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COACHING SECONDARY TEACHERS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS
BY INCORPORATING STORYTELLING INTO
CONTENT-AREA INSTRUCTION

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty of
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at the University of New England

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For the degree of Doctor of Education

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COACHING SECONDARY TEACHERS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS BY INCORPORATING
STORYTELLING INTO CONTENT-AREA INSTRUCTION

Abstract

Currently, school leaders are being called to action to find ways of improving the literacy achievement of today's youth in response to the escalating number of students exiting high school unprepared for postsecondary educational programs and the workforce. Literacy coaching, as an embedded professional development model is one effective approach that can provide essential leadership and support for school and district-wide literacy reform. This qualitative single case study considers secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) as a professional development model and the extent to which it supports the integration of literacy practices within disciplinary subjects. This study also pursues the use of storytelling as a hook to spark student interest in content material and engage them in project-based learning.

The study explored three research questions: 1) How does the role of secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) support content teachers with introducing and embedding literacy strategies into their core subjects? 2) How can storytelling spark student interest in learning content material? 3) How does storytelling enhance student engagement and act as a catalyst for project-based, self-directed learning? Data collection included field observation notes, written reflections, documentation artifacts, a teacher questionnaire, and a focus group discussion with administrators. Data was analyzed using Creswell's (2013) Data Analysis Spiral. Three rounds of coding were applied to determine categories which illuminated overall themes.

Triangulation (Creswell, 2013) was used to corroborate evidence and validate findings through cross verification from multiple sources. This empirical investigation supports literacy coaching in situ as a powerful professional development model that can positively impact the teaching practices of secondary teachers and provide district and school-wide support for administrators. It also confirmed the benefit of story as a motivational hook for engaging adolescents in challenging disciplinary studies. Finally, it served to add to the discussion of current theories by providing effective ways to educate our youth, so they are prepared to meet the increasing challenges of our global 21st century society.

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

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DEDICATION

To my devoted family; my husband and best friend, Kris, cherished son, Gene, and precious daughter, Eilis, for their heartfelt love, enduring support, and ardent encouragement over the past three years. Thank you for your dedication to this endeavor and for the sacrifices you made along the way. And, most of all, for walking beside me, reminding me to live in the moment and to be grateful for life's blessings that occur every single day.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study considers literacy coaching in situ as a professional development model at the secondary school level and the extent to which it supports the integration of literacy practices within core content subjects. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore literacy coaching as a means of engaging secondary teachers and students in authentic literacy experiences that support the individual academic needs of every student (The Education Trust, 2016). This study pursued the use of storytelling as a hook to engage students in content material which provided a springboard for project-based learning. The knowledge generated from this inquiry affords new insights into content literacy instruction, thereby informing secondary literacy teaching practices and the role of student engagement in adolescent learning.

The intent of the researcher was to employ qualitative case study research “as a single entity or unit within a bounded context” (Merriam, 1998, as cited in Yazan, 2015, p. 139). In accordance with Merriam, the study stressed three distinct characteristics: “Particularistic”, focusing on the specific experiences of a group of teachers and students within a middle/high school setting (p. 139); “Descriptive”, yielding an in-depth account of the phenomenon under study, and; “Heuristic”, illuminating the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study” (p. 139). In-depth data collection and analysis was used to acquire a full account of the phenomenon under investigation. Participants of the study included a purposive sample (Merriam, 2009) of administrators and middle/high school teachers. They were selected to provide rich information about literacy coaching in situ as a professional development model, and the integration of storytelling in core subjects at the secondary level.

The study was conducted within a single middle/high school in a rural New England community. Each secondary educator was highly qualified in their area of expertise and benefited from the support of literacy coaching as a professional development model. Student engagement in content material using personal narrative audio was also examined.

This chapter begins with an overview of the background and problem that frames the study. It is followed by the statement of purpose, research questions, and conceptual framework. Also included are the assumptions, limitations, scope of the investigation, and a discussion of the rationale and significance of the study. The chapter concludes with definitions of key terminology used throughout the paper and a summary of key points with a preview of the chapters that follow.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, our nation is faced with a growing crisis in literacy. With an escalating number of students exiting high school unprepared for postsecondary educational programs and the workforce, school leaders are being called to action to find ways of improving the literacy achievement of today's youth (Rothman, 2012). In an era with increased accountability for student achievement, a leading number of factors impact the acquisition of literacy including societal changes, school climate, a broad range of literacy needs, lack of student engagement and incentives, as well as the rapid growth of technology.

One effective approach embraced by school leaders is turning to literacy coaches to provide essential leadership and support for school and district-wide literacy reform with the purpose of improving student achievement (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2009). The literature also

validated the inclusion of on-going, embedded professional development models as a means of creating sustainable change (Biancarosa, 2012; Cantrell & Calloway, 2008; & Gross, 2012).

While there is research to support literacy coaching as a promising practice at the elementary grade levels, few studies have examined literacy coaching as a professional development model at the middle/high school level to increase student engagement and achievement in reading and writing across the content areas. An examination of the literature also reveals a gap in professional development research focusing on the implementation of secondary literacy coaching as a means of supporting content teachers with developing effective literacy practices.

Experts urge further investigation into the challenges that exist institutionally, culturally, socially, and individually in high school settings (Biancarosa, 2012; Cantrell & Calloway, 2008; Dozier, 2014; Rainville, 2008; Smith, 2011; & Spollen-Laraia, 2011). Blamey, Meyer, and Walpole (2006) specifically recommend documenting what literacy coaches do at the secondary level. They suggest studies that explore understandings of the roles of secondary coaches particularly what they need to know and what strategies are useful for engaging and motivating both adult and adolescent learners.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore literacy coaching in situ as a professional development model within a small, rural, middle/high school setting in New Hampshire. The intention was to offer system-wide support to administrators and classroom support to content-area teachers with embedding literacy practices across the curriculum. Engaging administrators and content teachers with methods to engage and motivate students in content instruction served to support the demands of the *College and Career Readiness*

Standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) and the NH adopted English Language Arts (ELA) *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Research Questions

This investigation was designed to explore the following essential questions:

1. How does the role of secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) support content teachers with introducing and embedding literacy strategies into their core subjects?
2. How can the integration of storytelling spark student interest when learning content material?
3. How can storytelling impact student engagement and lead to learning experiences that are project-based and self-directed?

Conceptual Framework

Analysis of the literature on adolescent literacy reveals a crisis in student acquisition of 21st century competencies that has policymakers, educators, parents, and the public frantically seeking new, successful ways to address this growing epidemic. Professional development from literacy coaches that is ongoing and on-site has proven successful at the elementary school levels but the literature reveals a gap in using similar professional development models at the middle/high school levels. Instituting literacy coaching in situ at the secondary level supports the growing use of literacy coaches as transformative leaders whose role has the potential to positively impact both high school content teaching practices and student engagement in multiple literacies.

Literacy coaching in situ favors a collaborative, dialogical approach (Shor & Freire, 1987) to teaching and learning. Unlike professional development models that prefer narrative

lecturing, literacy coaching occurs in a participatory format where the teachers and coach transform learning together through collaboration and discovery of new knowledge. It fosters authentic dialogue, inquiry, and problem solving based on each participant's current reality and circumstance (1987).

As a collaborative process, literacy coaching was viewed through the lens of social constructivism. In his seminal work, Vygotsky (1978) rationalized that human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. Vygotsky maintained that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development as children learn to construct knowledge by themselves. He explained learning as not merely an assimilation of new knowledge, but rather a process that originates in the interactions between people and the culture in which they live (in McLeod, 2007). In this study, literacy coaching, as a model of professional development, engaged administrators, teachers and students in cognitive social processes that supported the construction and assimilation of multiple literacies within the natural classroom setting and high school culture.

Secondary literacy coaching also supported Dweck's (2006) theory of growth mindset. By providing systematic support from an expert, secondary teachers moved beyond their beliefs and comfort zones as content teachers to embrace the inclusion of literacy instruction. With time, dedication, and effort, teachers slowly developed more confidence with incorporating authentic literacy practices, thereby enhancing their own skills as teachers of literacy.

One novel literacy approach was to engage students in the ancient art of storytelling as a springboard to learning challenging content material. Unlike facts, storytelling has the power to provoke emotional experiences that generate feelings, thereby increasing engagement (Simmons, 2006). According to Sousa (2016), genuine student engagement is defined as "the amount of

attention, interest, curiosity, and positive emotional connections that students have when they are learning” (p. 17). Storytelling puts the listener inside the problem allowing the facts to become more personal, creating curiosity and interest that leads to increased attention to the subject matter (2006). Once the brain was activated through storytelling and students became emotionally connected to their learning, content instruction was differentiated to provide opportunities for active, student-driven, personalized learning.

Literacy coaching at the secondary level created bridges for teachers and students between the known and the unknown as both struggled with acquiring 21st century literacies. On one hand, teachers struggle with incorporating 21st century literacy practices into content instruction. On the other, students struggle with remaining engaged and enthusiastic while mastering challenging content material that requires higher level thinking skills and multiple literacies. This study was designed to explore this dilemma using literacy coaching as a vehicle to positively influence high school content teaching practices by sparking student interest and engagement in learning that lead to student acquisition of 21st century literacies (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework shows process of secondary literacy coaching in situ. Through dialogical teaching and social constructivism, coaches support teachers with developing a growth mindset in literacy. Teachers introduce storytelling as an authentic literacy practice that sparks interest in content and engagement in project-based, self-direct learning experiences that support the acquisition of 21st century literacies.

Assumptions

Based on the researcher’s thirty-three years in the teaching profession as a special educator, elementary educator, K-12 reading specialist, district literacy coach, and District Literacy Coordinator, several assumptions can be made regarding the implementation of this qualitative case study. First, students must be exposed to multiple literacies within disciplinary classes to succeed in college and the work force. This assumption is based on the premise that reading proficiency in the 21st century is no longer measured traditionally by reading

competence alone, but by the skills that make individuals employable and successful in their lives beyond high school (Daggett & Pedinotti, 2014). Second, high school teachers are generally unprepared to incorporate multiple literacies into content instruction. This assumption is based on the premise that secondary teachers are highly qualified experts in their fields of discipline, but they do not necessarily possess the knowledge and skills necessary to embed English language arts in their disciplines (Cantrell & Callaway, 2008; NH Department of Education, 2012). Third, content teachers are more likely to be successful with embedding literacy in their content lessons with ongoing support from a professional development model that occurs in situ. This assumption is guided by Fullan (2011), whose research suggests that on-site, systematic training and system-wide support for teachers and students is necessary for literacy skills and strategies to become embedded across the curriculum. Fourth, literacy coaches bring specialized expertise, skills, and strategies to instruction that support both teacher and student engagement in multiple literacies. This assumption is based on the premise that literacy coaches are uniquely positioned to engage in inquiry and explore transformative pedagogies that can help content teachers' raise the level of classroom instruction, thereby helping all students prosper (Fullan & Knight, 2011). Fifth, and finally, storytelling is a methodology that can be used to hook students and act as a springboard to learning that leads to deeper understanding of content material. This assumption is premised on the notion that gaining and sustaining student interest through personal narrative can inspire learning in ways that reading facts, data, and statistics alone cannot accomplish (Simmons, 2006). Technology has rewired the brains of today's youth, changing the ways in which they think and approach learning. Today's adolescent learners require motivation to approach and remain engaged in learning new literacies. Therefore, educators must seek new ways to address these challenges.

Limitations and Scope

This study contained certain limiting conditions, some of which were related to the common considerations of qualitative research methodology, and some which were inherent in the study's research design. Careful consideration was given to the acknowledgment of these external conditions that potentially weakened the scope of the study and influenced the research outcomes.

The most prominent limitation in this study was researcher bias. Because all facets of the study were derived from this researcher's thinking and choices, researcher subjectivity was a limitation. Consequently, the researcher was aware of purposeful or inadvertent favoring or skewing of methodology and data collection based on personal preferences. The researcher addressed this concern by remaining as neutral and objective as possible while carrying out the study by analyzing and interpreting data at face value without manipulating results; preparing focus group questions and questionnaires objectively with review by nonparticipants; ensuring that participants were ready and willing to take part in the study; and through "member checks" which provided the administrators an opportunity to review the focus group discussion transcript to evaluate trustworthiness (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113). Minimizing researcher bias was also enhanced by gathering information from several sources using the method of triangulation. This process involved collecting data from a variety of sources including a focus group discussion, questionnaires, documentation artifacts, anecdotal records, and journal entries. Analytical memos also helped to ensure that data was examined from different viewpoints. Having the document reviewed by an outside source also served to minimize bias.

Another key limitation was the scope of the study, which was restricted to a small research sample in a rural New England community. In this case, the focus was on three

administrators and four middle/high school content teachers within one site, who expressed interest in exploring new literacy practices to enhance student engagement in learning. Given these parameters, the possibility for generalization was limited and did not provide broader claims as would data on large populations. The focus of this case study was on transferability, or ways in which the reader determined whether and to what extent this particular investigation in this particular context could transfer to another particular situation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Transferability allows future researchers to make connections between the elements of this study and their own experience. For instance, content teachers in other secondary contexts might choose to selectively apply storytelling as an engagement strategy to their own classroom settings.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study emanated from the researchers' desire to uncover ways to encourage secondary teachers to engage in multiple literacies using novel strategies that spark student interest in learning. Implementing a qualitative case study approach allowed the researcher to explore secondary literacy coaching as a means of supporting teacher practices and student engagement in learning. The intention was to explore a bounded, real-life, contemporary school setting to gain a better understanding of secondary literacy coaching and its impact on teacher practices and student engagement in learning. Through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to this phenomenon, the researcher sought to gain insight that directly influenced secondary teaching practices, student engagement in learning, and future research.

Definitions of Key Terminology

Adolescent Literacy – The ability to read, write, understand and interpret, and discuss multiple texts across multiple contexts (National Council of Teachers of English, 2013). Additionally,

high school students must be able to respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data; and, finally, evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

In situ – on-site; in the natural setting; the building and classroom environment

Literacy Coaching – On-site professional development at the middle and high school levels (grades 6-12) delivered by a literacy coach/reading specialist in conjunction with district administration, principals, and teachers for the purposes of:

- Supporting secondary teachers with integrating the *College and Career Readiness Standards* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) and the English Language Arts *Common Core State Standards* (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) into disciplinary classes.
- Developing plans that will support and sustain continuous improvement in literacy;
- Ensuring effective, regular communication and problem solving regarding literacy decisions at the district, building, classroom, and state levels (NH Department of Education, 2010).
- Advocating for literacy in the school and community by spotlighting and promoting *Story Preservation Initiative's* (SPI) (2017) oral history-based resource as a promising

educational practice and innovative storytelling tool for engaging students in content literacy.

Secondary - A school that provides middle and high school education (Grades 6-12) after primary school and before higher education.

Secondary Teachers – Middle/high school teachers, highly qualified in a specific discipline of study or core content subject including math, science, art, English language arts, and library media.

Story Preservation Initiative (SPI) – Oral history-based online educational resource (2017).

Storytelling – Oral history recordings of “voices, words, and meanderings of artists, scientists, writers, poets, musicians, and eyewitnesses to history” found within the *Story Preservation Initiative* primary source audio collection (2017).

Twenty-First (21st) Century Literacy/Multiliteracies - The ability to “comprehend and construct information using print and nonprint materials in fixed and virtual platforms across disciplines” (International Reading Association, 2012, p. 2). This requires access to engaging and motivating content and instruction in the multiple literacy strategies that meet the demands of each discipline.

Conclusion

The purpose of this first chapter is to provide the reader with an overview of the research problem, purpose, and conceptual framework for this case study focusing on the role of literacy coaching as a secondary professional development model and its proposed impact on teacher practice and student engagement in learning. Chapter II reviews foundational and current literature in relation to the study. Chapter III describes the research design and methodology for investigating the issue including data collection and methods of analysis. Chapter IV outlines the

results of the case study research. Chapter V discusses an analysis of findings, draws conclusions, and proposes recommendations for future research. Appendices include data collection tools including questionnaires, focus group questions, and documentation artifacts related to the on-site study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Currently, our nation is faced with a growing crisis in literacy. The rapid, continuous acceleration of technology has changed the landscape of learning environments to such an extent that, for young adults to participate actively and successfully in today's global society, they must acquire a wide range of abilities and competencies, or literacies. These literacies are multifarious, demanding and evolving, and inevitably connected with personal histories and cultural circumstances that influence social trajectories of individuals and groups (National Council of Teachers of English, 2013).

According to Salinger (2011), chief scientist for literacy research at the American Institute of Research, "The literacy skills of many students in grades 4-12 are so alarmingly low that students are ill-prepared to meet the challenges of high school, post-secondary education and the work force" (p. 1). Willard R. Daggett (ICLE, 2017), founder of the International Center for Leadership in Education, is recognized worldwide for his proven ability to move pre-K-12 education systems towards more rigorous and relevant skills and knowledge for all students. Daggett, in conjunction with Pedinotti, Jr. (2014), examined this gap in readiness more closely. The study examined the reading complexity of various school texts by comparing entry level jobs, personal use reading, military-based texts, and half of the college textbooks as measured on the Lexile scale (2014). The Lexile Framework for Reading (2016) measures the complexity of a text and a reader's skill level. A Lexile measure represents "a student's level on a developmental scale of reading ability" (para. 1). Figure 2 illustrates the alarmingly wide gap between the Lexile ranges students are exposed to in school and what is expected for students to be successful in college and careers (p. 8).

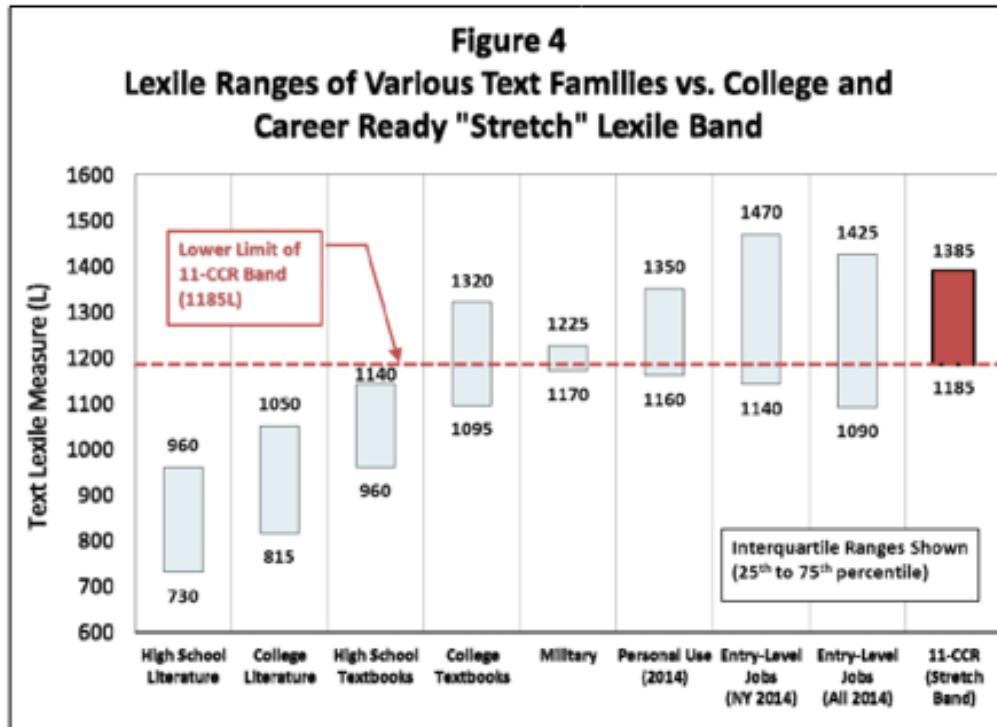


Figure 2. Lexile ranges illustrating gap between high school texts and college and career ready texts. Note. Reprinted from *Reading Skills and the Career Readiness Gap: A Study of High School Students' Preparedness for College and Career*, p. 8, by W. R. Dagget & J.A. Pedinotti, Jr., 2014, Wexford: International Center for Leadership in Education.

Clearly, life outside of school requires significantly higher levels of reading proficiency than what students are exposed to in high school and post-secondary education. Literacy, in the work context, requires better technical reading skills for understanding informational documents and quantitative material, and substantiates the need for students to be exposed to a variety of texts within and beyond the content areas, including career and technical education. Dagget and Pedinotti, Jr. (2014) suggest that states define reading proficiency not just by traditional measures of reading competence but by the skills that make individuals employable and successful in their lives beyond high school.

This requires a dramatic shift in how teachers approach learning and assessment. Rather than issuing grades based on a collection of assessments (tests, quizzes, homework), teachers

must provide evidence that supports mastery of learning goals and performance standards. The experts contend that new regulations and policies are not motivated by student achievement but, rather, on instilling a sense of lifelong learning and engaging students in their own education to ensure they become self-supporting adults (Dagget & Pedinotti, 2014).

The challenge facing education today is raising rigor and relevance for *all* students including the ability to apply new information, problem solve, communicate and collaborate with peers, and contribute to the greater good of society. Dagget and Pedinotti (2014) summarize the current state of affairs in our nation in the following way, “The challenge of preparing today’s students for tomorrow’s world in yesterday’s schools will require a sustained and focused effort...or the human and economic consequences to K-12 education and our children will be too dire to imagine” (p. 9).

These statistics have policymakers, educators, parents, and the public frantically seeking new, successful ways to address this growing epidemic. An examination of the literature revealed themes that support the increasing use of secondary literacy coaches as transformative leaders whose role has the potential to positively influence both high school content teaching practices and student engagement and achievement.

Prior research validated the successful use of literacy coaches at the elementary levels, where integrated curriculum, block schedules, Professional Learning Communities and Response to Intervention systems (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010) are part of the school’s culture. At the middle/high school levels, however, institutional changes of this nature are met with much resistance (Gross, 2012). Blamey, Meyer, and Walpole (2009) conducted a web-based national survey to examine the actual and potential roles of secondary literacy coaches as outlined in the *Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches* (International Reading Association,

2006). Results of the study confirmed that research on coaching at the secondary level is quite limited. The authors called for more research on the actual roles and duties of secondary coaches to assess whether their daily practice is consistent with the IRA's definition and description, and to evaluate the impact of coaches on teacher and student performance.

The literature also confirmed the necessity of literacy coaches to provide systematic training and system-wide support for teachers and students, so that literacy skills and strategies are embedded across the curriculum. Daggett and Pedinotti, Jr. (2014) substantiate these findings by strongly urging school districts to provide focused and sustained professional development to K-12 teachers in general, but specifically secondary teachers, on how to become effective teachers of reading within their subject areas. Blamey, Meyer, and Walpole (2006) recommended documenting what literacy coaches do at the secondary level. They also suggest future studies that explore understandings of the roles of secondary coaches particularly what they need to know and what strategies are useful for motivating and engaging adult and adolescent learners.

Purpose

The purpose of this literature review was threefold: to place this study-[examining secondary literacy coaching in situ, as a professional development model with a lens on student engagement, firmly within an historical perspective by relating the topic to previous studies in the field; to illuminate the problem thereby identifying the gap in literature that substantiates a call for further research; and to provide a theoretical framework for a qualitative case study that adds to the literature and promotes the current educational discourse. Using a literacy coaching professional development model, designed to engage both teachers and students in authentic literacy experiences, this qualitative case study explored the essential question: How does the

role of secondary literacy coaching in situ support content teachers with introducing and embedding authentic literacy strategies into their core subjects?

Subsequent questions focused on:

- How can storytelling spark student interest when learning content material?
- How does storytelling impact student engagement and act as a catalyst for project-based, self-directed learning?

The literature review includes the following overarching topics: I. 21st Century Literacy Background, II. Secondary Coaching: A Revolutionary Approach, III. Secondary Teachers at a Crossroad, IV. Effecting Change in One's Frame of Reference, and V. Storytelling as a Compelling Hook

21st Century Literacy Background

With an escalating number of students exiting high school unprepared for postsecondary educational programs and the workforce, school leaders are being called to action to find ways of improving the literacy achievement of today's youth (Rothman, 2012). In an era with increased accountability for student achievement, a leading number of factors impact the acquisition of literacy including societal changes, school climate, a broad range of literacy needs, lack of student engagement and incentives, as well as the rapid growth of technology.

No longer is a limited definition of reading and writing appropriate for students to become fully functioning citizens in our culture. In an updated position statement, the NCTE (2013) redefined "literate" in contemporary society as "actively, critically, and creatively using print, spoken language, and visual language" as well as having the ability to demonstrate the following:

- Develop proficiency and fluency with the tools of technology;

- Build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationships with others so to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought;
- Design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes;
- Manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information;
- Create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts; and
- Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments (para.1).

The International Reading Association (IRA) (2012) likewise acknowledges that the 21st century has brought with it a tremendous evolution in how adolescents engage with text. The IRA contends that “As adolescents prepare to become productive citizens, they must be able to comprehend and construct information using print and non-print materials in fixed and virtual platforms across disciplines” (p. 2). This requires access to engaging and motivating content and instruction in multiple literacy strategies designed to meet the demands of each discipline.

In a report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, from the Alliance for Excellence in Education, national experts in the field of adolescent literacy cite the shift from *Reading First* or “learning to read” in the primary and elementary grades, to *Reading Next* or “reading to learn” in the middle and high school years, as an ongoing challenge for students and teachers in the content areas (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Taking a closer look, Cantrell and Callaway (2008), investigated the extent to which middle and high school teachers were effective at incorporating literacy into their disciplines after a yearlong professional development program. For the most part, their findings confirmed the assumption that content teachers feel unequipped to teach literacy.

Instructional Reform

A call for literacy reform is not surprising at a time when research affirmed that U.S. college remediation rates were on the rise and our nation's youth turned in flat results on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a tool that measures students' proficiency in reading, math and science worldwide (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010). To address the growing demands of literacy in the 21st century and the widening gap of achievement in the United States, instructional reform has been in the spotlight and led to several federal and state initiatives over the past several years.

College- and Career-Ready Standards. In March 2010, the U.S. Department of Education developed a blueprint for reform that would ensure every student that graduates from high school would be college and career ready. In a letter to the American people, President Obama affirmed a new national goal stating that “by 2020, the United States would once again lead the world in college completion” (B. Obama, personal communication, in U.S. Department of Education, March 2010, p. i). With this in mind, congressional lawmakers reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, to encourage states and districts to develop comprehensive educational programs that meet the individual academic needs of students (Jones and Workman, 2016). With a revised focus on raising standards for students in English language arts and math, new benchmarks were set that build toward college and career readiness upon high school graduation. Increasing the rigor of college- and career- readiness led to the development of the National Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In response to declining literacy rates and the lagging performance of our nation's students compared with their international peers, the

Council of Chief State School Officers (2010) in conjunction with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices developed a set of common grade level objectives known as the National Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These standards are a set of high-quality academic benchmarks in mathematics and English language arts (ELA), placing new emphasis on Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects. The CCSS were adopted in a state-led effort to “ensure all students, regardless of where they live, are prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate and compete with their peers in the U.S. and abroad” (2010). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade so that by high school graduation they are prepared to succeed in entry level careers, introductory academic college classes, and workforce training programs.

The CCSS (2010) requires that all teachers are teaching the same standards to all students, so that when moving from classroom to classroom, school to school, district to district, or state to state, students will be more likely to be instructed on material based on the same standards. The adoption of the standards also ensures that all students are exposed to increased classroom rigor, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills as well as extra time and support in tiered intervention to help them master the ELA and math competencies (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

New Hampshire, like most other states, adopted the CCSS (2010) to provide a clear and consistent framework for educators that ensured an advancement of equity for all students, increased rigor, developed higher level thinking and creativity skills, and reinforced the integration of instruction across disciplines. But, these expectations leave many middle and high school educators at a crossroad, wondering how to integrate the ELA standards into their core subject areas with virtually little or no training in best literacy practices. Today, secondary

educators must not only be highly qualified experts in their field of study, they must possess the knowledge and skills necessary to embed disciplinary literacy into core academic subjects. This collective ownership of the ELA CCSS has created intellectual unrest amongst experienced secondary educators, faced with introducing new literacies into their classrooms.

There continues to be much debate over the adoption of the CCSS (2010) which set a national trend in K-12 education toward a narrow focus on ELA and mathematics and subsequent teaching to the test. Most agree that the CCSS level the playing field in our schools by raising the expectations for each and every student to achieve at the highest possible level. But, defining what constitutes a “well-rounded education” led lawmakers to redefine educational excellence in broader terms moving beyond core academic subjects (Jones and Workman, 2016, p. 1).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law (The Education Trust, 2016). ESSA is the current version of the federal government’s biggest K-12 law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESSA promotes a nationwide focus on College- and Career-Ready Standards, but it also shifts the focus from ELA and mathematics to include a wider selection of academic subjects including the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences. Congressional lawmakers are now encouraging states and districts to embrace “comprehensive school programs that meet each student’s academic needs, learning styles, and interests” (Jones & Workman, 2016, p. 2). The new law also requires states to include nonacademic factors into their accountability systems that promote this broader vision of school success. At least one indicator of school quality or student success must be measured in tracking school performance “to allow for meaningful differentiation in school performance” (Blad, 2016, p. 15). A few examples of

possible indicators that states may consider include student engagement, educator engagement, as well as student access to and completion of advanced coursework.

Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements. Another facet of instructional reform concerns the Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements. The NH Department of Education (2012) requires teachers to be highly qualified if they teach a core academic subject. But, being certified HQT doesn't necessarily translate to teacher effectiveness in the classroom particularly at the middle and high school levels. HQT requirements outlined by the NH Department of Education (2012) apply to all public elementary or secondary school teachers employed by a local educational agency (school district). At a minimum, a teacher must hold a bachelor's degree, a state certification, and demonstrate subject-matter content knowledge in the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches. Now, with the adoption of the CCSS (2010), secondary educators must not only be experts in their field of study, they must be able to meet the demands of literacy as it relates to adolescent learners.

Adolescent literacy. According to the International Reading Association (IRA) (2012), adolescent literacy is understood as the ability to read, write, understand and interpret, and discuss multiple texts across multiple contexts. To be college and career ready, the IRA expects adolescents to do the following:

- Read a variety of texts including, but not limited to, traditional print text and digital (multimodal) text;
- Author words and images in fixed domains as well as multimodal settings;
- Talk about a variety of texts with others, including teachers, peers, members of their own communities, and the larger world population;

- Interact with text in discipline-specific ways within and across all subjects inclusive of, but not limited to, electives, career and technical education, and visual and performing arts (p. 2).

These expectations shift the responsibility for teaching English language arts to all content teachers across the curriculum including ELA, math, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. To implement these newly adopted standards, HQT's require further systematic training and system-wide support in secondary literacy instruction.

System-wide Literacy Reform

Now that the bar has been raised on student achievement, there is a call for system-wide reform in public education at the national, state, and local levels. This takes restructuring with a relentless focus on instructional improvement. Michael Fullan (2011), a Canadian educational researcher noted for his expertise on educational reform, maintains that changing one school at a time is no longer an option for countries that want to compete internationally. He suggests whole-system education reform but maintains that some countries, like the United States, are focused on the wrong drivers - accountability, individual teacher development, technology, and piecemeal reform components. Fullan reasons that for real reform to take hold the right drivers are capacity building, teamwork, pedagogy, and systemic reform, all of which are more compatible with the strategies of good coaches (2011).

From reading specialist to literacy coach. The traditional role of the reading specialist has evolved from diagnostician and intervention provider to literacy coach, curriculum designer, professional developer, and teacher leader. Although reading specialists engaged in coach-like duties for many years, it was the Reading First program, enacted as part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which placed literacy coaching in the national spotlight (Toll, 2014). Since

that time, the shift from reading specialist to literacy coach has been promoted by organizations such as the International Reading Association (2012) and the National Council of Teachers of English (2013), who see this position as a means to substantially improve the literacy achievement of students, sustain job-embedded professional development, and promote teacher collaboration.

The traditional role of the reading specialist continues to transform, moving away from teaching on a one-to-one level to becoming agents of change in a broader context. Becoming a literacy coach is a developmental process that develops over time as the coach gains the trust of teachers and the expertise to be effective in a wide range of multiple professional development initiatives. As the role of reading specialist evolved to literacy coach, the responsibilities of the coach grew more complex. Intertwining the coach's role with instructional practices can improve school performance dramatically, but not unless the coach's roles and responsibilities are clearly defined (Fullan & Knight, 2011). Yet, due to a lack of research at the middle and high school levels, there is no clear definition of what a literacy coach is or how they function. What can be agreed upon is that the reading specialist spends most of the time providing students with direct instruction while literacy coaches place emphasis on supporting teachers (Toll, 2014).

Coaches as transformative leaders. School leaders are turning to literacy coaches to provide essential leadership for school and district-wide literacy reform. Literacy coaches hold a unique position of leadership that has the potential to impact changes in pedagogical practices and the learning culture of a school. Foster (1986) describes coaching as a potential transformative leadership model that is “critically educative; not only looking at the conditions in which we live or teach, but deciding how to change them to become more inclusive and democratic” (Shields, 2010, p. 567).

Fullan and Knight (2011) also affirm that one of the most crucial strategies used in top performing countries is utilizing coaches at the school and district levels in conjunction with instructional principals, superintendents of curriculum and instruction, and district superintendents. As a tool, coaching offers rich possibilities for engaging in inquiry and exploring transformative pedagogies. Cassidy and Cassidy (2009) assert, “Literacy coaching is a ‘very hot topic’ because there is a strong body of evidence that validates that collaborative and supportive professional development increases teacher effectiveness which results in higher student achievement” (Shaw, 2009, p. 7).

Coaches as system leaders. Utilizing literacy coaches as system leaders can serve many purposes. It supports administration with creating district and school-wide changes by incorporating literacy models that increase rigor, relevance, and relationships in learning. It supports teacher professional development in a manner that respects the way in which adults learn best. It supports teachers’ collaboration, reflection, and decision making which can positively impact the climate and culture of a school. Above all, effective literacy coaching contributes to increased student achievement. Boykin and Noguera (2011) uphold the theory that the quality of teacher instruction has the greatest impact on student achievement and that “good teaching leads to higher academic performance” (p. 174). Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) also attest to research demonstrating that the best way to help all students prosper is to raise the level of classroom instruction.

These points are elucidated in Sharratt and Fullan’s (2009) district-wide study which took place in the greater Toronto area, Ontario, Canada. The district was comprised of 130,000 students; 8,800 teachers; and 192 schools. The approach treated all schools in the district as part of a single system and utilized literacy coaches as leaders to bring about positive instructional

changes. The district showed major success in literacy, numeracy, and high school graduation rates over the last decade (2009). What they discovered was the crucial role that literacy coaches played by working in conjunction with the superintendent of curriculum and instruction and principals in 17 low performing schools in the district (2009). In the schools that improved significantly, literacy coaches worked closely with principals to implement “Fourteen Parameters for Success” (p. 52). The process involved extensive work with teachers on planning and implementing instructional practices, modeling lessons, peer observation, reviewing data, and providing professional development.

Coaches as instruments of change. Schools and districts in the United States are now turning to literacy coaches to support leadership at all levels of education K-12. The most recent position statement of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASP) (2016) supports comprehensive literacy education from birth to grade 12. It promotes research suggesting that less attention and investment has been concentrated on the developmental literacy needs of middle and high school students and cites multiple sources of data that acknowledge the persistent disparities that exist at the secondary level including socioeconomic, demographic, and ethnic groups. These facts coupled with the rigorous demands of the CCSS (2010), substantiate the need for system-wide change through ongoing professional development that embeds literacy instruction into content areas across the curriculum. To bring about system-wide reform in classrooms K-12, the vertical alignment of best literacy practices from kindergarten through high school is necessary (Fullan, 2011).

Embracing the expertise of literacy coaches as system leaders who support these changes in K-12 classrooms has been successful in high performing countries. Consequently, it is becoming a regular practice to provide classroom and content teachers with on-going, job-

embedded professional development in literacy. Fullan and Knight (2011) view coaches as “instruments of change” who are vital in bringing about sustainable system-wide reform. Next to the principal, coaches are the most crucial change agents in the school.

Secondary Coaching: A Revolutionary Approach

Prior studies (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Block, Oakar, & Hurt, 2002; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) confirm that elementary students benefit from specific kinds of instruction at different stages of development (Parris & Collins, 2007). From this research, it is reasonable to assume that distinctive types of teaching are needed at various stages of literacy development for middle and high school students. Yet, limited empirical evidence exists to provide models for teaching literacy at the secondary level. English teachers have typically been charged with meeting the demands of the ELA standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Now that every teacher is responsible for the ELA standards, it is necessary to obtain more information about instructional strategies that would assist greater numbers of adolescents. Snow, Ippolito, and Schwartz (2006) assert that, “Coaching in middle and high schools is ripe to be the site of such a revolutionary approach to educational research” (p. 46).

Research synthesis and proposed agenda. Section three of the *Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches* (International Reading Association, 2006) documents research led by Snow, Ippolito, and Schwartz (2006) from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Their investigation provides a synthesis and proposed research agenda meant to guide districts with decisions about where coaches can function effectively and where other approaches might be more effective. The report substantiates the limited empirical basis about coaching models, qualifications, and procedures for preparing coaches, and recommends a systematic

collection of data in places where coaches are working in middle and high schools. While the authors contend that no blueprint yet exists defining what a coach is or how they function, they agree that the most widely adopted model suggests, “local, site-specific, instructionally focused, ongoing professional development generally works better than the traditional pull-out models focused on schoolwide or districtwide issues” (Guskey, 2000, in IRA, 2006).

A practice-embedded research agenda. Snow, Ippolito, and Schwartz (2006) argue for adopting a different kind of research agenda at the secondary level: “One that starts with the practice as it exists and addresses the questions of greatest importance to the practitioners” (IRA, 2006, p. 46). Designing a study that examines current secondary literacy practices and the extent to which literacy coaching could improve teacher practice and increase student engagement would serve to support a practice-embedded research agenda. Snow, Ippolito, and Schwartz believe that documenting teacher and student experiences resultant from literacy coaching in situ, “would improve the value of good ideas for educational institutions that wish to implement secondary literacy coaching, and would enable the field to learn from the experience of trying out those good ideas” (p. 46).

Developing a framework for secondary coaches. The *Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches* (International Reading Association, 2006) was developed to guide literacy coaches at the secondary levels, through the historic partnering of the International Reading Association (IRA), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), and National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). Together, these organizations outlined ideals of what a literacy coach should know and be able to do in delivering both leadership and support in individual content areas. Its purpose is to provide an initial blueprint for coaches themselves,

policymakers, school and district administrators, and teacher educators. The document outlines both Leadership Standards and Content Area Literacy Standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies (2006).

Secondary literacy coaching defined. According to the IRA standards (2006), literacy coaching is defined as “a form of highly targeted professional development” (p. 3). Common components of training include inquiry and reflection; participant driven and collaborative; sustained, on-going, and intensive; and connected to and derived from the teacher’s ongoing work with their students (2006). Not only are coaches expected to be well versed in research, theory, and best practices in literacy instruction, they must also be knowledgeable about adult learning and provide essential leadership for a school or district’s entire literacy program (IRA, 2012). Other essential skills include planning and organization; strong interpersonal skills, especially in the areas of communication and empathy; mentoring and modeling; facilitating study groups and providing workshops; assisting with data collection and screening; monitoring intervention strategies and student progress; collaborating with teachers in grade level Professional Learning Communities (PLC) (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2010); as well as working closely with administration.

Secondary Coaching In Situ

Research, conducted by Spollen-Laraia (2011), confirms that isolated professional development events do not result in sustainable changes in classroom practices or student learning. These fragmented practices are being replaced by high quality job-embedded models developed by literacy coaches, who provide structured and collaborative on-going support to teachers in situ, their natural setting. Much like the changing role of the reading specialist,

traditional, one-time, workshop-oriented professional development sessions are being replaced by more progressive models.

Disciplinary Literacy

Mraz and Sturtevant (2011), conducted a case study that investigated literacy coaching across the content areas. Their results were consistent with Spollen-Laraia's (2011) investigation. At the high school level, professional development is most effective if it is sustained and focused on specific content; gives teacher opportunities for active, hands-on learning; and provides individual follow-up through supportive observation, feedback, mentoring and peer coaching. The authors also describe coaching as a multifaceted process with expectations for the following; mentoring individual teachers; modeling and observing in classrooms; working with study groups or on teacher teams in different subject areas or departments; leading schoolwide literacy initiatives; advising administrators; administering and monitoring literacy assessments; and working with parents and community groups (2011). While this study validates the changing role of the literacy specialist at the high school level, the authors encourage more research to compare the experiences of high school literacy coaches across different districts and in different states.

Levels of Coaching

According to Shaw (2009), national expert on preparing reading specialists to be literacy coaches, coaches increase the level of intensity and risk as they gain experience and trust. He outlines three levels of coaching, taken from the IRA (2012) position statement, which identifies a continuum of coaching beginning with informal support and progressing to more direct assistance:

Level one. Level one coaching includes conversations with colleagues, developing and providing curriculum materials, and participating in professional development activities.

Level two. Level two coaching includes co-planning lessons, helping teachers plan instruction, and making professional development presentations.

Level Three. Level three coaching includes modeling and discussing lessons, co-teaching lessons, observing classroom instruction and providing feedback, leading study groups, and analyzing literacy programs (p. 9).

Coaching is Dialogic

Literacy coaching is a social practice that is “situated,” taking on new and different relational dynamics in different contexts (Rainville & Jones, 2008, p. 440). As coaches move within a school, from classroom to classroom, power shifts occur as they interact with different teachers, students, and materials in each setting. In situ coaching provides opportunities for coaches to engage in ongoing dialogue and communication with teachers and students that serves to increase social and emotional engagement as well as build cultural awareness. This practice is reflective of Freire’s (1993) pedagogy of literacy education where critical consciousness is raised through “personal, dialogic relationships that undergird education” (Shields, 2010, p. 566). According to Bennis (1986) these personal exchanges, where all learn, question, reflect, and participate in meaning-making of their world, provides the coach with “an ability to reach the souls of others in a fashion which raises human consciousness, builds meanings, and inspires human intent that is the source of power” (Shields, 2010, p. 567).

Secondary Teachers at a Crossroad

Prior studies (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Block, Oakar, & Hurt, 2002; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) confirm that elementary students benefit from specific kinds of instruction at different stages of development (Parris & Collins, 2007). From this research, it is reasonable to assume that distinctive types of teaching are needed at various stages of literacy

development for middle and high school students. Yet, limited empirical evidence exists to provide models for teaching literacy at the secondary level. English teachers have typically been charged with meeting the demands of the ELA standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Now that every teacher is responsible for the ELA standards, it is necessary to obtain more information about instructional strategies that would assist greater numbers of adolescents. Snow, Ippolito, and Schwartz (2006) assert that, “Coaching in middle and high schools is ripe to be the site of such a revolutionary approach to educational research” (p. 46).

Much like the role of the reading specialist differs from that of a literacy coach, so does literacy coaching at the elementary level differ from coaching at the middle and high school levels. Prior research validates the successful use of literacy coaches at the elementary levels, where integrated curriculum, block schedules, PLC’s and RtI systems (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010) are part of the school’s culture (Gross, 2012). On the other hand, at the middle and high school levels, institutional changes of this nature are met with much resistance.

Today, secondary educators find themselves at a crossroad. For the most part, content teachers are unprepared to integrate best literacy practices and the ELA CCSS (2010) into their curriculum with little or no training. Obstacles exist institutionally, structurally, locally and individually that impact literacy coaching at the middle and secondary levels. School culture, administrative support, the beliefs and feelings of the individuals involved, as well as the willingness of content teachers to seek ongoing professional development all impact the efficacy of a coach’s role. So how do high school teachers make this transition?

Growth Mindset

Content teachers are viewed as experts in a particular field of study. They have background and training in a core subject that instills confidence in their abilities to teach their discipline. As such, they perceive their teaching capabilities as tied to knowledge as opposed to practice. Their mindsets are essentially fixed (Dweck, 2006) on being teachers of content which can inhibit intellectual growth and limit development as a teacher of literacy. Requiring middle and high school teachers to incorporate literacy into content instruction, essentially pushes them out of their comfort zones. Expecting teachers to embrace unfamiliar pedagogies without system-wide support and training sets them up for failure. Providing systematic support through secondary literacy coaching could serve to alleviate apprehension and resistance to incorporating best literacy practices into instruction.

Parris and Collins (2007) support a long-held belief that content teachers must be willing to view themselves as literacy teachers if literacy instruction is to become embedded in their daily teaching routines. Developing coaching models that lead educators to “question their practices, work through inevitable differences, and embrace the process of learning” would serve to support the theory of Growth Mindset (Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014, pp. 5-6). According to Dweck, et. al, “Good pedagogy and a solid curriculum are vital, but pedagogy requires more than the presentation of academic material” (p. 26). It requires a belief that your abilities and talents can develop with hard work, good strategies, and support (2014).

Scaffolding for Teachers

Through instructional, cognitive, and motivational scaffolding, coaches can provide high-quality feedback to teachers that can increase their motivation to learn. The term “scaffolding”, first introduced in the pioneering work of Jerome Bruner and his colleagues (1976), is the kind of

support that a skilled tutor provides to a student (Fisher and Frey, 2010). Benson (1997) defines academic scaffolding as “a bridge used to build upon what students already know to arrive at something they do not know. If scaffolding is properly implemented, it will act as an enabler, not as a disabler” (Fisher and Frey, 2010). High-quality feedback provided by the teacher to the student is among the strongest predictors of student accomplishment and teacher effectiveness.

It stands to reason that if a coach scaffolds the support and quality of feedback given to teachers, secondary educators might gradually move beyond their comfort zones and attempt to incorporate literacy skills and knowledge into their lessons. In time, teachers could develop confidence with teaching the unfamiliar and engage in learning that supports a transformation of their practices that ultimately builds a bridge to becoming a teacher of literacy (Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014).

Effecting Change in One’s Frame of Reference

Coaches are uniquely positioned to provide leadership and expertise to administrators, teachers, and students across grade levels and schools within a district. At the same time, their work with families and the greater community provide a unique perspective of the inequities and struggles that exist within the population in a broader social context. Looking critically at the conditions within which students live, provides the coach with knowledge that can inform decisions, so that changes can lead to empowerment (Shields, 2010). Together, coaches, administrators, and teachers have the power to transform education by “effecting change in their frame of reference” so that all students can learn at high levels regardless of their background or societal circumstances (p. 565).

Democratic Learning Environments

As leaders, coaches are positioned to guide administrators and teachers with developing inclusive classrooms where teaching practices are culturally responsive to the populations they serve. Teaching to and through the strengths of the students using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, story, personalized learning styles, and multiple intelligences, learning can become more appropriate, more engaging, and ultimately more effective for them.

For all students to achieve at high levels and experience the promise of a brighter tomorrow, coaches must support teachers with creating democratic learning environments and experiences that value and respect individual learning styles and differences; that establish equal opportunities for all students, so that every child has access to common grade level standards and necessary support; and that honor distinctive cultural backgrounds that shape each individual's upbringing. If coaches, as leaders, advocate for both students and teachers with moral purpose and integrity, then learning and achievement is possible for all.

Providing equity of opportunity for all students, appears to be a step in the right direction when one considers this startling 2018 forecast by Carnevale, Smith, and Strohl (2010), "Dropouts, high school graduates, and people with some college but no degree are on the down escalator of social mobility, falling out of the middle-income class and into the lower three deciles of family income" (Salinger, 2011, p.8).

Meeting the needs of diverse populations. As master teachers, literacy coaches are positioned to provide on-site professional development as well as essential leadership for a school or district's K-12 literacy action plan. Working closely with principals and administrators can provide the link between effective professional development and improved teacher practices. Through professional development models such as co-teaching in situ, literacy coaches can

support middle and high school teachers daily with developing learning environments that are more inclusive, democratic, and equitable, thereby meeting both the academic and social justice needs of our diverse populations (Shields, 2010). In a co-teaching scenario, the expertise of a content teacher is combined with that of a master literacy teacher. Together they can raise the level of classroom instruction, thereby impacting the growth of all students. This task not only includes learning the formal curriculum but, as Shields suggests, “It involves creating learning contexts and communities where the playing field is as level as possible with respect to access, academic, social and civic outcomes” (p. 572).

Differentiated instruction. One way to support democratic learning environments is through differentiated instruction. Research supports the need for differentiated learning experiences through personalized instruction that authentically engages students in the learning process (Tomlinson, C., Brimijoin, K. & Narvaez, L., 2008). In situ coaching provides opportunities for content teachers and literacy specialists to work together to design curriculum units that are differentiated, taking into account personal learning styles, student interests, student engagement, and multiple intelligences.

Storytelling as a Compelling Hook

Literacy coaching at the secondary level provides a revolutionary possibility for coaches to support teachers with rigorous and relevant learning that engages the 21st century adolescent learner. Technology has rewired the brains of today’s youth, changing the ways in which they think and approach learning. Today, students persistently take in new information in different ways which requires educators to shift their instructional practices to support the acquisition of new literacies. Educational neuroscience author, Dr. David Sousa (2016), advises educators to adapt their instruction to keep students’ brains engaged and attentive. For educators, gaining and

sustaining student interest in lesson content is no easy task in environments that are saturated with digital-devices. Literacy coaches can create a bridge for learning between the known and the unknown for teachers struggling to inspire students with an enthusiasm for content learning.

Student Engagement

According to Sousa (2016), international consultant in educational neuroscience, genuine student engagement is defined as “the amount of attention, interest, curiosity, and positive emotional connections that students have when they are learning” (p. 17). Developing in-depth learning projects that are self-regulated, provides a catalyst to motivate students for longer periods of time as they investigate topics that build critical and creative problem-solving skills. Personalized learning also engages students emotionally which can serve to sustain attention and drive their learning. This, in turn, increases the likelihood that information will be stored in long term memory and content curriculum will be remembered (Sousa, 2016).

The Power of Story

Designing novel instructional hooks that spark the interest of students at the start of a lesson can be the work of a literacy coach. Literacy coaches come to the classroom equipped with a toolbox of strategies and ideas that can engage students in a range of appropriate and relevant activities that promote literacy and content learning. Using narrative as a compelling introduction could convince the adolescent brain that the lesson is worth their attention.

Neuroscience research, conducted by Posner and Rothbart (2014), reveals attention as a “complex process involving speedy collaboration of several different cerebral systems: alerting, orienting, and deciding (Sousa, 2016, p. lii). In the classroom, a student’s alert system is triggered in the frontal lobe of the brain by some form of stimulus that indicates the lesson is about to begin. Flipping light switches, ringing chimes, or clapping hands often signal students to

orient themselves to pay attention to the teacher. Sousa (2016) describes the next phase, the deciding phase, as the most important in the sequence. From the student's perspective, whatever happens in the next five seconds provides their brain with the information they need to decide if they will continue to pay attention or move on to something else. Essentially, the frontal lobe is saying, "You have my attention. Now quickly convince me that what is going to follow is worth keeping my attention" (p. iii).

Lighting the spark to adolescent learning. One approach is to spark student interest to new and challenging content material through the ancient art of storytelling. Annette Simmons (2006), author of the groundbreaking book, *The Story Factor*, reminds the reader that storytelling is not only the oldest tool of influence, it is the most powerful. Beginning a lesson with personal narrative can hook students to content by "persuading, influencing, and inspiring learning in ways that cold facts, bullet points, and directives can't" (xviii).

Bishop and Kimball (2006) describe storytelling as a neglected teaching tool that provides useful skills for students such as stimulation of interest in reading, reinforcement of oral and listening skills, enhancement of vocabulary and language development, cultivation of the imagination and assistance with mental visualization, and the passage of information into long term memory which is easier to learn and recall than when presented in an informational format. It also has the ability to convey an awareness and appreciation of other cultures which is a valuable asset in an increasingly complex and diverse world (2006).

Glonek and King (2014) conducted an experiment that supports the constructivist theory of narrative comprehension which suggests that the narrative form presents advantages related to listening retention. The purpose of the study was to compare the impact of instructor presentation style (narrative vs. expository) on retention of information. The results indicated a relationship

between organization and retention suggesting that the audience retained more information when it was presented in narrative style. These findings support advantages for narrative form in everyday practice for instructional communication.

Verhallen, Bus, and de Jong (2006) also recognize storytelling as a beneficial educational tool, linking it to increased audience interest and involvement and providing more relevant content (Glonek & King, 2014). The work of Cortazzi (2001) emphasizes the human socialization aspect of everyday experience and interaction with others. He reports, "Through life stories, individuals and groups make sense of themselves; they tell what they are or what they wish to be" (Glonek & King, 2014, p. 388).

In a world besieged with reality television, social media, and selfies (self-portrait photographs), it stands to reason that students become more engaged when focused on personal information, glimpses of real life experience, and meaningful connections to content. Listening to personal narratives connected to content curriculum can initiate conversation and motivate students to participate in classroom discussions related to a topic of study.

Project-based learning. Once storytelling sparks interest in content, it can act as a springboard for deeper learning and inquiry that has the potential for rich, multidisciplinary learning experiences. "Hearing the voices, words, and meanderings of artists, scientists, writers, poets, musicians, and eyewitnesses to history" can engage students emotionally and intellectually, leading them on a journey of self-discovery (Story Preservation Initiative, 2017, para. 1) that promotes more independent, student-led learning.

Compelling personal narratives that inspire students to engage in learning and promote ongoing motivation for a topic is one way to capture their attention (Cushman, 2014). Once they are hooked, lessons can be developed that spur motivation even further by incorporating active,

hands-on, collaborative learning that draws in even the most reluctant learners. These experiences foster learning beyond the classroom, stemming to the school and larger community which has the potential to widen personal perspectives and expand world views. Partnering literacy coaches with content teachers has the potential to create more dynamic learning environments centered on student engagement and experiences that are project-based.

Conclusion

The realities of college and workplace requirements have placed an ever-increasing focus on reading achievement in schools today. Educators and policymakers are being forced to rethink literacy plans and the manner in which professional development is provided at all levels of education. At the elementary level, literacy instruction and assessment is built into the daily schedule which is not generally the case in secondary schools. Content courses are built upon the assumption that students already know how to read (Parris & Collins, 2007). Current data addressing the literacy skills of students in grades 4 to 12 suggests otherwise and reveals adolescent literacy as a growing crisis in the United States (Salinger, 2011).

Recently, schools and districts across the country have called upon literacy coaches as instructional leaders to support the implementation of school and district-wide literacy plans that address rigorous educational goals and objectives. The current literature review supports the promise of incorporating school-based, coaching programs in situ as a model of strategic professional development. Literacy coaching in situ has the power to increase teacher and student engagement through the integration of best literacy practices. The research suggested future empirical studies to determine the level of impact literacy coaching has on improved student performance at the middle and high school levels. It also indicated a need for literacy coaches to document their experiences working with teachers and students at the secondary level.

In response to the current findings, a qualitative case study proved beneficial in supporting a deeper inquiry into literacy coaching in situ at the secondary level and storytelling as an authentic approach to engaging students in content learning. This empirical investigation served to add to the discussion of current theories suggesting that literacy coaching is a powerful professional development model which can positively impact the teaching practices of secondary teachers. It also extended the conversation to include the role of story as a motivational hook for engaging adolescents in challenging disciplinary studies. Most of all, it supported the goal of educational research: To find increasingly more effective ways to educate our youth, so they are prepared to meet the increasing challenges of our global 21st century society.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore literacy coaching as a means of engaging secondary teachers and students in authentic literacy experiences that support the individual academic needs of all students (The Education Trust, 2016). Using storytelling as a hook to engage students in content material, this study examined how this approach acted as a springboard for content-area learning. The researcher supposed that a better understanding of this phenomenon would afford new insights into content literacy instruction, thereby informing secondary literacy teaching practices and the role of student engagement in adolescent learning.

The researcher gained an in-depth perspective of the particular issue under investigation using qualitative single case study methodology within a bounded, real-life, contemporary middle/high school setting. This approach was based on a constructivist paradigm which, according to Stake (1995) and Yin (2003), is “dependent on one’s perspective, recognizing the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). A constructivist approach allowed for “close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories and describe their views” (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). Socially situated interactions between the literacy coach, administrators, teachers, and students supported the construction and assimilation of new literacies through engagement and active learning (Bruner, 1978, as cited in Kivunga, 2015).

Shaw’s (2009) Levels One and Two Literacy Coaching models provided the framework for supporting district administration and secondary teachers with embedding multiliteracies into content-area classes. Through personal collaboration and dialogic exchanges all benefited from

learning, questioning, reflecting, and raising human consciousness that inspired intentional teaching practices for adolescent learners (Bennis & Freire, 1986, as cited in Shields, 2010).

To understand this phenomenon more fully, this study focused on the following essential questions:

1. How does the role of secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) support content teachers with introducing and embedding literacy strategies into their core subjects?
2. How can storytelling spark student interest in learning content material?
3. How does storytelling enhance student engagement and act as a catalyst for project-based, self-directed learning?

This chapter describes the study's research methodology and includes discussions in the following areas: (a) the study's setting, (b) description of the participant sample, (c) overview of research design, (d) methods of data collection, (e) data analysis and synthesis, (f) participants' rights, (g) limitations, and (h) issues of trustworthiness. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Setting

Story Preservation Initiative (SPI) (2016) is an educational resource that provides NH educators with a collection of personal narratives or stories, and related resources to enhance classroom instruction. Several school districts across the state of New Hampshire piloted the use of these primary source audio recordings in classroom settings as part of a statewide initiative. One of the aims of the project was to examine the integration of *SPI's* Learning Lab recordings and resources at the secondary level (grades 6-12) as they were implemented in disciplinary classes. One public school district, located in a rural New England community, incorporated this

resource across all grade levels and disciplines (K-12) during the 2016 – 2017 school year.

Because SPI was being used at the middle/high levels, this particular setting provided a unique opportunity for the researcher to study an intrinsic case because “the case itself was of interest, in all its particularity and ordinariness” (Stake, 1995, as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548).

Supporting content teachers with literacy coaching and the use of storytelling as an authentic practice allowed the researcher “to gain an information-rich case, with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 104).

Qualitative research was conducted in this rural New England community at the middle/high school level (grades 6-12). There were approximately 107 students and 14 full time teachers on staff, with an estimated student-faculty ratio of 8:1. Approximately 52.3 % of the student population was eligible for free and reduced lunch. The total enrollment for females (54.1%) was higher than males (45.9%). Seven ethnicities were represented in the population including White (87.2%), Multi-race (5.5 %), Black (3.7%), Hispanic (3.7%), Indian (0.8 %), Asian (0.8 %), and Pacific Islander (0.8 %) (NH Department of Education, 2010).

Sample

Purposive sampling occurred before the data was gathered (Merriam, 2009) to identify participants at the district and middle/high school levels. Purposive, or nonprobability, sampling was used based on the assumption that the investigator wanted to discover, understand, and gain insight from a sample of teachers and administrators from which the most could be learned. As a result, three out of five administrators, and four out of 15 teachers were purposefully selected based on the following criteria:

- Participants expressed interest in supporting content instruction using personal narratives from the *Story Preservation Initiative* (2016) collection;

- Participants were highly qualified teachers (HQT) in a specific discipline;
- District and building administrators supported secondary literacy coaching and the use of storytelling as an authentic literacy practice at the building and district levels.

Participants

There were two groups of participants in the study: administrators and content-area teachers. The administrators included one Director of Curriculum and Instruction, one middle/high principal, and one middle/high assistant principal. Four content-area teachers were highly qualified (HQT) in their area of expertise including Art, English Literature and Library Media, General Science, and Secondary English. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity (Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Profiles

| Participant Code | Role | Grade Level | Discipline of Study |
|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Participant 1 | Teacher | High school | Art |
| Participant 2 | Teacher | High school | English Literature & Library Media |
| Participant 3 | Teacher | Middle school | Language Arts |
| Participant 4 | Teacher | High school | Science |
| Participant 5 | Administrator | District | Director Curriculum & Instruction |
| Participant 6 | Administrator | Middle/high school | Principal |
| Participant 7 | Administrator | Middle/high School | Vice Principal |

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this intrinsic case study was that of a participant observer (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell, a researcher in this roll is “participating in the activity at the site which would help the researcher gain insider views and subjective data” (pp. 166-167).

The investigator supported secondary teachers as a literacy coach bringing expertise in best

literacy practices. Sharing literacy strategies and tools such as embedding storytelling in content curriculum, was a way to embed literacy across the disciplines and meet the requirements of the College and Career Ready Standards and Assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) as well as NH's adoption of the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Participants' Rights

In qualitative research, it is critical that the participants' rights are protected and that anonymity is maintained. In this study, several steps were taken to ensure that consent was obtained and that ethical considerations were examined.

First, a proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of New England for approval which ensured that the study fell within all ethical boundaries. Next, written permission was asked of the participating School District to conduct the research in their middle/high school. This involved a written explanation of the research and details of the case study including the central purpose, timeline, grade levels, administration and faculty involved, permission to visit the site and to examine pertinent documents. Once permission was granted by the district, administrators and teachers were invited to participate in the study via email (see Appendices A and B).

Ethical considerations were then closely addressed with participants who volunteered to participate in the study. Teachers and administrators were required to sign a "Human Subjects Consent-to-Participate Form" (Creswell, 2013, pp. 152-153) that outlined their rights (see Appendices C and D) including: the voluntary nature of the study; the right to withdraw from the study at any time; the purpose and procedures for data collection; protection of confidentiality; and the known risks and benefits associated with participation in the study.

Research Design

The design for this qualitative research study appeared to harmonize well with case study design. It was grounded in the philosophical underpinnings of constructivism which, according to Yin (2003) and Stake (1995), is the foundational approach to case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This paradigm is primarily concerned with understanding “the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). In this case, how a secondary literacy coach, who supported both teachers and administrators, interpreted their experiences and what meaning they attributed to their experiences in the middle/high school setting (2009).

The purpose was to inform professional practice in an educational setting and facilitate exploration of a phenomenon within its natural setting (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Exploring individuals, organizations, relationships, interventions or programs, allows the researcher to discover meaning, first by deconstructing and then reconstructing various phenomenon (2008). It emphasized “complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic” whereby the researcher worked back and forth between themes and data (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). As sets of themes were established inductively, they were cross-checked with the data using deductive reasoning. This back and forth approach, shaped the themes and abstractions that emerged from the process.

This case study focused on four teachers and three administrators from a single public school district located in a rural New England community. To better understand how literacy coaching can support content teaching practices and engage students in learning, three research questions were explored to gather the necessary information. Question 1: How does the role of secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) support content teachers with introducing and embedding literacy strategies into their core subjects? Question 2: How can

storytelling spark student interest in learning content material? Question 3: How does storytelling enhance student engagement and act as a catalyst for project-based, self-directed learning?

Table 2 presents an overview of the research questions and methods the researcher used to collect information during the study.

Table 2

Overview of Questions, Information Needed, and Methods

| <i>Research Questions</i> | <i>Information Needed/What the Researcher Wants to Know</i> | <i>Method</i> |
|--|---|--|
| 1: How does the role of secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) support content teachers with introducing and embedding literacy strategies into their core subjects? | Participants’ perceptions of how literacy coaching in situ supports their instructional practices. | Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire Field observations Documentation artifacts |
| 2: How can storytelling spark student interest in learning content material? | Participant and student perceptions about the use of storytelling as a strategy to engage students in content learning. | Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire Field observations Documentation artifacts |
| 3: How does storytelling enhance student engagement and act as a catalyst for project-based, self-directed learning? | Participant perceptions about the use of storytelling to spark student interest in project-based, self-directed learning. | Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire Field observations Documentation artifacts |

Timeline and Steps for Carrying Out the Research

The following list summarizes the timeline and steps used to carry out the research based on Bloomberg and Volpe’s (2012) application section for methodology (p. 120).

1. A review of past and current literature was conducted for the following purposes: (a) to place this study, examining secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) as a professional development model with a lens on student engagement, firmly within an historical perspective by relating the topic to previous studies in the field; (b) to

illuminate the problem thereby identifying the gap in literature that substantiates a call for further research; and (c) to provide a theoretical framework for a qualitative case study that adds to the literature and promotes the current educational discourse.

2. Following the proposal defense, the researcher acquired approval from the University of New England's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in early December 2016 to proceed with the research. The IRB approval process required the researcher to outline the procedures and processes needed to ensure adherence to standards required for the study of human subjects, including participants' confidentiality and informed consent. The researcher acquired access and permission from the participating school district in mid-December to conduct the study on-site that would facilitate the collection of data prior to IRB approval.
3. Once IRB approval was granted, research participants were identified and ethical considerations were outlined. The participants involved in the study completed a mandatory consent form in January 2017 that outlined their rights, procedures, confidentiality, as well as the risks and benefits associated with participation in the study. The subjects were provided with knowledge of the proposed research so that consent, or a willingness to participate, was grounded in their knowledge of the expected risks, possible benefits, and activities expected of them.
4. Data collection commenced in January and concluded the last week of March 2017. It included on-site visits as well as ongoing communication through email and phone conferences. During site visits, field observation notes and documentation artifacts were gathered including lesson plans, meeting minutes, literacy coaching professional development materials, journal entries, and anecdotal memos.

5. One focus group discussion was conducted at the end of March 2017 with three administrators; one at the district level and two at the middle/high levels. Sub-questions were directly related to the three essential research questions and focused on administrator perceptions of literacy coaching in situ as a professional development model. The use of storytelling as a hook for student engagement in content learning was also discussed.
6. Questionnaires were completed at the end of March 2017, by four middle and high school participants. Sub-questions were directly related to the essential research questions and gathered teacher perceptions about literacy coaching at the secondary level as well as teacher perceptions of storytelling as a hook to student engagement in learning in content-area classes.
7. Data was analyzed during the month of April 2017 using Creswell's (2013) Data Analysis Spiral. First, holistic coding was applied and categories of information were chunked into smaller units using codes or descriptors for each unit. Next, In Vivo codes (Saldaña, 2016) were identified in the form of words and phrases that were unique or recurring, across participants and data sets. These codes were grouped into categories using pattern coding. Finally, the researcher developed themes to convey the content of each of the groups (2013) based on the research questions. Triangulation (Creswell, 2013) was used to corroborate evidence and validate findings through cross verification from multiple sources.
8. Finally, data was interpreted, findings were presented, and conclusions were drawn between mid-April and May 2017.

Data Collection

Collecting data from multiple sources is one of the defining characteristics of qualitative research. In case study research, the investigator acts as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis which is why several methods were employed. According to Creswell (2013), “As the key participant in this study, it is essential that the researcher keep a focus on learning the meaning that other participants hold about the issue, not the meaning that the researcher, brings to the research” (p.47). For this reason, the researcher gathered a wide array of information to provide an in-depth picture of secondary literacy coaching and how this practice supports the integration of literacy across the curriculum. Gaining multiple perspectives from teachers and administrators, as well as including field observation notes and documentation artifacts provided multiple data sources that served to validate the findings.

Multiple Methods. The following methods of data collection complimented this approach to qualitative case study and provided a rich, detailed description of the phenomenon under investigation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Questionnaire. A research tool that uses questions to gather specific information from participants. The questions included open-ended responses wherein the participants formulated their own answers.

Focus group discussion. Interviewing several administrators together in a focus group provided an opportunity to interact with participants and gather a large amount of information in a limited time period. This process created an open discussion surrounding administrator perceptions of literacy coaching at the secondary level and the incorporation of storytelling during content instruction. This discussion “fostered

interactivity and dialogue among the participants, which allowed for increased richness of responses” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 252).

Audio recording. During the focus group discussion, the participants were made fully aware that they were being audio recorded and gave prior consent to be recorded. This ensured that subjects were comfortable with recording as a data collection method and were informed that they were free to stop the recording at any time and had the right to have the records destroyed.

Transcription. The online transcription service, REV.com, was used to transcribe the audio-recording into written form. Participant rights were protected by keeping subject names anonymous with the exception of the researcher.

Field observations. An accurate and organized depiction of thoughts, ideas, questions, and concerns were recorded in a journal and notes during the research process. These insights and reflections provided descriptive information from participants during site visits and in follow-up emails that provided a means for clarification, correction of mistakes or misunderstandings that occurred during and after the data collection process.

Documentation artifacts. Artifacts and documents used during professional development sessions, meetings, and classroom observations were gathered as part of the data collection process. Educational materials included lesson plans, meeting minutes, *Story Preservation Initiative* (2016) Learning Lab resources, and professional development materials and books.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data, including questionnaires, focus group discussion transcript, field notes, and documentation artifacts, were collected, organized, and analyzed using traditional methods.

Computer software was not the preferred method of data analysis for this investigation because of the researcher's desire "to better capture the emotions and tone of the participants as well as the contextual basis for the information" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 147).

Data Analysis Spiral. Once the data was collected and managed in organized files and units, data analysis occurred using Creswell's (2013) Data Analysis Spiral (Figure 3). The researcher moved between nonlinear phases that happen simultaneously. Using constant comparison, data was analyzed in a spiral, whereby the researcher moved in circles between coding data, analyzing data, interpreting data, and developing a narrative account of the findings (pp.182-187).

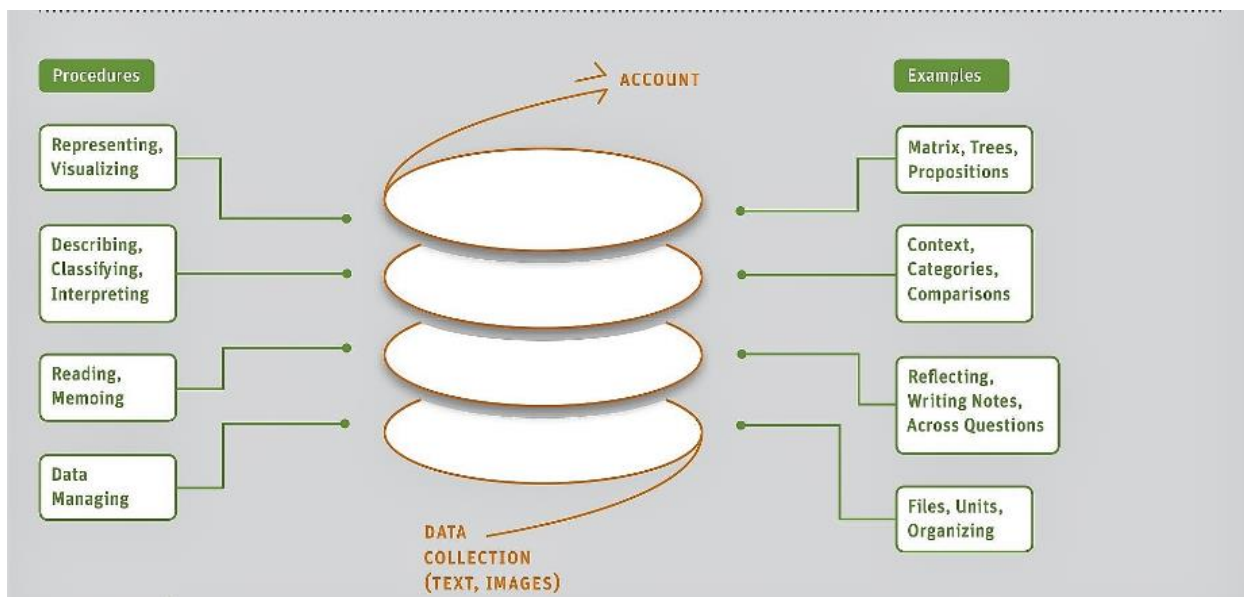


Figure 3. Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell, 2013) depicting movement in circles involving reading, memoing, coding data, analyzing data, interpreting data, and representing data visually.

Reading and memoing. This process involved reading and rereading field observation notes, documentation artifacts, questionnaires, and the focus group discussion transcript while, at the same time, writing notes and memos that identified key concepts and ideas. These ideas were then organized into themes or categories.

Describing and classifying. At this stage, codes or categories were developed from the detailed descriptions in the texts or visual data. Once labels were added to the codes relevant data was selected and themes were determined.

Interpreting. This process required the researcher to make sense of the data by abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data. Interpretation involved insight, intuition, and constructing meaning from personal views. Once the meaning was teased out, the findings were connected to the larger research literature.

Representing and visualizing. The final phase involved a representation of the data in visual form. This included figures, graphs, and pictures that illustrated the relationships between the layers of data.

Triangulation. Multiple sources of data were analyzed using triangulation. Triangulation is a technique whereby the researcher corroborates evidence through cross verification from more than one source (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Together this data provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Creswell (2013) recommends three analysis strategies (a) coding the data and reducing it into meaningful segments; (b) combining codes into broader categories and themes; and (c) making comparisons in the data graphs, tables, and charts (p. 180).

Co-construction of meaning. Throughout the interview process and at the conclusion of the study, member check procedures were used to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the researcher's interpretation and report of the narrative.

Potential Limitations

This study contained certain limiting conditions, some of which were related to the common considerations of qualitative research methodology, and some of which were inherent in the study's research design. Careful consideration was given to the acknowledgment of these external conditions that potentially weakened the scope of the study and may have affected the research outcomes.

Biases. The most prominent limitation in this study was researcher bias. Because all facets of the study were derived from this researcher's thinking and choices, researcher subjectivity limited the study. Consequently, it was critical for the researcher to be aware of purposeful or inadvertent favoring or skewing of methodology and data collection based on personal preferences. The investigator addressed this concern by remaining as neutral and objective as possible while carrying out the study; by analyzing and interpreting data at face value without manipulating results; by preparing questionnaires for teachers and the focus group discussion objectively with review by nonparticipants; and by ensuring that participants were ready and willing to take part in the study. Minimizing researcher bias was also avoided by gathering information from several sources using the method of triangulation. This involved collecting data through a variety of sources including questionnaires, a focus group discussion transcript, field observation records, documentation artifacts, and reflections.

Scope of the study. Another key limitation was the scope of this study, which was restricted to a small research sample in a rural New England community. In this particular case, the focus was on four middle/high school content teachers and three administrators in one district setting who were interested in engaging in new literacy practices that enhanced student engagement and increased motivation for learning.

Generalization. Given the parameters of this qualitative case study and small number of participants, it limited the possibility for generalization, which provides broader claims from data on large populations. As a result, the focus of this case study was on transferability, or ways in which the reader determined whether and to what extent this particular investigation in this particular context could transfer to another particular situation (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012).

Transferability. According to Patton (1990), transferability “promotes thinking of ‘context bound extrapolations’, defined as ‘speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical, conditions’” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 126). While findings from this qualitative case study were not generalizable, transferability allowed the “reader to determine whether and to what extent the particular phenomenon under study could transfer to another particular context” (p. 126). Transferability allows future researchers to make connections between the elements of this study and their own experience. For instance, teachers in other high school contexts might selectively apply storytelling as an engagement strategy in their own classroom settings.

Conflict of interest. The study was conducted in a separate rural New England community to eliminate any possibility of a conflict of interest between the researcher and her present employer. In this way, the researcher’s personal interest in pursuing a doctorate was protected and not in conflict with her professional responsibilities in her current role as a district literacy coach.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Designing and implementing a case study required efforts on the part of the researcher to enhance the overall validity and trustworthiness of the investigation. These efforts helped to

control for potential biases that might be present in the design, implementation, or analysis of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Credibility or Validity

The researcher established credibility or validity by writing the research questions clearly and ensured that the questions were substantiated by matching them with the appropriate case study design. Applying purposeful sampling strategies that were appropriate to the case study is another example of how the researcher established credibility. A peer review and cross-check of the information presented in the research and findings also served to add validity to the study.

Reliability or Dependability

To determine whether reliability or dependability exists, the researcher wrote up the study so that the findings could be replicated. This involved precisely documenting the procedures and ensuring that coding schemes and categories were used consistently. Ensuring that the findings were consistent and dependable with the data collected, required the researcher to “leave a trail of transparency” that illustrated the method and accounts of the data and how they were used (Merriam & Associates, 2002, as cited in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 126). Using appropriate methods to systematically collect and manage data safeguarded the information which created more reliability in the findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability was the researcher’s attempt to achieve objectivity by “being reflexive or illustrating how their data can be traced back to its origins” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 126). This was accomplished through ongoing reflection during the study using field notes, anecdotal memos, and journaling. These instruments supported the researcher’s telling of the story from start to finish.

This chapter provided a detailed description of the methodology for this research investigation. Qualitative case study was chosen as the preferred approach because it provided an in-depth analysis of administrator and secondary teacher experiences and perceptions about literacy learning within its real-life context, a public high school setting. The participant sample was made up of seven purposefully selected participants. Four data collection methods were employed, including questionnaires, focus group discussion, observation field notes, and documentation artifacts. The data was analyzed and reviewed in regards to the literature and emerging themes. Issues of trustworthiness were accounted for through various strategies including triangulation of data.

A review of the literature was conducted to devise a conceptual framework for the design and analysis of the study. Once data was collected it was analyzed in a spiral fashion allowing for themes to be revealed and findings to be identified. The literature provided a means of comparison for the findings and provided a basis for interpretation and conclusions. Recommendations were offered for educational practice and future research. The intent of this study was to contribute to the understanding of how literacy coaching might support secondary literacy practices and student engagement in learning. Moreover, this study's findings proved valuable to administrators and educators responsible for meeting the literacy needs of 21st century learners.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Currently, public middle and high school teachers in the state of NH are required to integrate the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (2010) into core content instruction. The researcher was interested in gaining an in-depth understanding of how literacy coaching in situ supports secondary teachers with integrating literacy practices into disciplinary classes. The study was conducted in a real-life, middle/high school setting that presented a unique situation, or what Stake (1995) refers to as an intrinsic case. The intrinsic case in one rural southern NH school supported the researcher's genuine interest in better understanding professional development 'in situ', meaning within its context or surroundings (Creswell, 2013). Integrating storytelling as an authentic literacy practice was also examined. This qualitative case study explored literacy coaching in situ as a means of engaging teachers and students in authentic literacy experiences during content instruction using *Story Preservation Initiative's* (SPI) (2017) oral history-based educational resource. SPI provides a collection of personal narratives recorded by people who have made extraordinary contributions in the arts, sciences, and humanities, as well as been eyewitnesses to history. The literacy coach's role was to support administrators and teachers in their efforts to integrate personal narratives into their respective disciplines of study, and to engage students in content learning. This research was guided by following research questions:

1. How does the role of secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) support content teachers with introducing and embedding authentic literacy strategies into core subjects?
2. How can storytelling spark student interest when learning content material?

3. How does storytelling impact student engagement and act as a catalyst for project-based, self-directed learning?

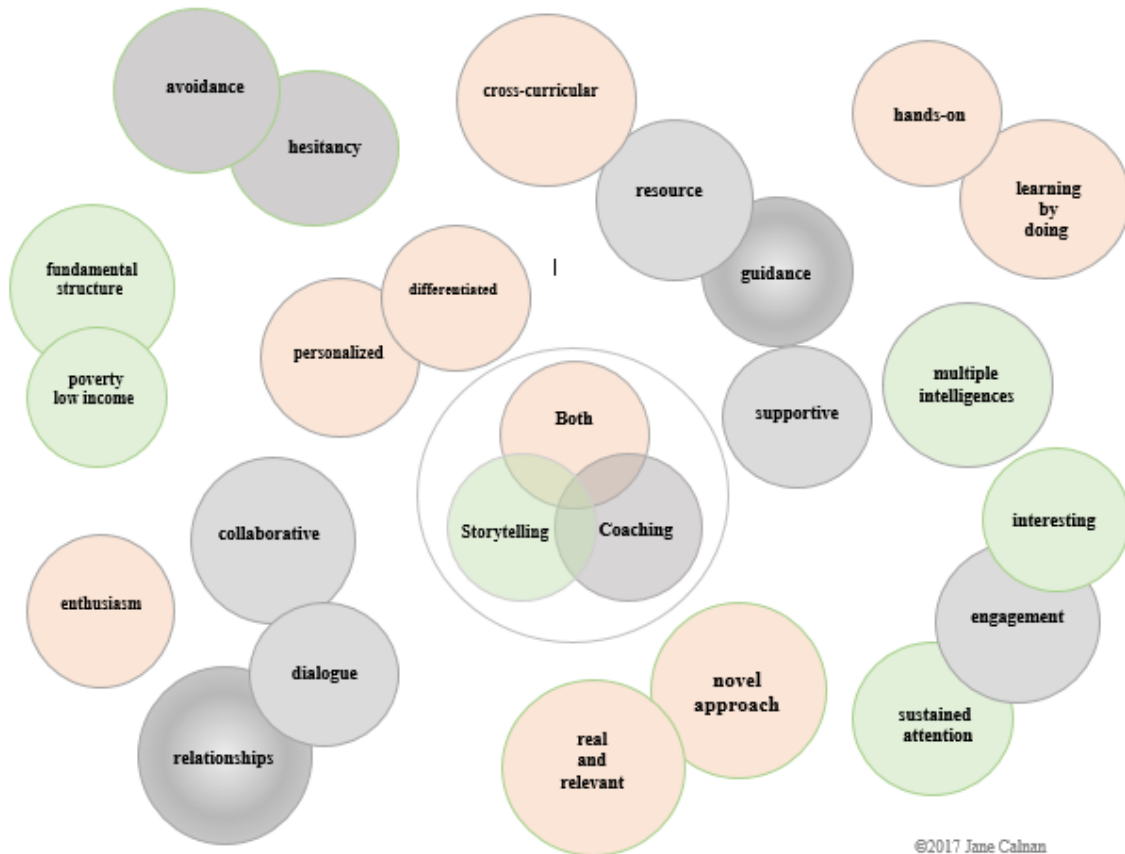
This chapter includes a description of the methodology used for collecting and analyzing data using Creswell's (2013) Data Analysis Spiral. It also provides a narrative account of the findings as they relate to the research questions, and the process of theory development supported by examples that illuminate the findings.

Analysis Method

The study was conducted between January and March 2017, during which time the researcher provided literacy coaching in situ to four content teachers and met with three administrators on different occasions to gather rich, detailed descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Data was collected during on-site visits in the form of field observation notes, written reflections, and documentation artifacts. Follow-up communication between the researcher and participants occurred as needed through email and phone communication. At the conclusion of the study, teachers provided feedback to the researcher in the form of open responses on a questionnaire. Administrators shared insights in a culminating one-hour focus group discussion. The focus group discussion was recorded on a Sony audio recorder and uploaded to Rev.com (2016) for transcription. To reduce bias, the researcher evaluated trustworthiness using "member checks" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113). This process involved sending the transcribed discussion to participants to verify its accuracy prior to data analysis.

The researcher employed three analysis strategies based on Creswell's (2013) Data Analysis Spiral that included: (a) coding the data by reducing the information into

meaningful segments; (b) combining codes into broader categories and themes; and (c) utilizing tables and figures to making comparisons in the data (p.180). Beginning with the first loop in the spiral, the researcher manually compiled and organized all the raw data including field observation notes, written reflections, documentation artifacts, teacher responses on questionnaires, and the focus group discussion transcript. Following this organization, the researcher simultaneously read, reread, and reflected on the data in an attempt to get an overall sense of the storyline and emergent insights into the study as a whole (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2013). In the process, descriptive ideas and phrases were recorded in the form of jottings, memos, and summaries (Saldaña, 2016) which were then “chunked” into broad topics or holistic codes (Saldaña, 2016). Figure 4 illustrates holistic codes, categorized by color in relationship to secondary literacy coaching and storytelling.



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Figure 4. Holistic codes representing preliminary groupings of emergent themes derived from literacy coaching and storytelling.

Holistic coding revealed consistent emergent findings across participants from all data sources. This discovery supported merging the data gathered from administrators and teachers into one data set that combined ideas from the questionnaire, focus group discussion, and on-site meetings. From the various data sources, sixteen general codes emerged: resource, dialogue, engagement, guidance, collaboration, interest, novel approach, learning by doing, cross-curricular, worry, story is fundamental, real and relevant, relationships, support, connections, and differentiation. Figure 5 shows the holistic codes, divided into initial categories as a means of establishing early themes within the data.

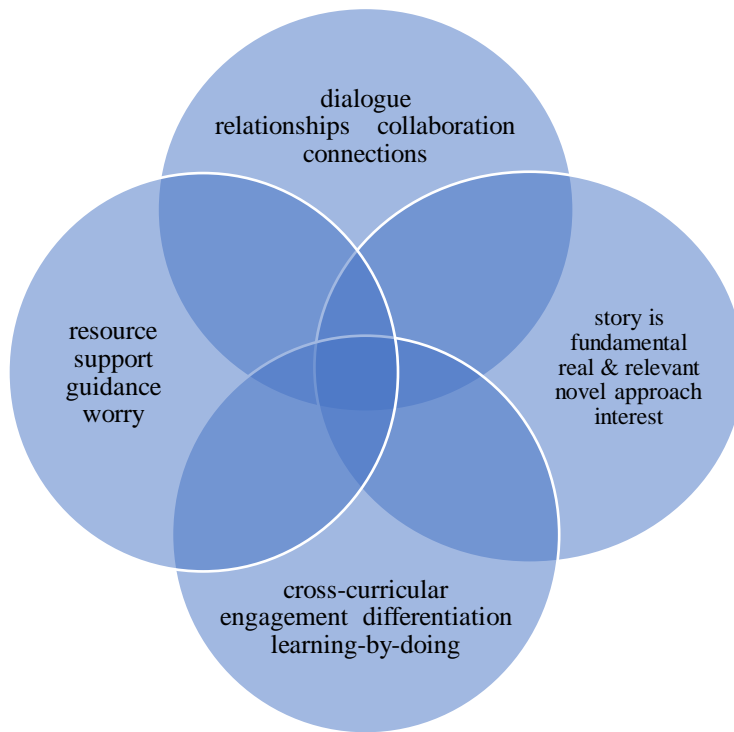


Figure 5. Sixteen codes organized into preliminary groupings based on initial holistic coding.

Next, the researcher manually developed color-coded summary tables (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) to further represent individual and group data for deeper examination and presentation of the findings. Participant and whole group tables were created to aggregate the data within and across research questions.

The second phase of analysis involved In Vivo coding, a strategy that Saldaña (2016) recommends for beginning researchers and practitioners. This process was useful for prioritizing and honoring participants' voices from on-site discussions, informal conversations, open-ended questionnaires, the focus group audio transcript, and written responses from students. In Vivo codes were identified in the form of words and phrases that were unique or recurring, across participants and data sets. The codes were stored in a separate codebook (Saldaña, 2016) and listed according to research questions. These direct quotations provided key illuminations in the

research narrative and authentic language associated with the essential questions in this intrinsic case.

The process of In Vivo coding was enlightening for the researcher. Key illuminations from the participants' authentic language substantiated Creswell's (2012) alert "to code for surprising information, not expected to be found, and information that is conceptually interesting or unusual to the researcher and, potentially, the participants and audiences" (p. 186). In Vivo codes from administrators and teachers uncovered what Saldaña (2016) refers to as "buried treasure" or "insights of relative magnitude" (p. 289). By using descriptive language drawn from the teachers, administrators, and students themselves the researcher "captured the meanings inherent in the participant's experiences" in the middle/high school setting (Stringer, 2014, in Saldaña, 2016, p. 106).

After examining the In Vivo codebook, the researcher continued analysis with code patterning and mapping (Saldaña, 2016) using WordSift (2017) and WordItOut software (2017). These code landscaping tools allowed the researcher to cut and paste long lists of In Vivo words and phrases, according to questions, into the field to be analyzed for word frequency. The final word clouds contextualized the essential findings of the study by visually representing what Saldaña (2016) refers to as "both the forest and the trees" (p. 223). The landscaping tool helped to identify the most common words and phrases in the text as those words appeared larger than the rest in the word cloud. As the frequency of words and phrases decreased, so did their visual size. Three colorful clouds visually transformed the codes into themes that focused the researcher's lens on trends within the study. The findings are represented in Figures 6, 7, and 8.

This graphic emphasizes the most commonly used words and phrases from students and teachers associated with the use of storytelling as a tool to spark student interest in content learning.

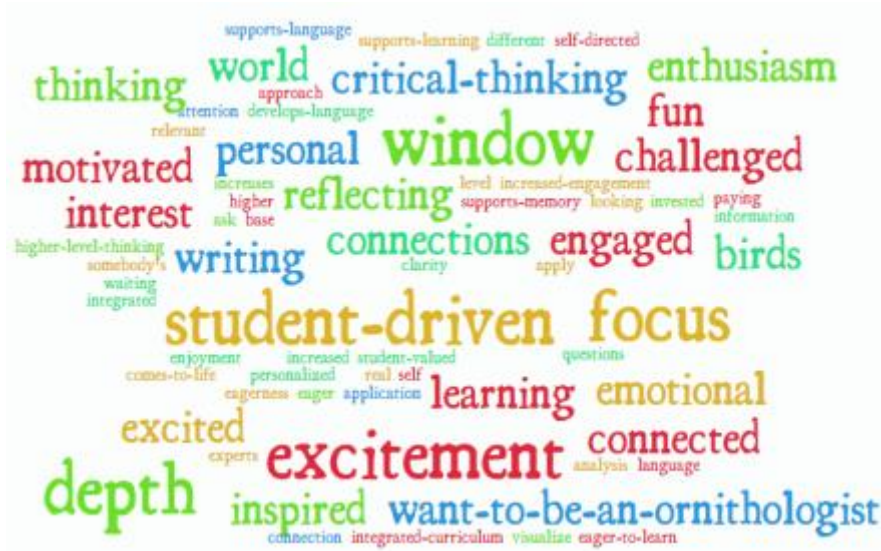


Figure 8. WordSift cloud of In Vivo Codes. Calnan, J. (2017) created with www.wordsift.org.

This graphic emphasizes the most commonly used words and phrases from teachers and administrators associated with storytelling as a catalyst for project-based, self-directed learning.

The researcher developed Figure 8 as a visual representation of all In Vivo codes derived from all three research questions. Comparing In Vivo codes with the initial concept map, representing holistic codes, served to support reliability and validity of the findings.

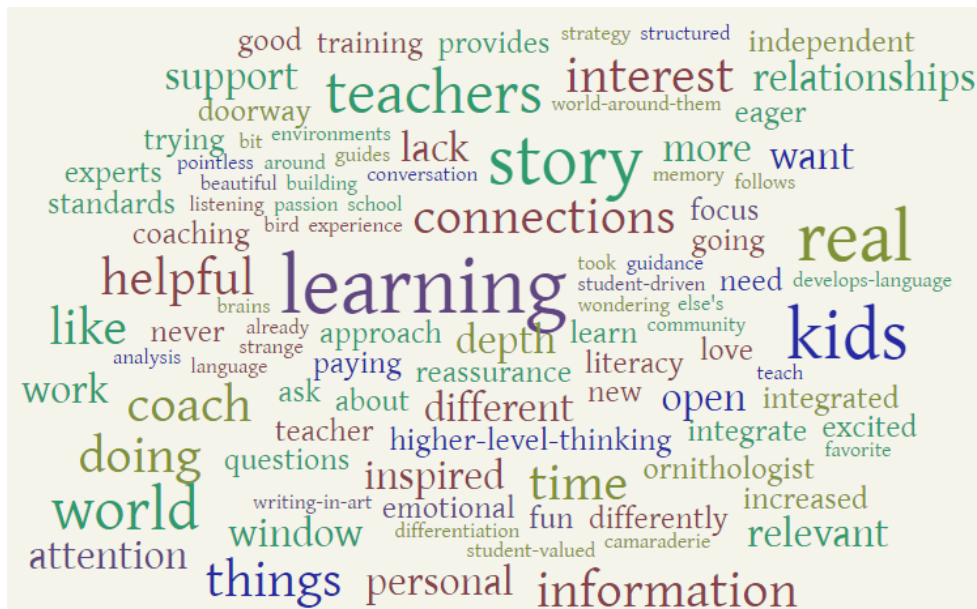


Figure 9. WordItOut cloud of In Vivo Codes. Calnan, J. (2017) created with

www.worditout.com. This graphic emphasizes the most commonly used words and phrases from teachers, administrators, and students based on all three essential questions.

Next, triangulation was used to corroborate the evidence through a cross verification of several sources (Creswell, 2013) including holistic, In Vivo, and pattern codes. Consolidating the data from multiple perspectives, using a Venn Diagram (Figure 10), supported the researcher’s classification and interpretation of the findings which led to the discovery of overall themes.

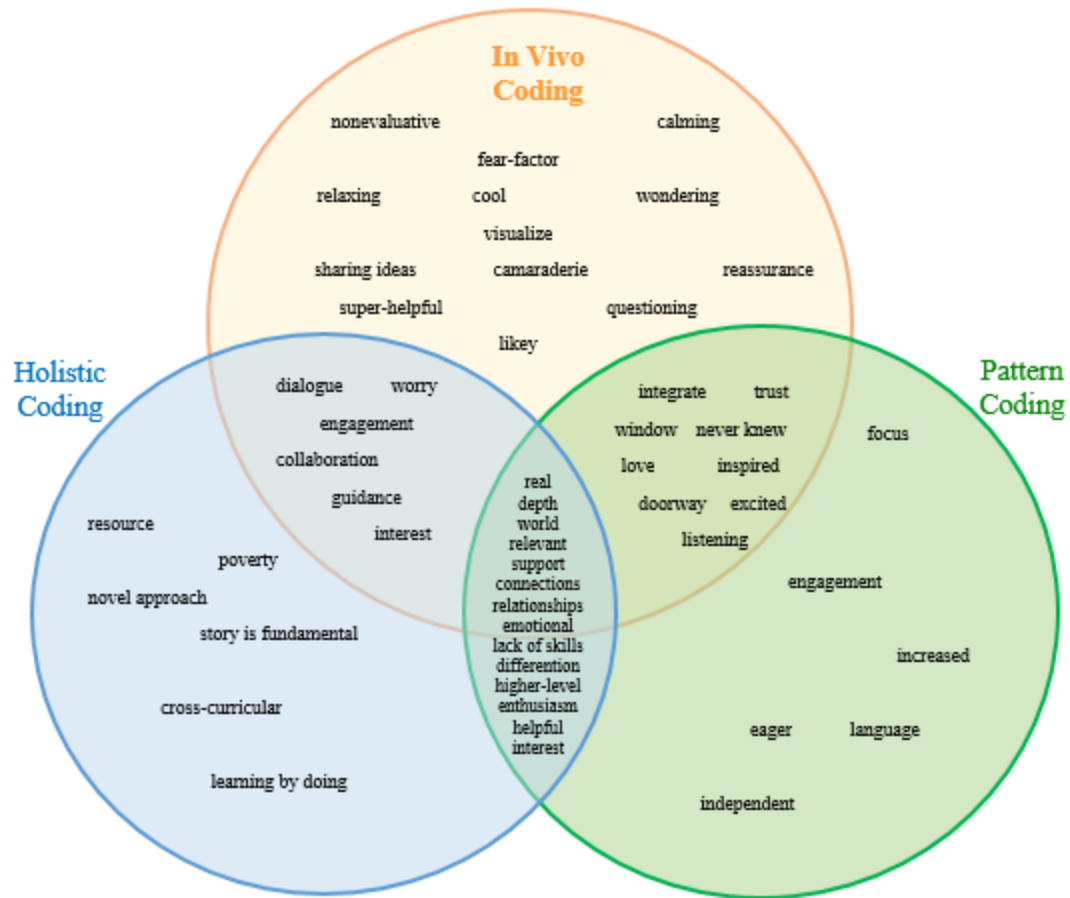


Figure 10. Venn Diagram representing triangulated data from multiple data analysis methods. Commonalities are depicted from holistic, In Vivo, and pattern coding results.

In the final phase of analysis, the researcher abstracted beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2013). This was accomplished by revising the coding scheme structure according to the essential research questions. Creating diagrams to represent and visualize the data in layers enabled the researcher to further interpret the data using “insight, intuition, and constructing meaning from personal views” (p. 187). Two In Vivo codes, “doorway to doing things differently” and “window to somebody’s world”, provided metaphors elucidating two storylines that emerged from the findings: Literacy coaching as a doorway to transformative teaching; and, Storytelling as a window to transformative learning.

Literacy coaching as a doorway to transformative teaching. The researcher’s interpretation of the storyline that developed for Question 1: How does the role of secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) support content teachers with introducing and embedding authentic literacy strategies into their core subjects? is represented in Figure 11. The arrangement illustrates the relationship of categories as “concurrency”; a term Saldaña (2016) defines as “the process by which two or more categories operate simultaneously to influence and affect an outcome” (p. 279).



Figure 11. Graphic representing overarching themes connected to literacy coaching in situ as a doorway that leads to transformative teaching. Coaching teachers on-site encouraged authentic practice, dialogical teaching, and collaboration which ultimately lead to transformative teaching practices.

Storytelling as window to transformative learning. The findings for Question 2: How can storytelling spark student interest when learning content material? and Question 3: How does storytelling impact student engagement and act as a catalyst for project-based, self-directed learning? revealed associations within the triangulated data that suggested a connection between them. As the researcher abstracted out beyond the codes and themes using visual representations (Creswell, 2013), findings revealed that in this intrinsic case, project-based and self-directed

learning were an outgrowth of student interest. For this reason, the researcher combined the findings for Questions 2 and 3 into a flowchart that reveals the narrative through a sequence of events in a process (Figure 12). The arrangement of categories represents “a sequential order suggesting that action progressed in a linear manner” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 279).

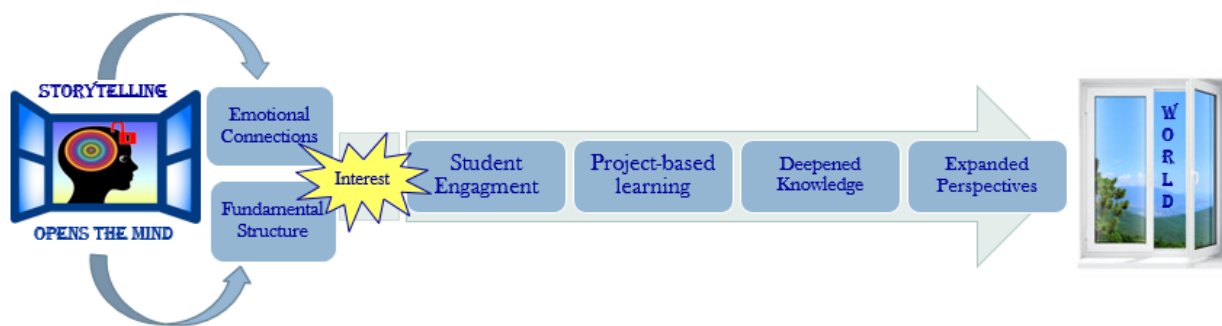


Figure 12. Flowchart depicting storytelling as a window to the mind and world. Storytelling sparked student interest in content through emotional connections and its fundamental structure. Interest led to further engagement in projects that deepened knowledge and expanded perspectives leading to a worldview.

Presentation of Results

Several themes emerged from the data that positively supported secondary literacy coaching in situ as a promising professional development model and storytelling as an authentic literacy practice that enhances content learning in the classroom. This section reviews the findings for the essential research questions and presents data to support each of the underlying themes.

Research Question 1

The first question, “How does the role of secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) support content teachers with introducing and embedding authentic literacy strategies into their core subjects?” was designed to develop an understanding of how a literacy

coach might support disciplinary literacy at the secondary level by providing professional development on-site. Overall, the findings suggested that literacy coaching in situ was a novel approach that opened a doorway to *authentic professional development, dialogical teaching, and collaboration*. Together, these themes supported transformative teaching practices that serve the literacy needs of all learners, thereby making learning environments more inclusive and accessible for all students.

Authentic professional development. All study participants appreciated professional development in situ because it was situated (Shor & Freire, 1987) in the culture, language, and pedagogy relevant to their daily practice which made it authentic. Having a coach on-site was perceived by all as a positive and novel approach to professional development. It opened the doorway to authentic opportunities in which the literacy coach could meet face-to-face with participants and observe their work with students in the natural setting. These meetings provided instruction that was tailored to each teacher's specific needs, discipline of study, and student population, which made learning real, relevant, and differentiated.

The literacy coach was also viewed as a guide who supported teachers in the development of literacy strategies that enhance student learning and the acquisition of tangible resources. Providing individual in situ support with lesson planning, using online resources, scaffolding instruction for students with varying needs, and working with administration to acquire bird feeders and nature journals for classroom projects was perceived as helpful and appreciated. Below are quotes from three teachers and two administrators that support literacy coaching as an authentic practice:

- *Having the literacy coach come in and watch the students helped them to focus and authenticated the learning.*

- *This approach was a doorway to doing things differently. It was real and relevant.*
- *I think it would be helpful to have a literacy coach as a position at my school to help teachers make lessons aligned with literacy standards and work with different grade levels.*
- *I would definitely have done more of this [literacy] and utilized the coach more.*
- *Coaching on-site provided real experience from an outside expert that personalized learning.*
- *I saw glimmers of teachers needing more support in the short time you were here. They are going to want to see more of you.*

Coaching in situ also created cohesion between the administration and teachers by addressing the literacy needs of the district and school population as a whole. In several discussions, administrators articulated a gap in language and vocabulary skills within their district and school populations where poverty is a major concern. Examining the academic needs and cultural conditions at the middle/high school and district, and addressing how these issues influenced school performance, “raised awareness about relations in society at large” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.11). Together, the administrators and coach used this knowledge to consider ways to support the needs of their population, so that changes could lead to empowerment for both teachers and students.

Differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all their learners was a framework discussed by five of the seven participants. Each saw personalized learning as a way to build more equitable learning environments that support the diverse needs of all students, especially those who struggle with academic achievement due to poverty and learning differences. Two of the four teacher participants requested support from the coach in scaffolding lessons for students

who struggle in core classes. This finding confirmed the work of Shields (2010) who contends that “education has the power to be transformed by effecting change in one’s frame of reference” (p. 565). Once the teachers looked more closely and critically at the complexity of their curriculum and at varying approaches to delivering content, they employed new techniques with the coach’s help. This led to the empowerment of teachers (2010). The following In Vivo codes from administrators illustrate these findings:

- *Our district is at the poverty level.*
- *It’s about kids and their learning.*
- *Our kids learn differently; not through cause and effect.*
- *Story can help them learn. It has a predictable pattern – beginning, middle, end.*
- *Vocabulary is a concern.*
- *Using story gives teachers a different way to teach.*

One benefit of this intrinsic case was that the literacy coach was previously trained in specific literacy practices that this particular district had adopted for comprehension development and content writing. Therefore, coaching support included embedding *Keys to Literacy* (KTL) (2017) routines into the participants’ content classes. Assisting teachers in integrating these promising literacy practices into unit and lesson plans benefitted both the teachers and students by promoting consistent literacy practices across grade levels and disciplinary subjects. Developing literacy skills through authentic practices that met the demands of their middle and high school learners was recognized as a benefit, as evidenced in the following participant quotations:

- *This approach supports building learning environments that are best for everyone.*
- *This [disciplinary literacy] supported the integration of writing.*

- *They're writing in art!*
- *It's great to have a resident expert!*
- *A literacy coach can provide support for the teachers and, in turn, the kids.*
- *KTL skills have been super helpful especially for students that have [learning] problems.*

Dialogical teaching. A key finding that emerged from the data analysis was that literacy coaching in situ was a doorway to dialogical teaching (Shor & Freire, 1987). This approach was transformative because it occurred in the natural setting through dialogue, inquiry, and problem solving based on each participant's current reality. An on-site approach to professional development was novel to the teachers at the middle/high school. Unlike professional development models that favor narrative lecturing (1987), coaching in situ occurs in a participatory format where the teachers and coach transform learning together through collaboration and discovery of new knowledge.

In this case, coaching at the middle-high school happened on three separate occasions, followed by ongoing communication via email and phone. The approach allowed literacy teaching practices to be illuminated and acted upon immediately through dialogue and mutual informal discussions. Learning was situated (Shor & Freire, 1987) in the particular circumstances of each participant's thoughts, knowledge, aspirations, and conditions, coupled with the knowledge and training of the coach who worked as a guide and researcher.

One teacher participant rarely responded to emails from the coach and was reluctant to set up a schedule to meet when the coach was on campus. Administrators were not completely surprised by the lack of communication and suggested an impromptu visit to the classroom to encourage face-to-face discussion. On this occasion, the teacher was most receptive, inquisitive, and supportive of coaching while collaborating with the coach in the moment. The participant

was particularly interested in ways to integrate literacy into art using problem solving strategies which were discussed and outlined. Once the coach was offsite, there was noticeable reluctance, on the part of the participant, to follow-through on plans and emails. These findings seemed to conflict with the enthusiasm expressed while meeting in person. A lack of ongoing communication between the coach and participant caused some concern for the researcher, especially when the participant chose not to complete the final questionnaire. Deeper analysis of the literature revealed a new consideration which might serve to explain this finding. According to Shor and Freire (1987), a dialogical situation implies “the absence of authoritarianism, permitting students the freedom to emerge” (p. 16). In a dialogical setting, it is understood that “there is no goal or requirement that all people have to speak or must say something if they have nothing to say” (p. 16). The researcher regarded the lack of response from this participant as an indicator of a genuine open exchange, where the participant had ‘the right to be silent’ (p. 16). All indicators from administration were that the participant found coaching to be helpful and insightful even though personal dialogue was limited to on-site visits. This suggests that, perhaps an open-response questionnaire may not have been the most appropriate data collection tool for all participants.

Quotations from one administrator and three teachers also supported dialogical teaching as a doorway to transforming practices:

- *I'm glad you [the coach] shared that with me [the principal] because I didn't realize time was such a problem. Now I know how I can help this teacher.*
- *Never did anything like this before. This has been helpful.*
- *It's hard to get to the teaching with some of the student behaviors. I would love it if you have any ideas.*

- *It's great to be able to ask you questions.*

Collaboration. Literacy coaching is a collaborative and social process. In this case study, knowledge was constructed through interactions between the coach and the participants (Vygotsky, 1978) either in whole group, small group, or one-to-one meetings. This strategy of communicating and interfacing with teachers and administrators within the school culture served to support them in several ways.

First, collaboration between the coach and the study participants, created a camaraderie that became contagious. More classroom doors began to open as evidenced in co-teaching partnerships that blossomed and requests from teachers outside of the study to get involved with coaching and storytelling projects connected to birding. Collaboration also spread within the community as teachers and administrators coordinated efforts to support community projects on the district campus.

One participant was responsible for purchasing student natural journals for all the classes in conjunction with the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. District and middle-high school administration coordinated efforts to have bird feeders installed on the school campus and bird seed purchased from local businesses. Three of the four middle-high school teachers engaged in some form of planning together that involved sharing ideas and resources for projects they were implementing at their grade levels. This open communication not only supported the integration of ELA standards across the curriculum, it also encouraged interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Together, teachers constructed and assimilated new knowledge about multiple literacies in other core subjects and applied that knowledge to their own classroom settings (McLeod, 2007).

Secondly, literacy coaching in situ provided guidance to teachers that was supportive and nonevaluative as evidenced in relationships that were perceived as trusting and respectful. It also provided reassurance for teachers that expressed worry, fear, and apprehension about moving from ‘content learning’ to ‘literacy learning’ with limited background knowledge or training. These findings were consistent with Vygotsky’s (1978) belief that interacting with peers was an effective way of developing skills and strategies.

Finally, collaboration served to instill more confidence in the teachers’ abilities to embed literacy into disciplinary learning which promoted Dweck’s (2006) theory of Growth Mindset. Two teacher participants, who had background in teaching English, appeared more confident integrating literacy into their subject areas and required less reassurance from the coach in comparison to their peer counterparts. The other two middle-high teachers perceived that their teaching abilities were tied to knowledge of their content as opposed to their practice.

Data initially revealed worry and apprehension on the part of some teacher participants related to expectations about lesson planning and ELA standards that perhaps led to an avoidance or hesitancy to become actively engaged in coaching. A lack of time and confidence with shifting from ‘content instruction’ to ‘literacy instruction’ were cited as concerns. These findings align with the work of Parris and Collins (2007) who support a long-held belief that content teachers must be willing to view themselves as literacy teachers if literacy instruction is to become embedded in their daily teaching routines.

By the third site visit, all teacher participants perceived ongoing collaboration during coaching as an opportunity to grow professionally. Collaborating side by side, promoted positive interaction and engagement between the coach and teachers. It also provided opportunities for questioning and constructive feedback that helped nurture confidence and supported movement

beyond their zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). ZPD is the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help. Being on-site enabled the coach to scaffold practices and provide hands-on guidance in writing. In two instances, initial coaching support was no longer necessary once the projects got underway. Overall, being on-site positively influenced the level of involvement of all participants and encouraged teachers to become actively engaged in the coaching process.

The following quotes support collaboration as an underlying theme that promoted positive peer interaction, guidance, and a growth mindset among teacher participants. A few of these quotes extend beyond the participants to include the school community.

- *The bird unit might lend itself better to English. I think I'll talk to the English teacher.*
- *I'm worried about planning time. Haven't had time to sit down and do the unit plan.*
- *I might pair with the sixth-grade teacher. We can work together for the science part or the journaling.*
- *The coach helped with familiarity with the ELA standards.*
- *I'm now co-teaching with the honors teacher since we both teach the same courses. The SPED teacher is working with us, too.*
- *Working with the coach helped confirm how to integrate the literacy project correctly.*

Research Questions 2 and 3

Question 2: How can storytelling spark student interest when learning content material? and Question 3: How does storytelling impact student engagement and act as a catalyst for project-based, self-directed learning? were designed to examine how storytelling sparks interest in learning content material and supports engagement in project-based, independent learning. The stories used by teachers to involve students in content learning were audio recordings of

personal narratives taken from the SPI (2017) online resource. Three of the four teachers focused on a unit involving birds and birdsong with connected projects. One teacher chose an author study which centered on personal narrative and bookmaking.

As the researcher examined the triangulated data, categories in both questions appeared to be linked sequentially (Saldaña, 2016). Findings suggested that when students initially listened to the audio segments related to the expert environmentalist they became interested and engaged in the content. This enthusiasm continued through project-based learning experiences that were hands-on and intrinsically motivating.

Bird feeders were set up outside classroom windows around the middle/high school campus, authentic nature journals were kept, bird identification and counting occurred at feeders, writing in the form of reflections and summaries became rituals, bird anatomy was examined and drawn, and books were created based on students' personal stories. Qualitative data from teachers and students revealed that engagement in these projects led to deeper knowledge, self-directed learning, and extended learning which ultimately broadened student perspectives and world views.

Storytelling opens the mind and sparks interest. Storytelling was viewed as a novel approach to learning by all participants. Most teachers expressed excitement about incorporating this new tool to capture the students' attention and were interested to see how the students would respond. One teacher was a bit skeptical about using audio because there was no visual component. After listening though, all the teacher participants shared that, for the most part, listening to the personal narratives of naturalist, Don Kroodsma and children's author, Tomie dePaola (Story Preservation Initiative, 2017), ignited student interest in the subject matter during

instruction. A few students remarked that the birdsong audios were boring and uninteresting, but the majority were very excited about doing something different.

Engagement. During on-site visits, the literacy coach observed students' engagement levels while listening to the audio recordings. Sousa (2016) defines student engagement as “the amount of attention, interest, curiosity, and positive emotional connections that students have when they are learning” (p. 17). Interest was apparent in the following student behaviors: sustained attention, laughing and smiling, continual questioning, requests to keep listening, desires to replay specific segments, and feverish notetaking while listening to the audio.

The following In Vivo quotes express emotional connections to the material as shared by students in written reflections. The findings suggest a genuine interest in listening to the experts' first-hand accounts:

- *Listening was cool.*
- *It [listening] was relaxing and calming.*
- *The audio was interesting. I likey!*
- *I liked it because it was different.*
- *It's kinda cool but it's also kinda boring.*

Teachers and administrators also shared comments in discussions that supported story as an authentic tool for sparking interest in content material that included:

- *Students were more focused and engaged.*
- *The brain is wired for story and flows naturally from beginning to middle to end. It's easy for the kids to follow.*
- *They were eager to ask questions.*
- *The story created an enthusiasm for learning.*

- *The narratives helped to pull kids in.*

Project-based learning. Each teacher connected the personal narratives to authentic projects based on their content topic. The literacy coach supported teachers in developing unit and lesson plans that integrated standards across disciplines. Feedback from the participants during school visits and in the follow-up questionnaire suggested that all participants engaged students in projects that promoted higher level thinking.

Deepened knowledge. Students were challenged to think critically by participating in authentic projects that required application, analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and creativity. Participants also reported that some students were inspired to work independently outside of school. A few were intrinsically motivated to extend their learning beyond the classroom project to pursue other related topics in the field.

Expanded perspectives. In one English class, the teacher integrated science and art by connecting Don Kroodsma's bird narrative (Story Preservation Initiative, 2017) with American ornithologist and painter, John James Audubon. Then, students compared Audubon's life as an ornithologist with Don Kroodsma's story. Students also engaged in report writing and kept a nature journal with observations, written reflections, and drawings from the natural world. Math was also integrated, as students identified and counted birds at the feeders from January through March. They calculated their findings, compared data, and reported results to the Project FeederWatch program at Cornell Lab of Ornithology (2017). In fact, one student was so fascinated with the bird unit, he shared his interest in becoming an ornithologist.

A science teacher also studied Birdsong using Don Kroodsma's (Story Preservation Initiative, 2017) audio as a catalyst. This participant integrated writing, math, and geography by mapping bird migration patterns across the U.S. Different biomes and ecosystems were explored

through online research, and written reflections were used as a way to cement and share student learning. The teacher had students record the frequency of bird sounds on paper by creating sonograms while listening to different birdsong clips. After several song clips, the students compared their findings.

The art teacher admitted to having more difficulty integrating birdsong in many of his art classes. But, he did include research on the study of bird anatomy by having students draw birds from sources and sketch observations in nature. The participant also reserved time for quick writes at the beginning or end of class as a way to summarize learning and encourage student reflection.

Finally, the library media specialist introduced students to story and personal narrative by listening to the personal story of children's author Tomie dePaola. The project centered on reading, writing, art, and reflection through the process of bookmaking. Each student wrote their own personal story and then developed it into a picture book with illustrations. As a culminating project, the students planned to share their stories with students in the elementary school next door.

Below are quotations from teachers, students, and administrators that express positive outcomes from project-based learning that led to deeper knowledge. They also reflect expanded perspectives which moved beyond the classroom to the greater world outside their windows.

- *Students wanted to read Kroodsma's biography after listening to his narrative.*
- *I met with a teacher today who wanted to get involved in the bird project.*
- *Students were genuinely upset when the field trip to the river with the nature specialist was canceled.*

- *Their eyes are open and their ears are open and they're paying attention to what's going on around them. That's how you know they're engaged in their learning.*
- *What's happening is they are pulling things at the darndest times that shows they are really engaged in what's going on.*
- *One sixth grader shared, "I want to be an ornithologist!"*
- *One student did extra credit and researched Rachel Carson and DDT which tied really well to the curriculum. She also tied in maps.*

Summary

In summary, the qualitative data gathered during this study was analyzed on multiple levels using Creswell's (2013) Data Analysis Spiral. This interactive process involved moving from specific information to more generalized themes using three rounds of coding. Holistic, In Vivo, and pattern codes were assigned, reduced, and categorized by themes that were abstracted out beyond the codes to reveal two storylines: Question 1) Literacy coaching is a doorway to transformative teaching; and Questions 2 and 3) Storytelling as a window to transformative learning. Emerging themes aligned well with the study's theoretical and conceptual frameworks, outlined in Chapters I and II, proposing that literacy coaching in situ is situated and dialogical (Shor & Freire, 1987). This collaborative process allowed knowledge and meaning to be socially constructed between the coach and participants (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in McLeod, 2007). The coaching process also promoted Dweck's (2006) theory of Growth Mindset. Findings indicated that teachers benefitted from the coach's support when applying new literacy practices until they felt more confident with integrating literacy on their own. Results also revealed storytelling to be a powerful tool (Simmons, 2006) that ignites interest in content and engages (Sousa, 2016) students in deeper learning.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This qualitative case study was designed to provide a rich description of secondary literacy coaching in situ as a novel approach to professional development that aimed to support both teachers and administrators with embedding literacy across grade levels and disciplines. The study examined secondary literacy coaching on-site as a method to guide content teachers with incorporating authentic literacy practices into core instruction. It served to continue the work of Blamey, Meyer, and Walpole (2006) who specifically recommended documenting what literacy coaches do at the secondary level by further exploring the roles of secondary coaches, particularly what they need to know and what strategies are useful for engaging and motivating both adult and adolescent learners. Collaborating with building and district administration served the greater need of providing systematic training and system-wide support for teachers at all grade levels (K-12), but particularly secondary teachers who require sustained training to be effective teachers of reading within their subject areas (Daggett & Pedinotti, Jr., 2014).

This single case study opened the doorway to a small, rural public middle-high school in Southwestern, NH which provided an authentic opportunity to take the audience to a place they would typically not have access to (Donmoyer, 1990; Merriam, 2009). It was hoped that delivering on-site professional development in literacy would provide insight on how to support secondary teachers and administrators with embedding literacy into disciplinary instruction. Using storytelling as a novel approach to content learning was also explored as a strategy to engage students and support the acquisition of 21st century multiliteracies.

Qualitative case study methods were used to collect data in the form of field observation notes, written reflections, and documentation artifacts. A teacher questionnaire (Appendix E) and

a focus group discussion with administrators (Appendix F) also served to capture the essence of the story. The data were coded, analyzed, and organized by research questions and then by categories and subcategories that revealed themes and patterns guided by the conceptual framework and theories discussed in Chapters I and II. The purpose of this chapter is to provide interpretive insights into these findings in relation to the essential questions, theoretical framework, and their relevance to current research. It also addresses implications of the findings, recommendations for further action, and recommendations for further studies.

Interpretation of Findings

Research Question 1: How does the role of secondary literacy coaching in situ (in the natural setting) support content teachers with introducing and embedding authentic literacy strategies into core subjects?

Data analysis led to findings that clearly supported secondary coaching in situ as a beneficial model for supporting teachers with embedding authentic literacy strategies into core subjects. All participants cited on-site professional development as helpful in guiding both teachers and administrators with integrating literacy across grade levels and disciplines which ultimately impacted student acquisition of 21st century literacies. Findings endorsed coaching in the natural setting as an authentic approach to dialogical teaching, which promoted collaboration between the coach, teachers, and administrators that served to transform teaching practices. These findings also validated research conducted by Fullan and Knight (2011) who maintain that literacy coaches are uniquely positioned to engage in inquiry and explore transformative pedagogies that can help content teachers' raise the level of classroom instruction, thereby helping all students prosper.

Authentic professional development. Directly engaging with teachers and administrators in the natural setting proved highly beneficial in promoting authentic relationships and literacy practices within the middle-high school setting. Working side-by-side participants, provided several opportunities for the coach to offer support and feedback that was real and relevant to the participants' immediate needs and circumstances. While teacher participants were highly qualified experts in their disciplines (art, science, English, and library studies), two of the four did not feel entirely equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to embed ELA into content instruction (Cantrell & Callaway, 2008; NH Department of Education, 2012). This was revealed in findings that suggested apprehension and worry about expectations related to NH's adoption of the ELA Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). One administrator also raised concerns about the teachers' overall lack of familiarity with ELA competencies and suggested that support from the coach would be helpful in this area.

These findings are consistent with prior research (Cantrell & Callaway, 2008; NH Department of Education, 2012) that suggests secondary teachers are at a crossroad, struggling to integrate the ELA standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) into core subjects. Through personalized learning, the coach addressed these concerns by considering teachers' prior experience with ELA, disciplinary backgrounds, and approaches to student learning. The coach exposed teachers to unfamiliar standards and guided them with choosing a few that connected most appropriately to their disciplines. For example, in art class, the students critiqued each other's work. The coach suggested connecting speaking and listening standards to this activity because they naturally

related to formal discussions where students must orally evaluate, reason, and defend their point of view (2010).

The coach also worked directly with the administration, examining the current conditions of the district and school settings to promote teaching practices that were transformative or as Foster (1986) describes it “critically educative” (Shields, 2010, p. 567). According to Foster, for education to be transformative, leadership must look at the conditions in which they live and decide how to change them. In this case, the coach and administrators explored specific ways to support teachers with promoting authentic literacy practices by identifying areas of relative student weakness. Vocabulary and language were identified as skills that required attention in the district where approximately 52% of the student population was at or below the poverty level (NH Department of Education, 2010). Introducing storytelling as a novel approach to content instruction district-wide served to promote interest in reading, reinforcement of oral and listening skills, and enhancement of vocabulary and language development (Bishop & Kimball, 2006).

Overall, findings suggested that participants seemed very satisfied to have a literacy coach’s on-site support and expertise. All administrators viewed this role as critical to advancing the professional skills of teachers and achievement of students. Teachers were appreciative of the support they received and two of the four requested more time with the coach in the future. Currently, administrators at this setting are discussing the possibility of adding the position of a full-time literacy coach at the middle-high school level. This new position would serve to support the current research findings as well as promote prior studies that embrace the expertise of literacy coaches as system leaders who play a vital role in bringing about sustainable system-wide reform (Fullan & Knight, 2011; International Reading Association, 2012, National

Association of Secondary School Principals, 2016; National Council of Teachers of English, 2013).

Dialogical teaching. Findings suggested that learning transpired through dialogical teaching (Shor & Freire, 1987) between the coach and participants that was personal and collaborative. The coach met with teachers and administrators in groups and individually to discuss what was known and unknown about literacy, in the context of their disciplines and students. Learning happened in the moment and rested in the actual experiences of the participants and specific needs of the students based on their current realities. Through inquiry and reflection both the coach and participants acted critically to transform teaching practices to reflect current classroom conditions (1987). Findings suggested that teachers responded well to literacy coaching in situ as a nonevaluative approach to professional development. Respectful dialogue between the participants reflected trust which promoted openness, questioning, and problem solving in non-authoritative ways.

Dialogical teaching substantiated the need for face-to-face time with learners. Communication on-site proved more beneficial than correspondence in email or by phone. Following each visit, the coach noticed a lack of communication with many participants which impeded forward movement, in some instances, until the next scheduled visit. One participant rarely communicated with the coach off-site. Yet, classroom visits were always positive and productive. Rich dialogue occurred, questions were pondered, and problems were addressed in the moment. When this participant failed to complete the follow-up questionnaire, even after several follow-up reminders, the coach pondered whether an interview might have been a better method for retrieving genuine, rich feedback. At the same time, Shor and Freire (1987) argue that if dialogical relationships are truly genuine, then participants should not feel compelled to

say anything. In this case, the coach came to appreciate silence as an authentic response that required no further explanation.

Finally, dialogue promoted personal exchanges between the coach, teachers, and administrators that addressed the academic and social justice needs of the diverse learning populations in this setting (Shields, 2010). As the coach moved within the middle-high school setting, from classroom to classroom, critical consciousness (Freire, 1993) was raised about current teaching practices as they related to classroom needs, behaviors, and differentiated learning (2010).

Findings indicated that in most cases, teacher participants were receptive to facing the academic and behavioral challenges that existed within their classroom populations. But, they were not necessarily clear about how to differentiate instruction to support varying needs. Together, the coach and teachers discussed ways to scaffold instruction and personalize learning to create classroom environments that were more inclusive, democratic, and equitable for all learners (Shields, 2010).

Collaboration. Collaborating with participants in whole group, small group, and individual meetings was foundational to the practice of literacy coaching in situ. This approach to learning was socially situated, where participants interacted to construct and assimilate new knowledge about 21st century multiliteracies (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in McLeod, 2007). Vygotsky's (1978) theory of Social Constructivism fostered the development of problem solving skills as participants introduced and applied new practices in their specific disciplines.

Working collaboratively nurtured relationships and promoted camaraderie according to one administrator. The coach served to bridge communication between teacher participants and

administrators by promoting clarity about ELA standards, unit and lesson plans, and overall expectations about integrating literacy into content learning.

Collaboration also served to promote Growth Mindset (Dweck, 2006) amongst teacher participants by encouraging them to take risks and attempt new literacy practices with an on-site expert to support them. During data collection, the coach was mindful of using language and providing feedback during dialogue that was encouraging and promoted ways to work through challenges (2006). Introducing personal narrative as a hook to student learning was a novel approach that, while exciting, caused apprehension in some cases. One teacher reported that students appeared bored while listening to the audio. When the teacher expressed reluctance to continue, the coach suggested engaging the students in tasks while listening. Jotting questions and stopping along the way to pair-share, to keep students interested, were suggested strategies for keeping students involved in the personal narrative. Follow-up emails from the coach provided encouragement and support to teachers when the coach wasn't on-site. This online collaboration served to field questions and push through challenges with student writing assignments and projects, so participants wouldn't get discouraged.

Research Question 2: How can storytelling spark student interest when learning content material? and, Research Question 3: How does storytelling impact student engagement and act as a catalyst for project-based, self-directed learning?

The teachers provided rich data describing how they integrated storytelling into disciplinary learning. Teachers and administrators all agreed that storytelling provided an authentic hook that engaged most students in content learning. Student feedback to teachers was overwhelmingly positive and most supported a genuine interest in the narratives and subject matter (Verhallen, Bus, & de Jong, 2006, as cited in Glonek & King, 2014). These findings

supported the work of Simmons (2006), who promotes storytelling as the oldest and most powerful tool of influence. Teachers and administrators agreed that SPI (Story Preservation Initiative, 2017) audio recordings of personal narratives provided a novel approach to learning that inspired interest in content in ways that lectures, PowerPoints, and textbooks couldn't achieve (Simmons, 2006). Once engaged, students showed interest that led to sustained engagement in the topic.

Teachers also reported that project-based learning experiences promoted ongoing motivation for study of the topic (Cushman, 2014) which led to deeper learning. Three of the four secondary teachers were studying birds to greater and lesser degrees in their content classes. These teachers and their administrators associated engagement in the topic of birds to be associated with behaviors they observed inside and outside the classroom. Sustained attention during classroom learning; comparing birdcalls at lunch; identifying birds outside the window; waiting for birds to appear at the feeders; excitement about an upcoming nature walk and then disappointment when it was canceled; bringing in related books from home; and independently studying birds and nature outside of school, were cited as examples of student engagement in learning. Some students independently researched topics related to birds that moved beyond the classroom curriculum. For example, one student studied Rachel Carson's work on DDT and its devastating effect on the bird population. This raised awareness about the environment and expanded student learning so they held a broader view of the topic.

Implications

There are several implications from this single case study that are noteworthy. Most importantly, the teachers and administrators in this setting viewed the practice of secondary literacy coaching in situ as a promising professional development practice. Providing coaching

on-site positively impacted transformative teaching practices by providing literacy instruction that was authentic and personalized. This promoted both teacher and student acquisition of 21st century multiliteracies. As a result, this district is presently considering the addition of a full-time literacy coach at the middle-high school for the next academic school year. This action validates prior research that promotes the inclusion of on-going, embedded professional development models as a means of creating sustainable change (Biancarosa, 2012; Cantrell & Calloway, 2008; Gross, 2012). It also supports the work of other school leaders who have looked to literacy coaches to provide essential leadership and support for school and district-wide literacy reform with the purpose of improving student achievement (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2009).

Another implication of this study is that teachers benefitted from literacy coaching practices that were nonevaluative and collaborative. It's important for the coach's role to remain nonevaluative, so that partnerships with the teachers can remain trusting. Promoting dialogical teaching practices removed any form of authority which nurtured mutual respect and promoted genuine collaboration (Shor & Freire, 1987). A concern raised by participants was the lack of communication that occurred when the coach was off-site. Finding time for teachers during the school day to work directly with the coach is key to improving instructional practice.

Examining the academic needs and cultural conditions of the school and district raised greater awareness about societal factors impacting student performance. This dialogue was beneficial in identifying areas of relative weakness in the school population that the coach could address with teachers. The coach supported participants with creating learning environments that were more accessible for students by guiding them with differentiated

teaching practices designed to meet the needs of all learners. This finding supports the work of Shields (2010) who advocates for “effecting change in one’s frame of reference” (p.565).

Educational neuroscience author, Dr. David Sousa (2016), advises educators to adapt their instruction to keep students’ brains engaged and attentive. Another key implication in this study was the importance of gaining and sustaining student interest in content lessons. Storytelling proved to be an authentic approach to disciplinary learning that provided real and relevant connections for students. This approach served to capture the attention of the students which promoted further engagement in learning that was project-based (Cushman, 2014). It also supported the prior research of Sousa (2016) who encourages teachers to develop in-depth learning projects that motivate students for longer periods of time as they investigate topics that build critical and creative problem-solving skills. Storytelling engaged students emotionally which served to sustain attention and drive their learning. This approach increased the likelihood that content knowledge would be stored in long term memory and be remembered (2016).

Another powerful implication of this study is that it provides a field guide for administrators and educators attempting to address adolescent literacy and the crisis in students’ acquisition of 21st century competencies (Rothman, 2012). An escalating number of students continue to exit high school unprepared for postsecondary educational programs and the workforce. School leaders are being called to action to find ways of improving the literacy achievement of today’s youth. Literacy coaching in situ provides a doorway to address this situation through hands-on support. Embracing the role of secondary literacy coaching can serve to support secondary teachers with the new demands of the *College and Career Readiness Standards* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) and the implementation of the

English Language Arts (ELA) *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Findings from this study can also serve to guide practitioners in the field with enhancing 21st century literacy practices for teachers and students.

Recommendations for Action

Recommendations for action stem from an in-depth exploration of current literature on the role of embedded literacy coaching at the secondary level, and the use of storytelling as a catalyst to engage students in content learning. Recommendations are also a result of data analysis and findings that were illuminated during this study.

- District and secondary administrators should strongly consider the role of literacy coaching in situ as an alternative approach to professional development that is real, relevant, and personalized. This approach endorses ongoing, consistent communication and collaboration between the coach, teachers, and administrators in an effort to support the growing challenges of teaching 21st century learners.
- District and secondary administrators should work collaboratively with the coach to examine the factors impacting students' learning that occurs beyond the classroom and reflect the broader conditions in which they live. Once identified, weak content should be targeted and efforts should be made to support the community of learners as a whole, with the intention of making sustainable changes that lead to greater learning.
- Literacy coaches working in states that have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), should support secondary teachers with identifying and

integrating ELA standards into instruction that naturally connect to their discipline of study.

- Secondary teachers should seek novel approaches, like storytelling, to engage students in authentic disciplinary learning that sustains attention and deepens knowledge. Increasing experiences that are project-based would also serve to integrate and extend learning beyond the classroom curriculum.
- Administrators and teachers should consider ways to address the literacy needs of adolescents in academically diverse student populations, by creating learning environments that are more equitable and that reflect differentiated practices.

Although this case study focused on one small public middle-high school (grades 6-12) located in a rural New England community, the researcher believes this study has implications for other districts and school leaders in secondary education, literacy coaches looking to expand their current practices, and undergraduate education programs preparing secondary teachers to confront the many challenges of disciplinary learning.

Literacy coaches choosing to promote dialogical teaching should be mindful that genuine collaboration requires honest communication that is nonevaluative. At times, communication may take the form of silence or minimal feedback which is an acceptable response if dialogue is genuine (Shor & Freire, 1987). In this study, the coach learned that a lack of verbal engagement during dialogue isn't necessarily negative. It reflects the dialogic approach to teaching and learning which is built upon trust. For trust to be established, learners shouldn't feel pressured to speak or respond if they don't have something to contribute (1987).

Recommendations for Further Study

Research on literacy coaching at the secondary level is quite limited (Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2009) which supports replicating this study with changes and extending this study in a variety of ways. Below are some recommendations for further study:

First, it would be important to replicate a similar study with a larger pool of participants in a similar setting and include other content disciplines to further examine the literacy challenges confronting teachers and adolescents at this grade level.

The researcher found the focus group discussion with administrators to be especially enlightening. Engaging in a discussion with teachers or conducting individual interviews might provide more insightful feedback than a questionnaire. Feedback from the questionnaire was valuable, but one teacher participant chose not to complete it. This caused the researcher to ponder whether a questionnaire was the best tool for gaining rich feedback in this qualitative study.

Prior research indicates that instituting literacy coaching at the secondary levels has been met with much resistance due to school culture, lack of administrative support, the beliefs and feelings of the individuals involved, as well as the willingness of content teachers to seek ongoing professional development (Gross, 2012). This study benefitted from a supportive administration who was actively engaged in the literacy coaching process and facilitated the coach's work with teachers. It would be interesting to replicate this study in a larger setting with a supportive administration to see if the overall findings positively impact teacher practices and student learning.

Replicating a study that either incorporates different personal narratives from the SPI (Story Preservation Initiative, 2017) collection, or integrates other forms of storytelling, would

serve to reinforce the validity and reliability of using this ancient art to hook students and engage them in learning.

Finally, the researcher recommends replicating this study, but introducing a different approach to content learning that could support secondary teachers with novel strategies that ignite adolescent interest and engagement in learning.

Limitations

The design of this case study included limitations which may have affected the outcomes. The most prominent limitation in this study was researcher bias. Because all facets of the study were derived from the researcher's thinking and choices, researcher subjectivity was present. Moving the study to a neighboring district helped the researcher remain more neutral and objective, minimizing preconceived ideas and opinions. The researcher was on alert to be aware of purposeful or inadvertent favoring or skewing of methodology and data collection based on personal preferences. This included analyzing and interpreting data at face value without manipulating results; preparing focus group questions and teacher questionnaires objectively with review by nonparticipants; and by ensuring that participants were ready and willing to take part in the study. Minimizing researcher bias was also enhanced by gathering information from several sources using the method of triangulation. This process involved collecting data through a variety of sources including documentation artifacts, field observation notes, written reflections, a focus group discussion, and questionnaires. Analytical memos also helped to ensure that data was examined from different viewpoints. A final preventative measure taken was having the document reviewed by an outside source to check for researcher bias.

Another key limitation was the scope of the study, was its restriction to a small research sample in a rural New England community. In this case, the focus was on four middle-high

school content teachers and three administrators within one site, who expressed interest in exploring new literacy practices to enhance student engagement in learning. Given these parameters, generalization is limited and can't provide broader claims as would findings based on data on large populations. The study has the potential to be transferable if similar districts and middle-high school settings choose to implement literacy coaching in situ, or if secondary teachers choose to apply storytelling as an engagement strategy in their own classrooms.

Summary

Professional development from literacy coaches that is ongoing and on-site has proven successful at the elementary school levels but the literature reveals a gap in using similar professional development models at the secondary school levels. A growing crisis in adolescent literacy, the rigorous demands of College and Career Ready Standards and Assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), and the newly adopted Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), has schools and districts in the United States turning to literacy coaches to support leadership at all levels of education K-12. Instituting literacy coaching in the natural setting at the secondary level is a model that is embraced in other countries and supports the growing use of literacy coaches as transformative leaders (Fullan & Knight, 2011). As instruments of change (2011), the coach's role has the potential to positively impact both high school content teaching practices and student engagement in multiple literacies.

It is clear from this study that secondary literacy coaching in situ is a promising educational practice that supported content teachers with embedding literacy into their disciplines. Findings also supported the role of the coach as a transformative leader whose work

has the potential to positively impact both high school content teaching practices and student engagement in multiple literacies.

This study highlighted the need for administrators to support secondary educators with professional development models that are real and relevant. It also revealed the need for teachers to engage in trusting relationships with a literacy expert who can guide their practice in non-threatening ways. Together, the coach and teachers worked to transform literacy practices by introducing storytelling as a novel approach to content learning. Students showed interest and remained engaged in learning that was project-based which broadened their perspectives and opened their minds to wider world views.

As a result of this study, this school district is currently considering the addition of a full-time literacy coach at the middle-high school next year. This action validates prior research that promotes the inclusion of on-going, embedded professional development models as a means of creating sustainable change (Biancarosa, 2012; Cantrell & Calloway, 2008; Gross, 2012). It also supports the work of other school leaders who have looked to literacy coaches to provide essential leadership and support for school and district-wide literacy reform with the purpose of improving student achievement (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2009). The researcher hopes that this action will be realized, so that the work that has begun in one rural New England community will not only continue, but will spread for the benefit of adolescents who are faced with literacy challenges as 21st century learners. One participant in the study summed up their experience in the following way; *I think it would be helpful to have a literacy coach as a position at my school to help teachers create lessons aligned with literacy standards and work with teachers and students at all different grade levels.*

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APPENDIX A

Invitation Email (Teacher)

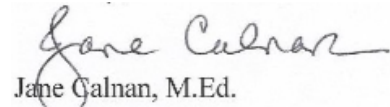
Dear Teacher,

I am conducting a qualitative case study on literacy coaching at the secondary level and the use of storytelling as a method to engage students in content learning between January 2017 and May 2017. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I have outlined the details of this study in the attached consent form and explained what would be expected of you as a participant.

After reviewing the attached document entitled, University of New England Consent for Participation in Research, if you feel comfortable participating in this study, kindly respond to this email to let me know your decision. If you choose to participate, I will arrange a time in December or early January to read the informed consent letter with you and we will both sign it.

If you have any questions at this time, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Jane Galnan, M.Ed.

jcalnan@une.edu

603-400-9501 (cell)

APPENDIX B

Invitation Email (Administrator)

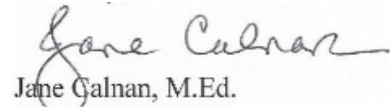
Dear Administrator,

I am conducting a qualitative case study on literacy coaching at the secondary level and the use of storytelling as a method to engage students in content learning between January 2017 and May 2017. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I have outlined the details of this study in the attached document and explained what would be expected of you as a participant.

After reviewing the attached document entitled, University of New England Consent for Participation in Research, if you feel comfortable participating in this study, kindly respond to this email to let me know your decision. If you choose to participate, I will arrange a time in December or early January to read the informed consent letter with you and we will both sign it.

If you have any questions at this time, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Jane Galnan, M.Ed.

jcalnan@une.edu

603-400-9501 (cell)

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent (Teacher)

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Secondary Literacy Coaching: A Transformative Journey
A Study of the Conditions and Factors Needed to Support Secondary Teachers and Enhance Student Engagement in Learning by Incorporating Storytelling into Content-Area Instruction

Principal Investigator:

Jane Calnan, M. Ed.
University of New England
Doctoral Candidate, Ed.D.
jcalnan@une.edu; (603-400-9501)

Advisor:

Dr. Grania Holman
University of New England
gholman@une.edu; (678-234-2414)

Dear Potential Study Participant:

You have been invited to participate in a study that documents teacher perceptions of literacy coaching at the secondary level and the integration of storytelling as a method to enhance student engagement in learning. In this study, professional development and literacy coaching support will be provided to educators participating in *Story Preservation Initiative's* Learning Lab projects. The use of storytelling in content-area subjects and student engagement in learning will be examined.

The goal of this study is to contribute to current research that supports secondary literacy coaching as a promising practice. It also will provide valuable insights on the use of storytelling as a methodology for enhancing student engagement in content-area subjects.

The purpose of using a questionnaire with teachers is to collect data that captures your perceptions and lived experiences as a participant in this study. Your views with regards to literacy coaching at the secondary level, and the use of personal narratives to ignite student engagement in learning, will provide the researcher with new insights on the topic under study.

Please read this form. You may also request that it be read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study now, during, or after the project is complete by speaking with the principal investigator, Jane (Jennie) Calnan (jcalnan@une.edu, 603-400-9501).

As you prepare to participate, please be advised of the following:

Who will be in this study?

- Approximately five middle/high school teachers participating in *Story Preservation Initiative* Learning Lab. These teachers are highly qualified in their content area or discipline of study.

What will I be asked to do?

- If you choose to participate, the researcher will meet with you approximately three times between January and March to provide the following levels of on-site literacy coaching support:
 - Level 1 involves conversations and professional development opportunities surrounding the use of *Story Preservation Initiative* (SPI) Learning Lab.
 - Level 2 includes co-planning with teachers to develop lessons and projects using SPI resources and curricular materials.
- During the study, documentation artifacts and field observation notes will be gathered that include professional development materials, lesson plans, meeting minutes, SPI resources, and researcher reflections.
- At the end of our time together, teachers will be asked to complete an on-line questionnaire about their perceptions and experiences surrounding secondary literacy coaching and storytelling as a method of student engagement. You may decide to withdraw your participation at any time, and you are not obligated to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with.
- The questionnaire, documentation artifacts, and field notes will be collected and analyzed.
 - Please note that the Institutional Review Board at the University of New England may request to review research materials.
- After an analysis is written, you will be allowed to read it and respond to it before the final draft is composed.
- Your participation is voluntary, and your responses are confidential.
- Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University of New England or your employer.
- If you choose not to participate, there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason.

- If you choose to withdraw from the research, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- Your name, institution’s name, and all identifying information will be removed, in accordance with Federal Laws surrounding student records. No individually identifiable information will be collected.
- There are no foreseeable risks or hazards to your participation in this study.
- There are no financial benefits to your participation in this research. Your participation will, however, indirectly inform educational leaders, educators, literacy coaches, and reading specialists of important secondary literacy teaching practices.
- You can decide whether or not you want to participate. *Kindly make your decision within two weeks of receipt of this invitation.*

A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least three years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location off school property that only the principal investigator will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.

If you would like a copy of the completed research project, you may contact the principal researcher directly.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call:

Olgun Guvench, M.D., Ph.D.
 Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board
oguvench@une.edu or irb@une.edu
 (207) 221-4171

You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant’s Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

Participant’s signature/Legally authorized representative Date

Printed name

Researcher's Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Researcher's signature

Date

Jane Calnan, Doctoral Student

University of New England's Educational Leadership Program

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent (Administrator)

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Secondary Literacy Coaching: A Transformative Journey
A Study of the Conditions and Factors Needed to Support Secondary Teachers and Enhance Student Engagement in Learning by Incorporating Storytelling into Content-Area Instruction

Principal Investigator:

Jane Calnan, M. Ed.
University of New England
Doctoral Candidate, Ed.D.
jcalnan@une.edu; (603-400-9501)

Advisor:

Dr. Grania Holman
University of New England
gholman@une.edu; (678-234-2414)

Dear Potential Study Participant:

You have been invited to participate in a study that documents administrators' and teachers' perceptions of literacy coaching at the secondary level and the integration of storytelling as a method to enhance student engagement in learning. In this study, professional development will be provided to educators participating in *Story Preservation Initiative's* Learning Lab projects. The use of storytelling in content-area subjects and student engagement in learning will be examined.

The goal of this study is to contribute to current research that supports secondary literacy coaching as a promising practice. It also will provide valuable insights on the use of storytelling as a methodology for enhancing student engagement in content-area subjects.

The purpose of using a Focus Group Discussion with administrators is to create a candid conversation that addresses, in depth, your perceptions and insights with regards to literacy coaching at the secondary level, and the use of storytelling to ignite student engagement in learning. Your opinions and perspectives will provide the researcher with a more complete and revealing understanding of the issues under study.

Please read this form. You may also request that it be read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate,

document your decision. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study now, during or after the project is complete by speaking with the principal investigator, Jane Calnan (jcalnan@une.edu, 603-400-9501).

As you prepare to participate, please be advised of the following:

Who will be in this study?

- Approximately three administrators will be recruited including the district Curriculum Coordinator and two middle/high building principals;
- Each has been purposefully selected based on this district's involvement with integrating *Story Preservation Initiative* Learning Lab into content-area classes.

What will I be asked to do?

- If you choose to participate, the researcher will meet with you approximately three times between January and March to provide the following levels of on-site literacy coaching support:
 - Level 1 includes conversations and professional development opportunities with administrators surrounding literacy coaching at the secondary level and the use of *Story Preservation Initiative* (SPI) Learning Lab.
 - Level 2 involves supporting the researcher with coordinating efforts between the administrators and teachers related to scheduling meetings, co-planning sessions, lesson and project development, and the use of SPI resources and curricular materials.
- During the study, documentation artifacts and field observation notes will be gathered that include professional development materials, lesson plans, meeting minutes, SPI resources, and researcher reflections. The documentation artifacts and field notes will be collected and analyzed.
- At the end of the study, administrators will be asked to engage in a Focus Group Discussion with the researcher to gather perceptions and insights surrounding secondary literacy coaching and storytelling as a method of student engagement. Your participation is voluntary, and your responses are confidential. The focus group discussion will involve the following:
 - One 1-hour on-site discussion in a mutually agreeable, permissive location that assures a level of privacy;
 - The discussion will involve open-ended responses to questions related to the topic of study;

- You may decide to withdraw your participation at any time, and you are not obligated to answer any questions or engage in any discussion that you are not comfortable with;
 - The discussion will be recorded and transcribed using a professional transcription service. The recording of the discussion will be kept on a password-protected computer. All notes will be securely stored and only accessible to the researcher;
 - Once transcription has occurred, member checking will take place so that administrators can establish validity of the account;
 - During data analysis, participant confidentiality will be protected by replacing names with pseudonyms;
 - After the data has been analyzed and interpreted, administrators will have a second opportunity to review and check the analysis and provide feedback;
 - At the conclusion of this research, all recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.
 - Please note that the Institutional Review Board at the University of New England may request to review research materials.
- All research findings will be presented to participants.
 - You can decide whether or not you want to participate. *Kindly make your decision within two weeks of receipt of this invitation.*
 - Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University of New England or your employer.
 - If you choose not to participate, there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
 - You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason.
 - If you choose to withdraw from the research, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
 - Your name, institution's name, and all identifying information will be removed, in accordance with Federal Laws surrounding student records. No individually identifiable information will be collected.

- There are no foreseeable risks or hazards to your participation in this study.
- There are no financial benefits to your participation in this research. Your participation will, however, indirectly inform educational leaders, educators, literacy coaches, and reading specialists of important secondary literacy teaching practices.

A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least three years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location off school property that only the principal investigator will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.

If you would like a copy of the completed research project, you may contact the principal researcher directly.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call:

Olgun Guvench, M.D., Ph.D.
 Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board
oguvench@une.edu or irb@une.edu
 (207) 221-4171

You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant’s Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

Participant’s signature/Legally authorized representative Date

Printed name

Researcher’s Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Researcher’s signature Date

Jane (Jennie) Calnan, Doctoral Student
 University of New England’s Educational Leadership Program

APPENDIX E

Questionnaire (Teachers)

(Adapted from Cantrell, S., Burns, L., and Callaway, P. (2009). Middle- and high-school content area teachers' perceptions about literacy teaching and learning. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 48, 76–94).

Directions: Please provide feedback to the following open response questions. Use details and evidence to support your thinking if/when appropriate.

1. What is your area of teacher certification?
2. Tell me about the content or topic of study you are teaching in the class where you integrated storytelling.
3. Tell me about the personal narrative you chose to integrate and its connection to your topic of study.
4. Do you feel that using storytelling, as a catalyst, engages students in content learning?
How so? How not?
5. Did the use of storytelling help to increase the rigor and relevance of the material you are teaching? How so? How not?
6. How did the students respond to the personal narrative? Were they interested and engaged? How so? How not?
7. How did the project integrate the English Language Arts standards into content instruction?
8. Did storytelling provide an authentic literacy activity that supported student learning of the content standards? How so? How not?
9. Has working with a literacy coach enhanced your literacy teaching practices? How so?
How not?

10. Do you feel that middle/high school literacy coaching in situ (on-site) contributed to your students' acquisition of 21st century literacy skills and practices? How so? How not?

11. Please feel free to add other comments that were not addressed in this questionnaire.

Thank you for your time and for sharing your reflections.

This information contributes to the understanding of current teaching practices and the use of storytelling as an authentic literacy methodology.

APPENDIX F

Focus Group Discussion Guide (Administrators)

Time:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Jane Calnan, Doctoral Student

Focus Group Participants/Positions:

Questions: (Adapted from Cantrell, S., Burns, L., and Callaway, P. (2009). Middle- and high-school content area teachers' perceptions about literacy teaching and learning. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 48, 76–94).

1. Did literacy coaching as an in situ (on-site) professional development model support the needs of secondary teachers during this research study? How so? How not?
2. What factors or conditions are necessary to support literacy coaching at the secondary level (Grades 6-12) in your district?
3. What role can secondary teacher's play in helping students acquire and practice literacy skills?
4. What did you learn (if anything) during your district's participation in this project that shaped your thinking about literacy and learning?
5. How do you know when students are engaged in learning?
6. Do you feel that using storytelling during content-area instruction increases student engagement and enthusiasm for learning? How so? How not?

7. Do you feel that listening to the personal narratives of relevant, accomplished people can enhance student motivation and support deeper learning of the subject matter? How so? How not?
8. Do you feel that using storytelling as part of content-area instruction made a difference in the teachers' enthusiasm for teaching? How so? How not?
9. Please feel free to add other comments or reflections that were not addressed in this discussion.

Thank you for your time and for sharing your reflections.

This information contributes to the understanding of current teaching practices and the use of storytelling as an authentic literacy methodology. Feel free to contact me at any time with questions or concerns.

