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NINTH GRADE STUDENT REACTION  
TO USING SUMMARIZATION AND ANNOTATION

by

Teresa Marie Farrand

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Teaching

Hamline University  
Saint Paul, Minnesota  
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To my mother who always told me I could do anything. Susan, my sister, without whom I would never have had the courage to try. Family and friends for their encouraging words and support, most especially Lisa Day, who prompted me to move, and Aunt Margaret, whose prodding, encouragement and late night porch-sits saw me through those first two years of this program. My Advisor Dr. Johnson, without whom I would have been lost and my committee for their help and encouragement. Finally, but not last, my husband Jim, whose unwavering support and encouragement these last two years has seen me through to the end of this part of the journey. Thank you. I love you all.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

#### **Chapter Outline**

As the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year dawned, I began to prepare my lessons incorporating some reading strategies into my lesson plans. As many of my high school students have low comprehension when they read, instruction must include some of the basic reading strategies, such as summarization, annotation and definition of words using context clues. My capstone question grows out of my questions that arise each year about the teaching of reading strategies and is How does a group of ninth grade students describe their reaction to two reading strategies (summarization and annotation)? My question is even more important given the impact of the Common Core Standards on the language arts curriculum.

The state where I currently teach has become one of the 48 states that has adopted the Common Core standards (The NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2017). These new standards have the potential to radically change the education landscape (Porter, McMaken, Hwang & Yang, 2011). Several experts (Schmoker, 2011) have expressed concern over the changes the Common Core Standards will make and the claims made by the writers of the standards. For example, Michael Schmoker (2011) has several concerns about the new standards. While he likes certain parts of the standards, he believes that there are too



many standards to be taught in a single year and the language of the standards themselves is imprecise. He reserves his strongest opinions for the Language Arts standards.

Schmoker (2011) disagrees with the standards because they illustrate a notion that literacy consists of mastering a set of skills. He believes rather than instituting one hundred standards, Language Arts standards should be limited to students being able to make inferences, make conclusions, solve conflicting ideas in the text, solve open-ended problems and support and break down arguments (Schmoker, 2011).

In keeping with Schmoker's idea of narrowing the standards, I am narrowing my focus to two reading strategies: annotation (called close reading by some), and summarization. In order for students to be able to either perform the narrower standards proposed by Schmoker (2011) or the Standards for Excellence, as the Common Core Standards have been renamed here in in the state where I teach, students must be able to master and use these strategies with independence regardless of the text they are presented to read. Good readers often perform these strategies to aid or check their comprehension automatically in some form. Readers who struggle with comprehension may not know how to use these strategies effectively and automatically to check their comprehension as they read.

In my professional experience, because I now teach high school English, (English 9, English 10 and Multicultural Literature), teaching some of the basic strategies becomes more difficult for two reasons. One, students of this age group often feel that they should know these strategies, and two, students may be embarrassed to admit that they do not have an accurate grasp on the use of these strategies. My capstone question grows out of my questions that arise each year about the teaching of reading strategies and my own

experience as a learner and my ease in learning to read as compared to that of the students I now teach.

I do not remember when I learned to read, or where I picked up good reading habits. I realize now that throughout my elementary years, my teachers must have taught me strategies for figuring out the context of an unknown word and ways to improve my comprehension, but those methods have become so much a part of my everyday life that I do not remember not being able to use those reading strategies. As a student, I simply could not understand how someone could have trouble reading or hate something like reading. The ease with which I learned to read also is connected to my choice of professions.

It seems fitting then, that I wanted to be an English teacher. The written word has always fascinated me for its ability to take me away to foreign lands and worlds of fantasy. I wanted to share my love of reading and the books that I cherished with eager young minds and spend time in class discussing the characters and plot. In 2011, I began teaching and was hit with the cold reality that some of my students did not have the skills of a good reader and therefore reading was a chore, or they hated it, at least in part because they were unsuccessful. As a result of my teaching experience, I began to ask myself then and every year since as I begin a new school year, what strategies help make a reader successful? What are some strategies that every successful reader employs that aid their success? My continued experience as a teacher and my interest in different learner's reaction to the teaching of reading strategies is my path to the capstone question.

## **Chapter Outline**

In this chapter, my road to my interest in this topic will be discussed. In the section “Road to Reality,” the dispelling of my fantasies of my first teaching position is discussed as well as the problems I encountered in those first few weeks as a teacher. As my fantasy bubble burst, I needed to figure out where to go next. In “Road to the Future,” the road to my capstone question is detailed as well as what I hope to learn from the answer to the question. In “Significance to of the Capstone,” the wider goals of the capstone are discussed, as well as the possibilities outside of my subject area is discussed.

### **Road to Reality**

In 2010, as I began to prepare for my first year teaching sixth grade, I was firmly ensconced in what Harry Wong (2009) would call the fantasy stage. I was sure that I would impart my love of reading and the books I love to read on my eager students. As I was coming into teaching as a second career, on one level, I knew I was in fantasyland, but I could not help it. As I began to plan lessons and activities, I operated under the assumption that all my students would love reading and be good readers, have working knowledge of various strategies to aid comprehension, thereby enabling us to have insightful discussions about the characters and the meaning of the text. I was happily choosing selections recommended by the textbook I was using at the time that I was sure would interest my students and motivate those thoughtful discussions and insightful questions. Needless to say in the first few weeks, my illusions were shattered and my students and I began the journey of teaching reading classes from a more realistic perspective.

As I continued my journey as a Language Arts teacher over the next five years,

changing first from middle to high school, and then moving locations from first Northern Minnesota to the suburbs of the Twin Cities and then to the rural south east, where I currently teach, I have noticed that while the locations have changed, student attitudes have largely remained the same. Most of my students when polled, read because teachers made them. If given the choice, many would rather do *anything* else than sit and read a book or complete a required reading assignment. I also noticed that during discussions, it was the same students that provided the insightful answers. There was another group of students that provided the basic answers and still another group who prayed that I would not call on them at all.

As it was the same scenario wherever I went, I began to really become intrigued by those silent students. What made them silent? I wondered if they were shy, simply did not read or if they were unable to answer the questions. Often when I called on them to illicit answers, they replied with “I read it, but I can’t remember what I read,” or “I did not understand what I read.” I began to see a pattern. I kept getting the same answers in all of my classes in the various schools where I taught regardless of location.

### **The Road to the Future**

In thinking about what I want to accomplish both with this research and in my classes, my main concern is the success of my students. I want them to feel successful in their reading. Without a strong foundation in reading, school is going to be very difficult for them in most of their academic classes. To be successful at reading, they need to have good comprehension. I keep asking myself, what aids in good comprehension and how can students measure their comprehension before coming into class? If a student does not understand the words used in a reading passage, they will not understand what

they have read. Annotating what they read can help students monitor their own understanding, and summarization is a way to check if students can articulate what they have read.

These are all strategies students were most likely taught in elementary and middle school. When I visited various classrooms and types of schools during my teacher coursework, I watched these strategies be taught. I had numerous discussions with teachers I observed, as well as colleagues about these various strategies. I often inquired not only if they had been taught, but also the methods on how they were taught. With my high school students, who have most likely been taught, but did not grasp how to use the strategies, I have a sticky problem. How do I remediate these strategies to high school students to build their reading confidence and not feeling successful because they do not understand how to use one or all of these strategies without making them feel less capable than their peers who perform these strategies with ease? More specifically, because I am teaching ninth graders, how will a group of my ninth grade students describe their reaction to two reading strategies (annotation, and summarization)? By better understanding my students' reactions to the strategies, I may better be able to frame the teaching of the remediation of the strategy. Additionally, I can better gauge their receptivity to being taught these strategies as an older student.

For the fall of 2017, I am teaching a ninth grade REP English class with students of varying ability levels. In my current position in a southeastern United States rural high school, we teach in blocks, with a new set of students each semester. When they pass this class, students have earned their English credit for their tenth grade year. I want to focus specifically on this age group because they generally have a better handle on the rigors of

high school and what it takes to succeed, and often have an idea of where they want to go after high school. In addition, there is no standardized test for this class, and therefore, I have more freedom to focus on what my students need to practice and perfect before moving on to American Literature in their junior year, where the stakes are high with a standardized test.

Now, as in the past, my silent students, are often what I refer to as a “past-your-eyes reader” because all the words merely passed their eyes, with no comprehension behind what they read. When a student is a “past-your-eyes” reading, they are unable to answer basic comprehension questions on the text. When they are questioned if the text has been read, they emphatically say they did read it, and are unable to give me reasons why they cannot answer the questions. Therefore, the two strategies that I will focus on forces the reader to slow down and check themselves for comprehension. The research performed will ask a group of ninth graders to describe their reaction to the two strategies, mentioned above.

### **Significance of the Capstone Topic to the Profession**

In my training to become a secondary Language Arts teacher, it was often discussed that my potential classes would contain readers with varying degrees of competence. I could never have imagined how varied those degrees of reading competence could be in a single class of ninth graders. By learning my students’ reactions to these two reading strategies I will be better able to understand how they feel about performing these strategies. By reviewing my research other teachers may understand how these strategies may be viewed and used in their classrooms. Hopefully, other teachers will learn from what I hope to accomplish with my research and from the

experience I gained from doing so. In addition, knowing students' familiarity with the strategies and then gauging their skill level, shows teachers student perception versus reality with how much practice students really need with these strategies to make them proficient at using them. Additionally, because literacy is required across the curriculum by the Common Core Standards, and those same two skills, summarization and annotation (close reading) are also required, being able to accurately gauge how students react and perform could be useful to other areas outside of English/Language Arts.

### **Chapter Summary**

Reading as a child was a favorite activity. I do not remember when I learned to read or how I became a good reader. I just simply remember the joy of curling up with the good book in my favorite chair and being absorbed into the story. I was baffled when someone told me they hated to read. I simply thought they were strange and of an unknown species.

As I started my first year teaching in 2011, I had visions of insightful discussions and a classroom filled with book lovers. Then reality hit. There were more of those book-haters that I first realized. Now as a teacher, I had to find strategies to help turn those haters into students who would at the very least tolerate a book. I felt at a loss because I had never been a struggling reader who did not know how to find context clues, summarize or annotate a text.

That is the driving idea behind this capstone. How does a group of ninth grade students describe their reaction to two reading strategies (summarization, and annotation)? These two strategies are essential not just in English class, but are keys to success in any discipline where students are required to read to understand the material.

In the pages follow, I will define what it means to be a struggling reader, how the selected strategies can aid in comprehension, various ways to implement the strategies

Chapter Two is the Literature Review, which reviews and discusses the research that informed my capstone question and the reading strategies chosen, as well as the implementation of those strategies during my research. Chapter Three discusses my research methodology including the demographics of the students who participated and the instruments used in data collection. Chapter Four details the findings of my research. Finally, Chapter Five discusses what was learned in the data collection process, my personal reflection of what I learned about my teaching and the ways that this research will inform my teaching in the future and where the research could be taken from where I left off.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

### **Chapter Overview**

In most English Language Arts classrooms, there are students who struggle with reading and do not read on grade level. In elementary school and even middle school, students may receive special pull-out time and/or other assistance to improve their reading skills. In my experience as an English teacher, I have observed that many students know that they do not read as well as their peers, and that not everyone receives this special help to improve their reading. The situation can worsen once students who struggle to read enter high school. As a high school English teacher, I am extremely aware of this population, and my capstone will explore how does a group of ninth grade students describe their reaction to two reading strategies (summarization and annotation)? Working as a high school English teacher, many of my students who struggled with reading as elementary students stop receiving extra assistant or it becomes minimal once they enter high school.

Unfortunately, often these high school students may still read below grade level, but often, because of no tested or identified disability, end up in mainstream classes. They have the label of a “struggling reader” and in my experience do not know how to get out from under it. The struggling readers that I work with often hate reading because of their lack of success with reading. Many of the struggling readers enrolled in the classes I teach are reading at one or more grade levels below their current grade level and do not have a learning or emotional disability diagnosis, nor receive special

education services. To address all my students who read below grade level, my capstone will focus on student reaction to strategies and techniques introduced in my class that may improve reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. These two areas of reading have been chosen because they can be applied cross-curricular and are often the areas where poor readers struggle most.

This chapter will review the purpose of this capstone and the research that informed both the capstone question and the way the research with the students was conducted. With the Common Core standards being enacted in the state where I teach, new expectations are being placed on students and teachers. In the section “New Reading Expectations for High School Graduates,” the new standards are discussed as they pertain to reading and what is expected of high school students. These standards may be difficult to meet for the struggling reader and these high standards, while important, are the cause of the interest in this capstone. Because the Common Core Standards are more rigorous than those in the past, average students are struggling to meet the new college and career readiness as discussed in the section “Students Are Not Meeting Standards and/or Are Not College and Career Ready.” The section shows through results of both state standardized tests and the ACT results that students are not meeting the standards set out for them and begs the question that if average students are not meeting the standards, then how is a struggling reader supposed to meet them? The subjects of this capstone are students in a remedial English class because that are classified as readers who struggle “Struggling Readers - Definition and Identity” gives researched definitions for the terms used in the capstone to solidify the meanings of the terms used in the capstone. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to research on the

strategies that will be used in this capstone. In the section “Reading Strategy: Annotation as Evidence as Close Reading,” the term “annotation” is defined, how the strategy can be used to show close reading of a text, and how it can bolster comprehension are discussed. Summarization of a text has often been used to check understanding. The section entitled “Strategies: Summarizing for Comprehension” discussed the purpose of summarizing and how it can be a way for the students and the teacher to monitor how the student understood a passage.

### **Purpose of this Capstone**

As can be seen from the evidence in the previous paragraphs, large numbers of students are not on target for the reading expectations set out by the Common Core (The NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2017). The Common Core’s rigor is leaving a substantial number of readers behind, some who may never reach that elusive target of “proficient” readers. Based on my seven years teaching reading and language arts, I am well aware of how as students get older, how they are seen by others matters more and more. In my experience, students know when they are placed in a lower reading class than their peers and are keenly aware of their lack of ability in this area.

This capstone seeks to ascertain how ninth grade students in a remedial reading class react and feel to being taught two strategies to help them improve their reading comprehension skills. Their attitude towards the strategies is important for the simple reason that action follows belief. If students have the attitude that they know what they are doing or believe they can do, they will. Since the Common Core (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2017) is here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future, students need

strategies they can use, manipulate and transfer to all reading situations to help them feel and be more successful in their reading, which ultimately will transfer to success in several areas of academic subjects. The ability to transfer these reading skills to other context area is important given higher expectations for high school graduates.

### **New Reading Expectations for High School Graduates**

The Common Core Standards (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2017), have become the controlling standards for education in 42 of the 50 states. They were conceived and drafted by a state-led effort of the National Governors Association for Best Practices due to the evidence collected that showed that what students were learning did not coincide with what would be demanded of them in college and the workforce. The Association collaborated with teachers, administrators and experts with the intent to “develop a clear and consistent framework” to “ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live” (CCSS, 2018), About the Common Core Standards, ¶ 1). The standards focus on requiring that students are college and career ready by the end of their high school careers.

According to the drafters of the Common Core, in order to ensure that students are college and career ready, the rigor of the English and Language Arts Standards has been dramatically increased. In Appendix A of the Common Core Standards, the authors state that the standards require that “students must be able to read and comprehend independently and proficiently the kinds of complex texts commonly found in college and career” (CCSS, 2018 p. 2). This means then that all readers, regardless of reading level or ability, are required to read texts that are similar in complexity to those they will

read in college.

The college and career ready goal hinges on students being able to read complex texts “independently and proficiently” (CCSS, 2018, p. 2). Because this is such a large component of the standards, the authors came up with a “model of text complexity which consists of three equally important parts” (CCSS, 2018 p. 3). The first of these dimensions for complexity is qualitative, which can be measured by a human reader. These aspects include levels of meaning, author’s purpose, and clarity of the writing. The second dimension required to determine complexity is quantitative, which is best measured by a computer.

Aspects of the quantitative dimension include word length and sentence length. Finally the third dimension for determining text complexity is reader and task considerations. This dimension considers things that are variable to specific readers, “such as motivation, knowledge and experiences” (CCSS 2018, p. 4). All three dimensions must be considered in determining a text’s complexity, its suitability for students, and meeting the requirements of the standards. Lexile level is often used to determine a text’s suitability for students.

According to Lexile.com (MetaMetrics, 2017) lexile level “involves a scale for measuring both reading ability and a text’s complexity” (Lexile, 2017, Making Test Scores, Actionable, ¶ 2). For text complexity, the lexile scale takes into account the “semantic and syntactic” features of a text. MetaMetrics (2017) claims that the lexile measures a reader’s skill level. When determining a text’s complexity according to the Common Core Standards’ (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2017) three-part dimension test, it seems that the Lexile Level Framework is similar to those requirements.

Lexile Levels (MetaMetrics, 2017) are an example of the increased rigor required by the Common Core Standards. Common Core has listed two different Lexile requirements for each grade level. For example, according to Appendix A of the standards, for grades 9-10 the Lexile levels are 960-1120. This means that students in ninth grade should be able to read proficiently and independently texts in this band. Additionally, the Common Core Standards require that students also read texts from the “Stretch Lexile Band” (MetaMetrics, 2017). The “stretch band” is the next level up for a reader that requires readers to stretch their abilities and skills (MetaMetrics, 2017). A ninth grade reader, therefore is required by the standards to read texts at a level above the current grade level.

By the end of the high school career according to the Common Core standards, readers should be able to read texts at the 1220 Lexile level and be stretched to read at the 1385 Lexile Level (MetaMetrics, 2017). If students can read at those levels proficiently and with independence, then according to the standards, those students are college and career ready. However, as described in the next section many students are not meeting these higher reading standards.

### **Students are Not Meeting New Standards and/or Not College and Career**

#### **Ready**

A main goal of the Common Core standards is for all students to be college and career ready by the time they leave high school. These standards, as discussed above, have very rigorous reading standards in place. To measure students’ mastery of the standards, individual states administer standardized tests throughout elementary, middle and high school. Also many students in high school opt to take the American College

Testing (ACT) test when applying to college as part of the administration process. In a large number of cases, the scores of students taking the standardized tests in reading, as well as those taking the ACT, are below the level needed to be considered proficient in the standards or college and career ready on the ACT.

In the state where the research took place, the standardized test for high school is referred to as the End of Course Test (EOC). The Language Arts EOCs are given in ninth and eleventh grades over two days, either at the end of a semester (if the class is a semester long) or near the end of the school year. The test, based on materials provided by the Department of Education in the state where the research took place, contains examinations for reading comprehension, grammar, and has several short as well as a longer writing components. As required by the laws in this state, the EOC grade count as 20% of the student's final grade in their ninth grade English class.

According to the Department of Education website in the state where the research took place in the Spring of 2016, 117,109 ninth graders were given the EOC across the state. Of all the students tested, only 41% tested as proficient readers or above. That same Department of Education also described how the Achievement Level Descriptor (ADL) "proficient reader" means that these students demonstrate the skills and knowledge for the grade level and are "on track for college and career readiness." In the Spring of 2016 only 22.5% of students tested scored at the ADL Beginning Learner stage which the state classifies as students who do not demonstrate proficiency and "need substantial support to ensure success in the next grade level and to be on track for college and career."

Additionally, 36.3% of students tested received the ADL of Developing Learner,

which states that the students demonstrated partial proficiency and “needs additional academic support” to be successful in the next grade and be college and career ready. According to these testing results, a large number of high school freshmen, despite the increased rigor of the standards, are not reading on grade level and therefore are not ready for the next level let alone “college and career ready.” In addition to state testing many of the students in the state where the research took place also complete the ACT.

Like other college-bound students many in this state also take ACT for the first time their junior year of high school and again their senior year to improve their scores as they begin to apply for college. Over the last few years record numbers of students in the United States are taking the ACT.

In 2016, over two million students took the test. Carlalee Adams, in her article for *Education Week* (2013), points out that there are separate tests for English, which tests grammar and rhetorical skills and a reading test which measures reading comprehension. Additionally, she states that the testing agency for the ACT developed College Readiness Benchmarks to predict “whether a student has a 75% chance at earning a ‘C’ or higher or an 80% chance of earning a ‘B’ or higher in a typical credit bearing college class” (Adams, 2013, p. 6).

In 2016, only 44% of students passed the reading section of the test and were considered college and career ready in that area (ACT, INC., 2016). Test takers, in the state where the research took place, fared slightly better with 46% passing the reading portion and being considered college and career ready in that area. However, while 46 % our students are passing the reading portion of the ACT that means that 54% are not. The



54% represents a large number of our graduating seniors. Graduating seniors who are planning on going to college but are not reading at a level commensurate with what is required at the college level. Graduating seniors who are reading below what is required for college are also likely to be or have been struggling readers at some point in their K-12 experience.

### **Struggling Readers – Definition and Identity**

Leigh A. Hall (2010) has done extensive research into the identities of struggling readers. The definition used by Hall in her paper “The Negative Consequences of Becoming a Good Reader: Identity Theory as a Lens for Understanding Struggling Readers, Teachers and Reading Instruction (2010) and used in this capstone defines struggling readers as readers who “typically read one or more grade levels below their current grade level but do not have an identified learning disability of any kind” (Hall, 2010, p. 1793). In this article, her focus is reading identity: how it is played out by the student and what effect a teacher’s perception of what makes a good reader has on a student’s reading identity. She also discusses how a teacher’s perceptions of the skills a good reader possesses greatly influences how a student sees herself as a reader in that class. Hall’s (2010) conclusions regarding teacher impact on student reading identity are discussed in the next paragraph.

Hall (2010) conducted a study of three struggling readers and three content area teachers through classroom observation and interviews over a year long period, and each teacher was from a different middle school. She had each teacher define what they felt were the skills a good reader possessed and then observed how the teachers taught those skills. Hall (2010) then interviewed the respective student from the classes of the

teachers involved in the research to discuss how the students felt about reading. The researcher discovered that middle school students were more interested in hiding their lack of skill than learning skills to be a better reader and the content being taught. Hall (2010) concluded that this need to protect an identity, along with a teacher's interpretation of students' desire to become good readers contributes to students marginalizing opportunities to become readers.

Hall continued her research in identity and more specifically, reading identity. In the research published in 2012, entitled *Rewriting identities: Creating spaces for students and teachers to challenge the norms of what it means to be a reader in school* she defines a "reading identity" as how capable individuals believe they are at comprehending texts, the value those readers place on their comprehension, and what it means to be a reader (Hall, 2012, p. 369 ). These reading identities are often constructed in terms of the level of skill a student has at working with an academic text. Hall (2010) states that students are very aware of what the assigned identities mean and how it relates to individual student's reading ability.

Hall (2012) also believes that the teaching of reading techniques to help students become better readers is irrelevant unless the student's identity is rewritten as it is the student who decides the type of reader she wants to become and what she is willing to do or not do (Hall, 2012, p. 370). According to Hall (2012) the rewriting of identities involves helping students discover who they truly are as readers and finding ways to engage them with texts. Through her research with one language arts middle school class over a school year and interviews with students, Hall (2012) discovered that students believed at the beginning of the year that it was the teacher's job to make them better

readers. Through extensive work throughout the year on what constitutes identity, how malleable identity can be, as well as reading strategies, the students in this study began to understand that they were in control of what their reading identities were and what they could become.

Hall (2012) discovered through her interviews that those “struggling readers” overwhelmingly asked to be given more challenging texts and requested more time in class to read them. Previous to this research, the students in this class felt that they had little control over what they read and craved being able to read the challenging texts of the classroom and self-selected texts that challenged them as well. The students over the course of the year began to see a balance between their knowledge and the knowledge and experience of the teacher that helped them grow and develop into reading identities they could be proud to demonstrate. Through Hall’s (2012) research and application in this classroom, students pushed themselves beyond their previous identities into the identities of skillful readers. Alvermann (2001) also looks at reading identities.

Alvermann (2001) compares a reader’s identity to H. G. Well’s (1904) short story “The Country of the Blind.” The main character, as the title suggests, lives in a country of blind people when he regains his sight as a result of a fall. The story details how the now sighted man is treated because he is viewed as different and somehow deficient because of his sight, which is different than the rest of the society. Alvermann (2001) uses the story as an analogy as to how struggling readers are often viewed by society and themselves as somehow different or deficient in some way.

The term struggling reader in Alvermann’s (2001) research is put through several lenses including the difference approach, the deprivation approach and the culture as

disability approach as a way to illustrate the various ways that culture of education views struggling readers. In her case study with Grady, an African-American boy, who was part of the subjects Alvermann (2001) was using for her research, Alvermann (2001) assumed that Grady would go to great lengths to avoid reading. Through his eyes, Alvermann (2001) came to understand that even she was not immune to categorizing someone in the institutional confines of a good reader. Grady reminded her that reading is not just a class, but something that is done every day in life.

Alvermann (2001) gives suggestions, based on her observations with Grady, to help those who have been labeled as struggling readers. She suggests reminding students that literacy is not as difficult as one may be led to believe, and they do it every day. Her second suggestion, echoes Hall (2012) in that it suggests ways can be found to help readers redefine their identities of themselves and how others perceive them. Lastly, Alvermann (2001) suggests that dialogue be started with students about what counts as reading when reading really counts. The value she sees in these activities and in her research is they demonstrate what culture not only constructs what counts as reading but who counts as a reader (Alvermann, 2001, p. 689).

In attempting to find a concise definition of the term “struggling reader,” I stumbled across these articles. These articles have transformed how I look at struggling readers and how to help them develop as readers. I had never considered that identity played a role in how students will apply themselves to become more adept at reading, and how my perception of those students affected how they see themselves and their abilities. I am keenly aware now of what my perceptions should be in order to help students become the readers they want to be. The next section will describe annotation as a

strategy that supports the struggling reader.

### **Reading Strategy: Annotation as Evidence of Close Reading**

As discussed above, the Common Core Standards (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2017) have upped the ante in not only the complexity of the texts that students must read, but also what students are required and should be able to do with those texts. For example, in the standards for excellence on the Department of Education website in the state where the research took place it describes how students are required to “determine a theme or central idea of a text . . . closely analyze its development over the course of a text, including how it emerges and is shaped or refined.” As a teacher of reading I know that in order to analyze a text with the depth to meet that standard, students must have more than a superficial understanding of a text. To have that deeper understanding, students must read that text more than once and be able to interact with text to develop that meaning and the message of the text. That is where annotation and close reading come into the reading experience.

Cynthia A. Dollins, in her article “Crafting Creative Non-Fiction: From Close Reading to Close Writing,” (2016) defines close reading as “a process that helps readers understand both the surface and deeper levels of complex texts” (p. 49). Close reading, is a process that helps readers work out the deeper meaning of a text. One way that I have my students practice with close reading is having them engage in annotation. In my class annotation is the written record of that process. As a teacher my view is that annotating is the reader’s thoughts, reactions, and ideas about what is happening in the text or the reader making sense of the material. Based on my professional view of annotating I consider it a close reading in written form. Supporting my view of annotation as a form

of close reading is Carol Porter-O'Donnell (2004).

In her article "Beyond the Yellow Highlighter: Teaching Annotation Skills to Improve Reading Comprehension," Carol Porter-O'Donnell asserts that annotating "helps readers reach a deeper level of engagement and promotes active reading" (2004, p. 82). She also states that the annotations are a "visible record of thoughts that emerge while making sense of the reading" (2004, p. 82). The author makes clear that this is very different from asking a student to highlight ideas or facts that may be important. For O'Donnell (2004) when a reader goes back to text that is simply highlighted, that reader may not remember the reason, without rereading, why that particular item was important. Annotation, conversely, because the student has written down notes or thoughts or ideas, can easily recollect the thought process and even deepen understanding when rereading the passage.

According to O'Donnell (2004) annotating slows reading down. In my experience as a reading teacher, many of my students, because they want to finish quickly, become "past your eyes readers" as one of my professors used to call them. They often do not retain what they have read or can recall only superficial details and miss the deeper meaning. Annotation, as O'Donnell (2004) found in her study, slows readers down and makes them "really have to read" (p. 87). In her research she found that her students made connections on a much deeper level when they annotated and began to be more active readers. A key take away from O'Donnell's (2004) research is that her students discovered that reading requires much more than simply looking at a page.

Annotation, for the purposes of this capstone, will be used by my students in

many different ways depending on the text. To begin, I will follow the model and structure set out by Christopher Lehman and Kate Roberts (2014) in their book *Falling in Love with Close Reading: Lessons for Analyzing Texts and Life*. Lehman and Roberts (2014) believe that to teach students to close read and annotate effectively, there must be a three part structure. This structure is “read through a lens. Use the lens to find patterns. Use the patterns to develop a new understanding” (2014, p. 7). Lehman and Roberts (2014) suggest starting simple so that students practice the strategy and then gradually increase the text complexity as the students get more comfortable with the strategy and what is expected of them as readers. According to the authors the goal with this structure is to have gradual release and independence for the students and for them to see how this structure can be used with any text and in any class.

Also, Matthew Brown (2007) in his article, “I’ll Have Mine Annotated, Please: Helping Students make Connections with Texts,” suggests using annotations to help students see connections between the text and their lives or other texts and media they have been exposed to. Brown (2007) “desires to have students enter into a conversation with the text,” (p. 73) and to “think about what they have read and then strive to make meaning of that text for themselves” (p. 73). To accomplish these goals, he has students first make connections to the text they are reading in all ways that are meaningful to them. Next Brown (2007) has them narrow down those annotations to one paragraph of a text and create annotations much like those in an annotated version of a Shakespeare text. In my class, we would start with making the connections and once those progressed, we would try making the annotations. Based on my review of close reading I conclude that my students will make meaning if they can see something of themselves in the text.

Another strategy that will be used to support struggling readers in my class is summarizing for comprehension.

### **Reading Strategy: Summarizing for Comprehension**

Writing has often been used as a strategy to help students in reading comprehension. Summarization of a text, either verbally or in writing, helps the reader identify key points of the piece. Wallace, Pearman, Hall, and Hurst (2007) in the article “*Writing for Comprehension*” defined summarization as condensing a large section of text into a smaller one. Summarizing also requires readers to paraphrase what the author says into their own words (Wallace et al., 2007). Readers who struggle may choose points to include in a summary based on personal preference. Training and practice are needed to help them pull the salient parts of the text to include in the summary. Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2001) agree that summarization is a useful tool to aid in comprehension in their book *Classroom Instruction that Works*.

According to these authors summarization requires that students must delete, keep, and substitute information regarding the text they have read. In order to do this, Marzano et al. (2001) note that the students must analyze the information fairly deeply. In order to summarize effectively, Marzano et al. (2001) also state that students must have more than a basic understanding of what the text says and its meaning to pull out main ideas and paraphrase the information into a coherent summary.

I have included summary as a strategy to help my struggling readers for several reasons. First, under the standards for the state in which the research took place, students are required to be able to determine the central idea of a text and provide an objective summary of the text. Secondly, summarization requires students to go through all the



stages of Bloom's Taxonomy (The Peak Performance Center, n.d.) from knowledge through evaluation because they have to make the decisions about what is important to include and what is superfluous information that does not need to be added. Finally, as a teacher I understand how summarizing is a skill that can be used across the curriculum and requires students to use reasoning skills and practice their writing.

Summarization is a strategy that takes practice for the students to do well, and there are many ways to have students summarize. Wallace, et al. (2007) have students read a section of text, discuss it with a neighbor and then together decide the main point of that section and write a main idea sentence on a sticky note. The process is repeated for the entire selection, and at the conclusion, students combine those sticky note sentences into a paragraph long summary.

A summarizing strategy I plan to use is "Somebody Wanted But So Then." I learned this strategy several years ago as a graduate student in my master's program at Hamline University. This strategy asks a reader to think about what a particular character wanted and what happened when that character went after that wanted. It simplifies conflict to a want, and the strategy allows students to see the effects of desires of different characters. For example, in the story, *Cinderella*, (Perrault, 1954) the stepmother does not want Cinderella to outshine her daughters, but Cinderella could not help but be pretty, so the stepmother forbids Cinderella from going to the ball. Cinderella gets help from the fairy godmother. This strategy breaks down the events and allows students to see the causes and effects of character's decisions. I generally use this to help students break down what happened in the various chapters of the novels we read.

## Summary of Chapter Two

With these new standards (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2017) come new challenges for students who struggle with reading. The new standards require (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2017) students to read more complex texts and engage in writing that uses strong evidence to support claims made. For many students comprehension of simple texts is difficult enough, and now they will be expected to interact with texts that may be several levels above their reading ability.

The first step toward success is to help readers change their identity (Hall, 2010) from one of a reader who struggles to a reader who can be successful. Until the students begin to see themselves from a different reader identity, reading strategies will be largely ineffective (Hall, 2012). Once the identity change has been started, then the work can begin on implementing on reading comprehension strategies such as summarization and looking for word definition in context. All of these strategies have benchmarks from the standards embedded in them. Students with practice can perform these strategies first on texts that are closer to their reading level and move up to more challenging texts as their skills increase. In Chapter Three, the research design will be described, along with data analysis, research setting and participants and limitations of the research design.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Research Design**

#### **Chapter Overview**

My capstone question is How does a group of ninth grade students describe their reaction to two reading strategies (summarization and annotation)? My interest in this question is linked to how reading has always been a part of my life. Whether for pleasure or the required reading for a class, I relished the feel of a book and the prospect of a new world or knowledge contained in those pages. As I began my first year teaching in 2011, I encountered students who would do anything rather than read, either because of lack of motivation and/or reading was difficult for them. Over the years, I have encountered students who did not use or were not comfortable with some basic strategies to aid in their comprehension.

In 2017 as I entered my third year teaching high school, I noticed common behaviors among the students in my English classes. For example, when asking students to summarize a passage or story, many do not show competency in writing a well-developed summary that contains all the necessary highlights of the passage. This also happens when reading a novel, I have noticed that a portion of my students have no skill at being active readers by annotating as they read. This capstone sought to help me explore how a group of ninth grade students describe their reaction to two reading strategies (summarization, and annotation). The goal was developing a better understanding of my students and informing my teaching of summarization and annotation so that my students have all the tools they need to improve their reading comprehension.

During the research for my literature review, I began to understand that while there are a plethora of reading strategies, the ones that recur time and time again are annotation and summarization. Additionally, in my five years of teaching I have observed that my students who love to read and succeed well at it often do these strategies, or personalized variations of these strategies automatically. Conversely, my students who struggle with reading do not seem familiar with these strategies or use with regularity. My research design enabled me to assess my students' reactions to two reading strategies summarization and annotation. The next section describes my rationale for using a qualitative research design to approach my capstone question.

### **Rationale for Use of a Qualitative Research Design**

My goal was to conduct research in my own classroom to better understand my students' reaction to the instructional environment. Given that my research took place in a real classroom I approached the research design using a qualitative lens. According to Creswell (2014) a qualitative approach is appropriate when the researcher is interested in "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Creswell's (2014) rationale for using a qualitative approach aligned with my research goal of exploring and understanding how my students reacted to two different reading strategies- annotation and summarization.

A qualitative approach was also appropriate because I put myself in the role of a teacher as well as researcher. In my role as a teacher I collaborated with my students, and it was impossible to separate this from my research role. Creswell (2014) notes that a qualitative approach is appropriate when there is the type of collaboration I have with my students and when the research takes place in a naturalistic setting, such as my classroom.

Doing the research in my classroom meant that I had to follow the academic schedule. That schedule dictated that I have eighteen weeks and 90 minutes a day to teach an entire course in REP 9. Therefore, my research was conducted for nine weeks of the eighteen-week semester period. During this time, the two strategies (annotation and summarization) were introduced and then modeled by me. The lesson progression was teach the strategy, guided practice and use the strategy on their own. The strategies were part of their normal coursework in my class. Prior to each strategy being taught, students were asked to assess their familiarity with the strategy on a scale of one to five as well as their comfort level in using the strategy. Then, over the course of the semester, students used the strategies as part of their regular coursework and assessed their reactions to them. A pre- and post-teacher created survey and exit cards were completed by the students in my class. In addition, I assessed their proficiency in their use of the strategy as part of their regular coursework for the class.

### **Data Collection Plan**

My research plan used three qualitative data collection tools: a teacher designed survey, exit slips, and a teacher created rubric used to assess student work to ascertain my ninth graders' proficiency with the strategies. My research design was to quantify the data produced. For example, my students responses to exit slips and surveys used a one to five scale, with one to two being developing, three to four rated as proficient, and five rated as exceeds. My evaluation of the students' work on these strategies also used this same scale. Students performed these strategies as part of their regular classwork, and as such I selected three dipping points for each strategy for their work to be assessed on this scale.

### **Teacher Designed Survey and Analyses of the Data**

First, my students completed a teacher created survey that used a scale of 1-5 (as outlined below) to determine their comfort level and attitude toward the strategy. In addition, I assigned an activity that used the strategy, prior to being taught in class, to assess a beginning point for the student with each strategy. The survey was administered using a Google Form. The google form asked students to rate their knowledge of a strategy as follows: 1 - never used the strategy before; 2 - vaguely remember the strategy and may have used it a few times; 3 - know the strategy and have used it a few times after being shown its usefulness; 4 - use the strategy often without being required to use it and understand its usefulness; and finally 5 - use the strategy very often, without being required to use it and find it extremely helpful when reading a text.

I chose this method to determine what the students knew (or thought they knew) and how much instruction the students would require of the strategy. I estimated that, because of the ease of the Google Form, students would take no longer than 3 minutes to take the survey. Rather than having students complete a Google Form for each strategy for the initial assessment, I included all three strategies with the same rating scale on one form.

Once the students completed the form, I analyzed each student's response as to where they saw themselves on the scale of proficiency with the strategy. That data assisted me as I planned the lesson on the strategy and also informed how much time I would spend on the initial instruction. As I noticed patterns in the google form data, it informed me as to who would most likely need more individual assistance as the students were attempting the strategy on their own

### **Exit Slip and Data Analysis**

After the students were taught the strategy and guided instruction was given, they were given another text passage where they were required to complete the strategy on their own. When they turned in their completed assignment, they were again asked to complete an exit slip implemented using Google Forms. The exit form asked students to assess their competency using the strategy as follows: 1 - did not understand the strategy and was unable to meet the expectations of the assignment; 2 - partially understood the strategy and met some of the expectations of the assignment; 3 - mostly understood the strategy and met most of the expectations of the assignment; 4 - understood the strategy and met the expectations of the assignment and: 5 - understood the strategy and exceed the expectations of the assignment. The form also contained an open-ended question that asked the students to describe in a sentence or two why they felt the strategy was helpful. I used their responses on the exit slip in two ways. First, I compared their evaluation of themselves to my evaluation of the proficiency of the assignment. Second, I used this to inform my use of the strategy in subsequent lessons by individually reteaching those who may not have felt comfortable in their use of the strategy.

### **Summary Rubric and Rubric Analyses**

After the strategy was modeled, and students given a chance to try it on their own, I evaluated their performance on the task using a rubric. The rubric for the summary assignment was a five point scale: a score of five exceeded the expectations of the assignment containing a clear topic sentence that stated the main idea with all other major topics included, no unnecessary data and no grammatical errors. A score of four, which met the requirements of the assignment meant that there is a clear topic sentence

expressing the main idea of the text; all other major ideas are stated and arranged in a generally logical order; but opinions and unnecessary details may be added; with some grammatical errors and spelling. A score of three meant that the summary began with a topic sentence that is somewhat clear and at least partially states the main idea of the original selection; most major ideas are stated and arranged in a somewhat logical order; but opinions and unnecessary details are added with several errors in grammar and/or spelling. A score of two meant summary meant a score of does not meet because the summary begins with a topic sentence that is fairly unclear and does not state the main idea of the original selection with some of the major ideas arranged in a logical order, but contained opinions, unnecessary details imprecise word choice and there are multiple errors on grammar and/or spelling errors. Finally, a score of one meant an incomplete on the assignment because the summary did not begin with a topic sentence and/or it does not state the main idea of the original selection with very few of the main ideas stated; there were several opinions and unnecessary details added and multiple grammatical and/or spelling errors.

As I read each summary, I evaluated the summary to determine where on the criteria the summary fell. First, I evaluated the topic sentence and scored it accordingly. I then evaluated the other sentences as a group and determined which category the summary belonged in. Finally, I deducted points from the overall summary for any grammatical and spelling errors. Based on the overall score, the summary was given a score on the one to five scale.

### **Annotation Rubric and Analyses**

After the strategy was modeled, and students given a chance to try it on their own,



I evaluated their performance on the task using a rubric. The rubric for the annotation was on a five point scale. To receive a score of five, a student's annotation had to be an insightful or well-thought out characterization or connection to the text. In order to receive a score of four, the annotation had to make an accurate characterization or connection to the text. A score of three meant that the student made an annotation that was partly accurate either to characterization or a connection to the text. A score of two meant that the student made a mistaken annotation to characterization or connection to the text, and a score of one meant that the student made no annotation to characterization or connection to the text

### **Research Setting**

The location for the research is a high school of approximately 420 students in the rural southeastern region of the United States. The district is a small, with one elementary school and the middle and high schools are contained one building (although in separate wings and separate administrations). The demographics of the district and the middle school 60% percent Caucasian and 40% African-American student body. We are also a Title 1 school as more than 40% of the students are low income students and qualify for free and reduced lunch.

The high school runs on the block system where each class is 90 minutes per class period. The classes run for an 18 week semester. At the end of a semester, the coursework for the class is complete, and providing a grade of at least 70%, students will receive their credit for that class and not take English again until the following school year.

## Participants

All participants in this study were enrolled in REP 9. REP 9 is a remedial class for entering ninth grade students who generally read below grade level, and have consistently not performed well in Language Arts classes and the state given assessments. In this class, focus is given to the skills that will be needed in English 9. Because the high school operates on a semester schedule, the pace is sometimes difficult for students who struggle. This class, therefore, practices skills that will be used in English 9 with easier texts and more feedback on how well the task is performed.

Students assigned to this class are not required to have a diagnosed learning disability, but there were two students who had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Because of the nature of the class and the difficulties of the students with IEP, there was an inclusion teacher, who is a Special Education Teacher who specializes in Language Arts. In the state where the research takes place, Special Education students do not have resource classes, and are instead, included in a general education classroom with an inclusion teacher to assist them. The inclusion teacher will also modify tests and assignments for students with an IEP.

A total of 14 students were in enrolled in my REP 9 class. Three of the 14 students in my REP 9 class transferred to a different school before the completion of the data collection. All of the 11 students remaining turned in a signed parental/guardian permission and were able to participate in the study. At the end of the data collection, there were 11 complete data sets included in the analyses.

The classroom environment was a ninth grade remedial English class, as described above. There were 11 students in the study, seven girls and four boys. Of the

seven girls, three were Caucasian and four were African-American. Of the five boys, one were Caucasian and four were African-American. Two of the boys had IEPs, one for a specific reading disability and the other had a mild intellectual disability. The students have been made aware of my research and letters of permission have been signed by parents giving their consent to the children being involved in the research.

### **Limitations of the Research Design**

One of the limitations in this research was the small non-random study sample. Therefore, I was unable to generalize. Given a different set of students the results may have been different. Implementing the same research design in another context could also produce different results. All of the students in this study were chosen for this class because of reading difficulties. While the abilities differed slightly, if I had students with different ability levels the results of the study could have been different, with a more wide range in results.

Additionally I would have liked to conduct the research over a longer period of time with more time to focus the data analyses as it took place. However, given that my teaching schedule is three classes, each one different and requiring a different preparation, this research was done under less than ideal conditions. Additionally, being an English /Language Arts teacher where I am required to evaluate student writing on a regular basis for three full classes of over 70 students, I completed what I could. Also, had I done the data analysis closer to time of collection, I may have seen the need for additional data points and collection.

Being a beginning researcher was also a hindrance in performing this research. The creation of the data collection tools could have been stronger. Given the

time frame of the research while I was teaching, there was no pilot test that could have provided feedback on the tools with the goal of refining and improving them prior to using them in the actual research.

The last limitation to this research is bias. The students in this study are my students. Because they struggle, I have a bias and hope for them to do well. While I want all my students to do well, I have a special affinity for these students of mine who struggle with and mostly hate reading. I want them to learn to read well so they can maybe like it, if not love it.

### **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this capstone is to understand how a group of ninth grade students describe their reaction to two reading strategies (summarization, and annotation). These strategies have been chosen as my areas of focus because they are skills that students should employ when reading a text to aid in their comprehension of the text. These strategies help a reader to not only understand what they have read, but can aid a student in retaining what has been read.

While these are not the only strategies that aid in comprehension, these strategies lend themselves to various applications, learning environments and subject matter. In Chapter Four, the results of the attitudes of the students toward the strategies will be discussed. That data will be compared to the students actual work product to determine if the student's attitude toward the strategy correlates to the student's ability to use the strategy. The results of this capstone will then inform my teaching in how to improve students performance in these foundational strategies.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Results**

#### **Chapter Overview**

In this chapter, I will seek to answer the question that has driven this capstone: How does a group of ninth grade students describe their reaction to two reading strategies (summarization, annotation and context clues)? The analysis of the data collected from the students will be discussed. In Chapter Three, the research tools used were describe along with the data collected. In this chapter, for ease in reading, each data collection tool will be discussed by what data it was designed to collect, how it was administered and the data collected from the administration.

#### **Results - Initial Survey**

In the Initial Survey, students were asked to rate their familiarity, use and attitude of either summarization or annotation of a text. This survey (see Figure 1) was given before the strategy had been discussed or taught to students.

Strategy	1 Never used strategy before	2 Vaguely remember strategy and may have used it a few times	3 Know the strategy and have used it a few times after being shown its usefulness	4 Use the strategy often without being required to use it and understand its usefulness	5 Use the strategy very often, without being required to use it and find it extremely helpful when reading a text
Summarizing a text					
Annotating a text					
Context Clues to determine meaning of unknown word					

Figure 1. Initial student survey

Eleven students completed the initial survey. The survey containing a Likert scale regarding their familiarity and comfort level with each of the strategies. The whole class results for the survey analyses related to summarizing text will be described first.

Analyses of the initial survey indicated that the majority of the students or 41%, (5 students) have used the strategy often without being required to use it and understand its usefulness. Another twenty-seven percent 27% of the students (3 students) indicated that they use summarization very often, without being required to use it and find it extremely helpful when reading a text. Eighteen percent (2 students) of students stated that they vaguely remember the strategy of summarizing and may have used it a few times. Finally, Nine percent (1 student) knew the strategy and had used it a few times after being shown its usefulness. What stands out to me in looking at these results is almost all of my students (82%) have heard of summarization. In reviewing the data, the biggest difference seemed to be the comfort level of the student with the strategy (see Figure 2).

## Summarizing a text

11 responses

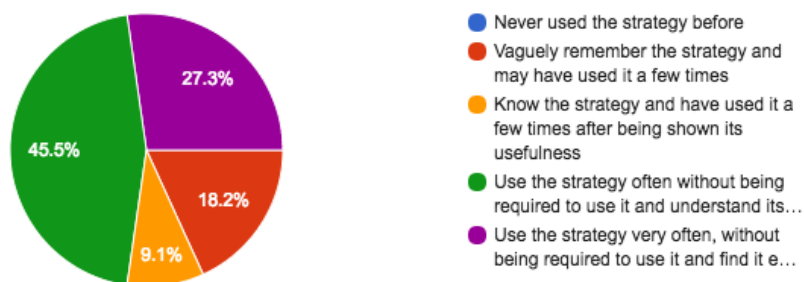


Figure 2. Student responses on the Initial survey for Summarizing a text.

The whole class results for the survey analyses related to annotation is discussed next.

The analyses of the initial survey regarding their attitude, use and familiarity with annotation as a reading strategy indicated that 46% (5 students) of students stated that they vaguely remember the strategy and may have used it a few times. The second largest response by the students at 27% (3 students) was they use the strategy often without being required to use it and understand its usefulness. Two students or 18% of the class, stated that they know the strategy and have used it a few times after the students were shown the strategy's usefulness. Only 9% (1 student) of students responded that they use the strategy often without being required to use it and find it extremely helpful when reading (see Figure 3).

### Annotating (close reading) a text

11 responses

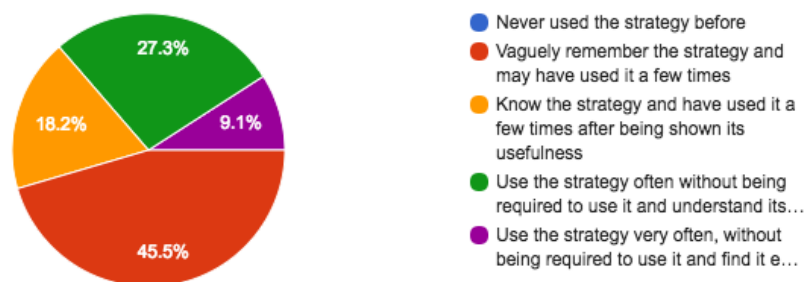


Figure 3. Initial Survey responses for Annotation

In reviewing the data related to student attitude, use and familiarity with annotation as a reading strategy my initial interpretation of the results were that most of my students have only vaguely heard of the strategy by its proper name.

The survey results confused me. Based on conversations with my colleagues, who had taught my students in previous classes, these strategies were used in other English Language Arts classes. Even though it was not part of my formal data collection I wanted to understand why my students chose vaguely when I was aware that so many more had used it in the past. So after the survey was completed, I informally spoke with my students and explained what I meant by annotation. When I explained the strategy, more students stated that they knew the strategy and have used it and this could indicate that annotation may be called by other names depending on teacher or district preference. The analyses of the Exit Slip data will be described next.

#### **Results - Student Exit Slip for the Summary Strategy**

After the initial survey taken by the class, I taught annotation and summarization. For the summary strategy, I started first with a verbal telling of the fairy tale *Cinderella* (Perrault, 1954), letting the students tell me what happened. Then, we



read a version of the story retold by Marcia Brown. After reading the story, I completed the boxes for the Somebody Wanted But So strategy with help from my students, and they copied the chart on their papers. With the chart complete, I wrote a summary on the board using the information on the chart.

After I had taught the summary strategy Somebody Wanted But So, which I learned during my study at Hamline, as described in Chapter Three, I asked students to summarize Chapter Two from the novel *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967). My students used the summary strategy, completing a chart for each of the three characters that were featured in the chapter and then wrote an eight sentence summary of the chapter. Upon finishing the assignment, students completed an exit card about their attitude toward the strategy after being shown how to use it. In addition to the Likert scale question, there was also an open ended question which asked the students whether or not they found the strategy useful and why. The whole class analyses of the Likert scale component of the exit card is described next.

A total of eleven exit cards were analyzed. My analyses of the Likert scale section of the exit card indicated that over half of the students, 64% (7 students) stated that they understood the strategy and felt that they met the expectations of the assignment. Nine percent (1 student) felt he mostly understood the assignment and met most of the expectations of the assignment. Eighteen percent (2 students) felt that they partially understood the strategy and met some of the expectations of the assignment. Only 9% (1 student) felt that she did not understand the strategy and was therefore unable to meet the expectations of the assignment (see Figure 4).

### Based on my performance of the strategy, I would rate myself as

11 responses

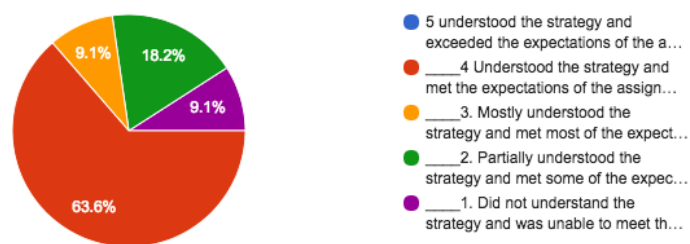


Figure 4. Student Responses on Exit Slip for Summary Strategy

In addition to the Likert Scale, the exit card included an open ended question about if the students found the strategy helpful and why.

All eleven of the students who responded to the open-ended question indicated that they found the strategy useful. Of the responses received two stand out as the most descriptive reasons why the strategy was helpful. One student described the summary strategy “Somebody Wanted But So Then” strategy was useful because all she had to do was transfer the information from the chart and make sentences to complete the summary. Another student described the strategy as useful because it helped her make her summary more complete, whereas before she may have only written a couple of sentences. The other responses consisted mostly of a variation of “I found the strategy useful because it helped me summarize better.” As I was curious as to whether or not the students’ perceptions of meeting or exceeding the assignment expectations would match my own. To complete that comparison I created a rubric (see Figure 5) to evaluate the summaries written by the students.

<b>5 – Exceeds</b>	<b>4 – Meets</b>	<b>3 – Partially Meets</b>	<b>2 – Does not Meet</b>	<b>1 - Incomplete</b>
The summary begins with a clear topic sentence that states the main idea of the original selection; all other major points are stated and in a logical order with no opinions or unnecessary details added. The overall purpose of the summary is clear. Word choice is consistently concise. There are few or no errors in mechanics, usage, grammar or spelling.	The summary begins with a clear topic sentence that states the main idea of the original selection; all other major ideas are stated and arranged in a generally logical order; but opinions and unnecessary details may be added. The purpose is generally clear and word choice is fairly concise. There are some errors in mechanics, usage, grammar or spelling.	The summary begins with a topic sentence that is somewhat clear and at least partially states the main idea of the original selection; most major ideas are stated and arranged in a somewhat logical order; but opinions and unnecessary details are added. The purpose is mostly clear and word choice is somewhat concise. There are several errors in mechanics, usage, grammar or spelling	The summary begins with a topic sentence that is fairly unclear and does not state the main idea of the original selection. Some of the major ideas are stated but are not arranged in a logical order. Opinions and unnecessary details are added. The purpose is partially clear but word choice is imprecise. There are multiple errors in mechanics, usage, grammar or spelling.	The summary does not begin with a topic sentence and/or it does not state the main idea of the original selection. Very few of the main ideas are stated and they are not arranged in a logical order. Several opinions and unnecessary details are added. The purpose is ambiguous and word choice is imprecise. There are multiple errors on mechanics, usage, grammar or spelling that interfere with meaning.

Figure 5 - Summary Scoring Rubric

The results of that comparison is described next.

### Summary Scoring Rubric Analysis

Unfortunately, one of the challenges I faced in completing the comparison analyses was that it relied on my students turning in their work as instructed and in a timely manner. For example, for the fiction summary exercise, the instructions were for my students to handwrite their initial response to get their ideas down. The next step was to type it into the computer for final evaluation. Unfortunately, only seven out of eleven turned their completed assignment into Google Classroom.

Their assignment was to take information from the chart for all four characters and integrate them to create a summary of what happened in Chapter Two of the

novel. Using the rubric, Figure 5 above, I then evaluated the students' summaries of the chapter. For their first attempt at summary using the Somebody Wanted But So strategy, as expected, no one scored a five. Most of the students fell in the three category with some in the two and only one in the four range.

In reviewing their charts where they filled out what each character, the students that received scores of three (most major ideas are stated and arranged in a somewhat logical order), did not fully use the information in their chart, and instead focused one or two characters instead of all four to give a full summary of the events. The students who scored a two (Some of the major ideas are stated but are not arranged in a logical order) listed the events for each character and did not integrate them with the other characters in a logical order of the story. The student who scored a one focused on one character and neglected the other characters all together. By contrast, the student who scored a four integrated all the characters and events, but neglected to put in a topic sentence and name the novel that was being summarized (See Figure 6).

In reviewing the data on how the students think they did on the assignment, most students scored themselves in the four range (understood the strategy and met the expectations of the assignment). They rated themselves a point higher than how I rated them on their actual performance of the task. Interestingly, one of the students, who performs very well in class, rated herself a two on the exit slip (partially understood the strategy and met some of the expectations), was the only student to score a four on the written summary assignment. That being said, most of the students completed the strategy chart correctly, where they struggled was taking that information and making a cohesive summary with the information they correctly pulled from the story and placed in

the chart (See Figure 6).

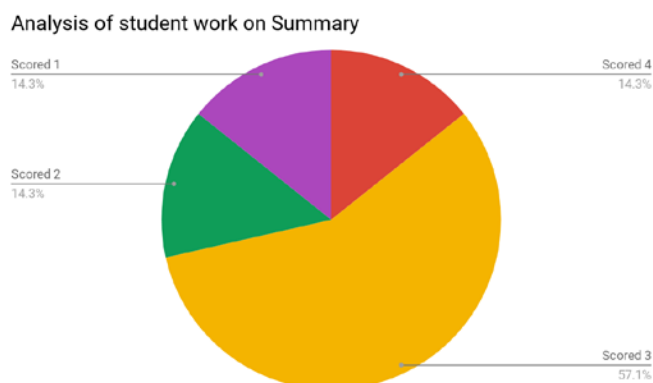


Figure 6 - Analysis of student work on summary

### Results - Exit Slip for the Annotation Strategy

After giving students the Initial Survey, I taught students the annotation strategy. As guided practice for the strategy, I used a song from the Disney film *Moana* entitled, *How Far I'll Go* (Miranda, 2016). A copy of the lyrics were provided to each student and after listening to the song the first time, we listened again, and as they listened, I asked them to first underline words that described her wanting something. We discussed the words they chose, and I asked them to write next to the words they chose, what the words chosen said about how Moana was feeling. The students shared their annotations of the emotions that the character was feeling. We then discussed, based on the words chosen, what the character was feeling and what kind of person she was, based on what she wanted in the song. As a class, we wrote a few sentences discussing a characterization of the character Moana.

Once the strategy was practiced with *How Far I'll Go* (Miranda, 2016), we revisited the excerpt from *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967). As a class, we had already summarized the text, so they had read it more than once. In the teaching of this strategy,

I encourage students to read the text through once and then on their second reading annotate as requested. In this annotation assignment, I was asking students to annotate statements and quotes that suggested a character trait about a particular character.

As guided practice, we went through several for *PonyBoy Curtis* (Hinton, 1967), where I picked the quote and they told me what it said about PonyBoy's character. I then asked the students to pick either Dally, Cherry or Johnny, and highlight phrases that indicated character and in the margin note what the phrase said about the character. Students had to then write a paragraph taking their annotations, using them as evidence for whatever character trait they focused on.

After their independent practice with annotation, students completed an exit slip rating themselves as to their ability with the strategy and to complete an open-ended question. A total of eleven exit cards were analyzed.

My analyses of the Likert scale section of the exit card indicated that 18% (2 students) students indicated that they understood the strategy and exceeded expectations. Over half of the students, 55% (6 students) stated that they understood the strategy and felt that they met the expectations of the assignment. Nine percent (1 student) felt that she mostly understood and met most of the expectations. Nine percent (1 student) partially understood the strategy. One final student (9%) felt that she did not understand the strategy and was therefore unable to meet the expectations of the assignment. All eleven of the students who responded to the open-ended question described finding the strategy useful.

Of the open-ended responses received two stand out as the most descriptive reasons why the strategy was helpful. One student wrote that the strategy was useful

because it helped break down the text, where it was easier to remember. The other student wrote that the strategy helped her organize the information she needed to write the paragraph in a way that she understood it better. In my analysis of the student performance on the strategy, which will be discussed in the next section, it is interesting to note that the two students who provided the responses above, scored fairly well on the assignment. A summary of their results is displayed in Figure 7.

#### Based on my performance of the strategy, I would rate myself as

11 responses

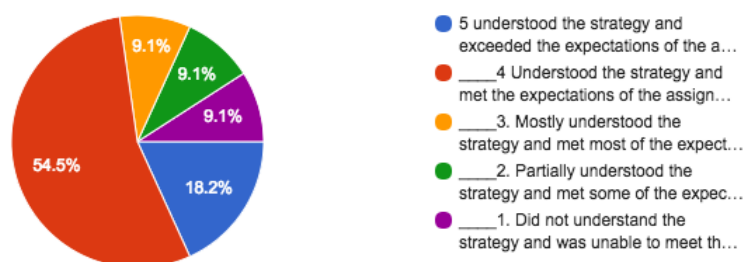


Figure 7 - Student rating of their performance on annotation strategy

In order to analyze student performance I created a rubric to evaluate the assignment (see Figure 8).

Annotation No.	5	4	3	2	1
	Annotation made an insightful or well thought out characterization or connection to the text	annotation made an accurate characterization or connection to the text	annotation made a partially accurate characterization or connection to the text	annotation made an mistaken characterization or connection to the text	Annotation made no characterization or connection to the text

Figure 8 - Annotation Scoring Rubric

### Annotation Scoring Rubric Analysis

In this exercise, after the students annotated the chapter of *The Outsiders*, I had them write their characterization paragraph on paper, and turn in both the annotation and the paragraph in before the end of class. With this method, I was able to analyze ten annotations. My analyses indicated that an equal number 36% (4 students) scored a four (met the expectations) or calculate the (3 students) (met most of the expectations). Eighteen percent (2 students) scored a two where they met most of the expectations, and 9% (1 student) scored a one, as a result of not completing the assignment. There were no students who scored a five on the assignment. One student did not turn in a characterization paragraph.



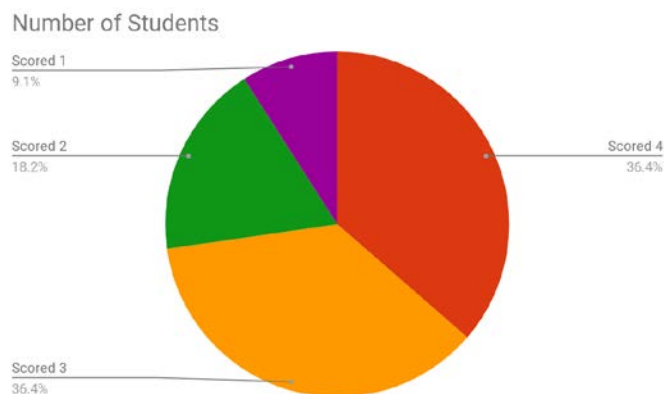


Figure 9. Evaluation of student work according to rubric

In analyzing the two students open-ended responses discussed above, the student who responded that annotation helped break down the text and made it easier to remember, was one of the students who scored a four.

Additionally, in evaluating the paragraph, that was the second part of the assignment, the students who had more complete annotations, had a more complete characterization paragraph that was supported with evidence from the text. It is interesting to note that here too, students had some trouble taking their annotations and turning them into evidence for a paragraph. It should be noted that in the evaluation for the paragraph, I did not deduct points for improper citing, only that the material from the text was contained in quotation marks with a page number.

### Chapter Summary

From the data analysis, several things were learned about my students and the strategies I asked them to complete. First, was that my students were aware of both of these strategies and had at least some knowledge. Second, and more interesting to my research was that my students' self-assessment of their use of the strategy was higher (meet or exceed the expectation) than the teacher assessment of their performance which

was lower. Finally, the data analysis revealed that summary was an easier strategy to use independently when compared to annotation.

What I realized that will most affect my teaching that more scaffolding is likely needed when teaching students to use these strategies. Where they struggled the most was taking the information from the graphic organizer or the notes made on the pages to a sentence form. An additional step or outline could be used to help students organize the information collected and make it easier to create sentences for summaries and other paragraphs.

Chapter Five is a reflection on my capstone now that the data analysis is completed. My reflection addresses my emerging sense of self as a researcher and scholar, the potential for the results of my capstone to have an impact on a larger audience, and recommendations for future research projects and suggestions for other researchers interested in using my research design.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Things I Learned and Some I Wish I Had Done Differently**

#### **Chapter Overview**

In the course of my research, I sought to explore the question: How does a group of ninth grade students describe their reaction to two reading strategies (summarizing and annotation)? In this chapter, I reflect on the outcome of my research, including differences between what the review of the research literature predicted about how the students would respond versus how the students in my study perform on strategy. Additionally, I will explore how the results of the study, both those identified in my review of the research literature and observations made in my classroom, will affect both my research in the future as well as my teaching practices. Finally, based on the findings of my research, recommendations for further exploration of these strategies.

#### **Research Outcomes and How They Will Further My Teaching**

My research, as discussed in Chapter Four, involved having my students complete Likert Scale surveys before the strategies of summarizing and annotation were taught. The surveys were to ascertain the comfort level of my students prior to the strategy being taught and to compare the pre-survey with how the students rating themselves on a Likert scale exit slip for each of the two strategies and my evaluation of the students' success with the strategy using a rubric. For the most part, the outcome of the research was as I expected.

The research subjects were students in my REP 9 class, which is a class designed to help prepare students for English 9. The research took place over a nine week period

during the first nine weeks of the semester in August, 2017. These students were placed in this class due to low test scores and recommendations from prior teachers. It is worthy of noting that all the students in the class were chosen and were required to take this class. Of the eleven students, two have individualized education plans (IEP) and the other nine are readers who struggle with comprehension.

In reviewing the results of the initial survey, as discussed in Chapter Four, all of the students had at least heard of the strategy and had used it at some point in the past. Where the variation came in was how familiar each student was with summarizing and how often they used it on their own. It was surprising to me that more students did not rate their familiarity with the strategy higher, as it has been a requirement for the state standards currently in place in the state where the research took place. During the research I did not ask, in what past class they had used or heard of summarizing even though it would have been interesting to find out.

The biggest surprise for me was when the students were asked to rate themselves as to their success in using the strategy. Based on the research that Hall (2010) conducted, she stated that students would rate themselves lower than their ability levels. However, I found the opposite to be true. Most of the students who rated themselves a four on the scale, actually scored in the three or two range when evaluated by me on their assignment. While I did not explore this during the research time period, it would be valuable to know if my students correlated familiarity with ability.

As a result of my data analyses I did discover that where my students seemed to struggle with summary was taking the information from the chart we completed related to summarizing and carry it through to writing a paragraph. For example, my students were

able to complete the chart of Somebody Wanted But So Then with relative ease. The Somebody Wanted But So Then chart required them to take the elements and events of the story and plug them into the boxes. My students were also able to answer questions in class as to how each character's wants from chapter two of *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967) related to and/or caused problems with other characters.

However, the summary paragraphs they wrote lacked the detail that their discussions were filled with. Then it hit me; they were struggling with a way to bridge the chart to written sentences. As a result, it became clearly apparent of the need to find a way to help them bridge this gap with ease. Moving forward one way I will try to bridge this gap is by integrating a graphic organizer as an intermediate step. I envision that the graphic organization could help future students formulate one or two word ideas in the chart into complete sentences. It may require two to three different organizers, one for the strategy, a second helping students taking the words from the chart and putting the information in sentence form and then the third organizer helping them with starter sentences for the summary which would also help them put the events in chronological order. Moving forward I can also differentiate my instruction so that those students who are better at the strategy from the beginning could skip a level of the organizer so that the organizers themselves based on each students' needs and comfort levels.

The annotation strategy analysis review revealed many things. It revealed first that many more of my students were familiar with this strategy when they realized that they were close reading and making notes. Second and probably the biggest reveal to me was that my students struggled with what to write down. When I prompted them to stop at a particular spot and asked them to describe the character, or the feelings or the setting,

they were fine.

However, when they were doing it independently, the questions they asked, which were not recorded as part of this study, demonstrated to me that they lacked confidence to do this strategy on their own. For example, during the research my students were constantly asking for reassurance such as “Can I put that PonyBoy was not violent like the others?” The results of this study revealed that before I ask students to do this completely on their own, I need to give them more guided practice and release them more gradually into independent work. Additionally, maybe narrowing the task, having them focus on one character or one literary element might help as well. Also, maybe giving them a “cheat sheet” of possible annotation starters for those who are not sure what to write down, similar to sentence starters when writing an essay. Overall, the biggest takeaway from this research and where it drives me in the future is more scaffolding.

Showing a student the strategy, having them practice the strategy a few times with me and then having them do it independently may not be enough for those of my students who really struggle when they read. Giving them graphic organizers and prompts may be what is needed to get them comfortable with these strategies and develop the confidence to do them on their own. Where I struggle is that I only have these students for eighteen weeks before they are sent to English 9. How can I in those relatively few weeks equip them with strategies they can take with them and use? How can I show the adaptability of what we have learned to other subject areas? In addition to research generating new questions for me as a result of completing this research I have recommendations for additional research.

### **Future Research**

For future researchers interested in using my research design I recommend that they increase the number of exit slips collected over the course of the data collection. Having more exit slips would allow students' degree of comfort to be analyzed and measured against their ability to perform the tasks assigned in relation to the strategies. In addition to additions to my research design I also have recommendations for additional areas of exploration.

For example, it could be worthwhile to explore if students can or do use these strategies in other classes, and how they use them. With the standards now requiring literacy across the curriculum, understanding how these strategies are taught and used other content areas beside English class is important. Reading and writing are used on a daily basis in all academic areas. If content area teachers all used the same terminology, graphic organizers, and measured students' success rates with those strategies then students might be able to internalize them. Using the same terminology to describe these strategies could help all students recognize them. Having to practice these strategies in different contexts would increase practice time so that all students could become proficient in using them.

### **Conclusion**

This research project taught me a great many things about my teaching style, and what could be done to improve and adapt it to fit the needs of my students. I realized that students need more scaffolding and practice before I set them loose to use a strategy. I was also reminded about how important and valuable exit slips can be to gauge the temperature of my class, not only when something is introduced, but as my students use the strategy many times to help inform my teaching as well as give me data points to see

where they are now versus when we started the strategy. I understand better now that my students want me to understand where they are, but are often afraid to tell me in class and exit slips give them a way to do that.

Additionally, this project forced me to look at myself as a teacher in a way that I had not before. It helped me see the effect of a shortcoming that I knew existed in myself: discipline. Not classroom discipline, but the discipline of time management to do the task that needs to be done rather than putting it off until later. I struggle with balancing the feedback needs of the students and what needs to be done for tomorrow and at home. This research project has brought that struggle to the forefront because I cannot help but feel that had I analyzed the data in the project sooner, my research may have been better, because I may have seen the need for more data points and dipping spots. It is the same way with feedback for my students.

The sooner I catch a problem, the sooner we can be on the way to fix it. While I know and knew that immediate feedback was important, this project has forced me to look at the effects of not providing relatively immediate feedback to the forefront of my teaching. While I do not have an answer yet as to how to provide all of my students with the time-sensitive feedback they need, I will be attempting various strategies that I know and seeking advice from veteran teachers in the future to develop a way to better serve my students.

This project has also solidified for me that this REP class is a needed class in my school. It is needed because some students struggle with reading and any extra practice with strategies that will help them be successful is positive. Additionally, there are those borderline students who, given the speed of the course (18 weeks instead of the 36 weeks



they are used to in middle school), could fall behind because they are just not ready for the speed of the course. This course is needed and should always be included in the schedule.

My inclusion teacher and I often joke (only half-heartedly) that if all we do in this class (REP9) is remind students what they already know and that gives them confidence in themselves as readers, then we have succeeded. The students that participated in this study are more comfortable with the tasks that are required for English 9. Because they got to practice the skills discussed in this research along with other skills that have been required of them, the REP 9 students are more confident than many of my students in my current English class that were not part of the REP 9 experience. Finally, this course is needed because fundamentally reading crosses all subject areas, and many of the skills I teach and remind students they know, transfer to those other classes, whether they realize or not the skills are being used.

In keeping with the transfer of skills to other content areas, it would be interesting to have another content area teacher model these same two strategies (summarization and annotation) and collect similar data. For example, I am already in conversation with a social studies teacher about collaborating on teaching and modeling of summarization and annotation. In this collaboration both of us would use the same terminology to describe the strategies. We would also use the same modeling techniques and data collection tools. Teaching these strategies in two different classes could increase the time students have to practice these strategies which in turn might help them produce better summaries and annotations. It would also allow us to explore what connections students might make between the two strategies when they are not

compartmentalize by subject matter.

Many lessons have been learned over the course of this research. The most important ones have not been learned by students, but rather those lessons that they have taught me. After all this research, one thing has remained the same: my desire to help all my students to be and do their best.

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