are often not aligned. For example, Mary and Catherine were forced to adapt the school-mandated Accelerated Reader program against their philosophy of effective literacy instruction and teaching beliefs. This implies that alignment might be more likely to occur when administrative support, in terms of collaboration among the school, the university, and the teacher/graduate student, is realized. Reflection is another area of concern in this study. Pre-service teachers learn the importance of reflection as an instructionally effective tool; however, when they make the transition to the classroom as in-service professionals, the practical realities of the classroom and administrative nonchalance overshadow the benefits of continuing to be a reflective practitioner. Providing incentives like release time for in-service teachers encourages a link between the classroom and the academic arena. In part, the responsibility for change lies with teachers who sometimes make the erroneous assumption that school administrators will not enthusiastically support their continued academic endeavors. For example, many principals will grant release time for academic activities related to the teacher's professional development, if only the teacher will request it in a timely way. Empowering teachers with these tools can help them see that they are capable of making classroom decisions. When teachers have the attitude that they control their teaching situations, then they are motivated to be reflective, creative and adaptable.

Another implication of the research study is the need for continuous planning within university literacy clinics. This particular study indicated a need for student clinicians to focus more on leaving their instructional comfort zones. This could be achieved by providing more expectations for implementing new and different strategies learned during the clinical experience. For example, professors could administer a pre-clinic survey of their students to determine what literacy strategies and methods they are currently using in their classrooms. Students would then be required to demonstrate that they are investigating and employing additional as well as appropriate methods of literacy instruction in the clinic with their client. Another goal for improving the clinic is to focus on recruiting more middle- and high-school aged clients. One way to accomplish this seemingly impossible feat is to take advantage of existing Extended School Services (ESS) at local schools and take the clinic to the school site. ESS is an after school tutoring program designed to help struggling students achieve at higher levels by providing assistance with course work as well as remediation in basic skills such as reading and math. In conjunction with ESS, students can benefit by receiving one on one intervention instruction from university students. Secondary students can be enticed to participate with the promise of improved grade averages in their language arts classes. Therefore, the findings of this study, despite the small sample size, can still add to the case for increased teacher autonomy and decision-making. In this way, the best, most cohesive literacy instruction and assessment in today's classrooms can finally be realized.

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Appendix A

Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS)

Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Read the following statements, and circle the response that indicates your feelings or behaviors regarding literacy and literacy instruction.

1.  The purpose of reading instruction is to teach children to recognize words and to pronounce them correctly.

    Strongly                                                  Strongly
    Disagree                                                    Agree
       1----------------2----------------3----------------4------------------5

2.  When students read text, I ask them questions such as "What does it mean?"

    Never                                                      Always
       1----------------2----------------3----------------4------------------5

3.  Reading and writing are unrelated processes.

    Strongly                                                  Strongly
    Disagree                                                    Agree
       1----------------2----------------3----------------4------------------5

4.  When planning instruction, I take into account the needs of children by including activities that meet their social, emotional, physical, and affective needs.

    Never                                                      Always
       1----------------2----------------3----------------4------------------5

5.  Students should be treated as individual learners rather than as a group.

    Strongly                                        Strongly
    Disagree                                        Agree
        1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

6.  I schedule time every day for self-selected reading and writing experiences.

    Never                                            Always
        1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

7.  Students should use "fix-up strategies" such as reading when text meaning is unclear.

    Strongly                                        Strongly
    Disagree                                        Agree
        1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

8.  Teachers should read aloud to students on a daily basis.

    Strongly                                        Strongly
    Disagree                                        Agree
        1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

9.  I encourage my students to monitor their comprehension as they read.

    Never                                            Always
        1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

10. I use a variety of prereading strategies with my students.

    Never                                            Always
        1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

11. It is not necessary for students to write text on a daily basis.

Strongly                                                    Strongly
Disagree                                                       Agree
   1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

12. Students should be encouraged to sound out all unknown words.

Strongly                                                    Strongly
Disagree                                                       Agree
   1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

13. The purpose of reading is to understand print.

Strongly                                                    Strongly
Disagree                                                       Agree
   1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

14. I hold parent workshops or send home newsletters with ideas about how parents can help their children with school.

Never                                                        Always
   1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

15. I organize my classroom so that my students have an opportunity to write in at least one subject every day.

Never                                                        Always
   1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

16. I ask the parents of my students to share their time, knowledge, and expertise in my classroom.

Never                                                        Always
   1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

17. Writers in my classroom generally move through the processes of prewriting, drafting, and revising.

Never                                                     Always
1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

18. In my class, I organize reading, writing, speaking, and listening around key concepts.

Never                                                     Always
1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

19. Reading instruction should always be delivered to the whole class at the same time.

Strongly                                          Strongly
Disagree                                           Agree
1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

20. I teach using themes or integrated units.

Never                                                      Always
1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

21. Grouping for reading instruction should always be based on ability.

Strongly                                          Strongly
Disagree                                           Agree
1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

22. Subjects should be integrated across the curriculum.

Strongly                                          Strongly
Disagree                                           Agree
1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

23. I use a variety of grouping patterns to teach reading such as skill groups, interest groups, whole groups, and individual instruction.

Never                                                                          Always
1----------------2----------------3----------------4----------------5

24. Students need to write for a variety of purposes.

Strongly                                                                    Strongly
Disagree                                                                      Agree
1----------------2----------------3----------------4----------------5

25. I take advantage of opportunities to learn about teaching by attending professional conferences and/or graduate classes and by reading professional journals.

Never                                                                          Always
1----------------2----------------3----------------4----------------5

26. Parents' attitudes toward literacy affect my students' progress.

Strongly                                                                    Strongly
Disagree                                                                      Agree
1----------------2----------------3----------------4----------------5

27. The major purpose of reading assessment is to determine a student's placement in the basal reader.

Strongly                                                                    Strongly
Disagree                                                                      Agree
1----------------2----------------3----------------4----------------5

28. I assess my students' reading progress primarily by teacher-made and or/book tests.

Never                                                                          Always
1----------------2----------------3----------------4----------------5

29. Parental reading habits in the home affect their children's attitudes toward reading.

Strongly                                                                 Strongly
Disagree                                                                    Agree
   1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5

30. At the end of the day, I reflect on the effectiveness of my instructional decisions.

Never                                                                      Always
   1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5


## Interpreting Your LOS Score

1. Plot your Total Score on the line.

90. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .110 . . . . . . . . . . . . . .125. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .145

2. If your score is in the 90-110 range, you are most likely a traditional teacher.

   If your score is in the 110-125 range, you are most likely an eclectic teacher.

   If your score is in the 125-145 range, you are most likely a constructivist teacher.

3. Plot your Beliefs Score on the line.

   45. . . . . 51. . . . . . . . . 61. . . . . . . 69. .72

4. If your score is closest to 51, you have beliefs similar to a traditional teacher.

If your score is closest to 61, you have beliefs similar to an eclectic teacher.

If your score is closest to 69, you have beliefs similar to a constructivist teacher.

5.  Plot your Practice Score on the line.

45. . . . . 51. . . . 56. . . . . . 63. . . . . . . . 72

6.  If your score is closest to 51, you have beliefs similar to a traditional teacher.

If your score is closest to 56, you have beliefs similar to an eclectic teacher.

If your score is closest to 63, you have beliefs similar to a constructivist teacher.

7.  List you Beliefs Score_____. List your Practice Score _____.

8.  **If your Beliefs Score is higher than your Practice Score, you have not yet found a way to incorporate your constructivist beliefs in your classroom.

    **If your Practice Score is higher than your Beliefs Score, you need to think about why you make the instructional decisions that you do.

## Definitions of Teaching Practices

Traditional Teacher
- *uses traditional reading methods such as basal reading instruction
- *teaches using primarily direct instruction

- *thinks about students as being "blank slates"

Eclectic Teacher
- *uses some traditional and some constructivist reading methods
- *uses conflicting instructional methods
- *unsure about how students learn

Constructivist Teacher
- *uses primarily an integrated curriculum
- *practices holistic instruction
- *views students as using prior knowledge to construct meaning

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Assessment

How much control do you think you have about decision-making regarding student assessment in your classroom?

What are some assessment decisions that you make? What are some assessment decisions that you don't/can't make? What factors restrict your decision-making?

Name some of the ways you find out what your students know or are learning in your classroom.

Literacy Assessment Checklist

| informal | formal |
|---|---|
| running records | GRADE |
| reading inventories (ARI, IRI, QRI) | CTBS |
| observation checklists | PPVT-III |
| anecdotal records | Woodcock-Johnson |
| interviews/conferences | Gates-MacGinitie |
| journals | CATS |
| self-generated writings | teacher made tests/quizzes |
| miscue analysis | basal tests |
| spelling inventories | |

Ask these questions about each individual assessment:

How do you decide which assessment is appropriate?

How is this assessment related to your beliefs? to current theories of literacy?

How frequently do you use it?

How do you use it—with individuals, group, class, school?

How do you use the results?

How do you keep track of how the students are doing in their reading and writing?

General questions

How can you tell when you are doing a good job teaching?

Can you think of a time when you felt really satisfied (and dissatisfied) with your work?

Could you describe what a typical day in your language arts class would be like?

Can you give me some examples of things you would like kids to know about reading and writing when they leave your class?

Have you tried any new assessment strategies during your clinical experience?

Appendix C

Teacher Participant Exit Interview

Please respond honestly to the following questions regarding your yearlong clinical experience. Reflect on how your literacy beliefs and classroom practices may have been affected over the course of working with your struggling reader. The researchers are extremely grateful for your participation in this study. Your insights into the clinical experience will add to the growing body of research on teacher beliefs and practices and will help teacher educators plan more effective instruction.

How do you develop your students' ownership of literacy? How can you tell when a student has this ownership?

To what do you attribute the gains/improvements you made with your student in the WKU Literacy Clinic?

What are some things you learned as a result of being a clinician in the WKU Literacy Clinic? What have you applied in your classroom from the clinic?

How do you make decisions about what you are going to teach?

As a result of the clinic, what changes have you noted about yourself as a teacher, as a learner, and as a more reflective practitioner? Be as specific as possible.

What clinic strategies/practices have you not implemented? Why?
What would your ideal literacy model or classroom look like?