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Teachers' Experiences with Comprehension Instruction in Upper Elementary Classrooms

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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Kathryn Louise Solic entitled "Teachers' Experiences with Comprehension Instruction in Upper Elementary Classrooms." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

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TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION IN UPPER
ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kathryn Louise Solic
May 2011

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the lives and memories of Tim Solic, John Solic Sr., and Dr. Michael Pressley. Even though you have preceded me in death, your lives propel mine forward in the most powerful of ways. You continue to shape me at my very core.

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Danielle Dennis and Kasia Derbiszewska. There is no doubt that you have kept me motivated and encouraged. I feel so privileged to be able to call you my friends.

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Finally, my students at Benchmark School and Penn High School have shared the classroom experiences from which my thinking extends and evolves. Thank you.

Abstract

The central goal of elementary reading instruction is to teach students to make sense of the range of texts that they encounter during their school careers and lives. The issue of interest in this study is to better understand educational practice for upper elementary reading comprehension instruction. Using a case study design within the framework of symbolic interactionism, I studied four upper elementary teachers and examined the nature of their experiences with organizing, carrying out, and learning about reading comprehension instruction. Three weeks of classroom observations of each teachers' language arts instruction and three interviews of each teacher constitute the major sources of data for this study.

Results suggest that each teacher provided her students a different type of instructional experience around reading comprehension, despite having access to same kinds of instructional materials and assessment information. The instructional experiences offered by the teachers were contingent upon the teachers' perspectives on the construct of reading comprehension and the factors that weighed most heavily in their individual decision-making processes about reading comprehension instruction. Several additional patterns emerged across the teachers. All four teachers made adaptations to their core reading program, utilized a small, consistent set of instructional routines in day-to-day instruction, and identified working with struggling students as an area of concern with which they felt unprepared to handle well. None of the teachers were observed or reported consistently employing direct, explicit, accountable ways of talking with students about texts or about ways of thinking through texts.

These findings suggest future research and professional development efforts to improve reading comprehension instruction should begin with the ways in which teachers think about reading comprehension and the kinds of decisions teachers make as a result of their working definitions. In addition, more attention needs to be paid to supporting teachers in making thoughtful adaptations to their curriculum materials, in expanding the range of instructional routines employed on a regular basis, and in learning how to meet the needs of students struggling with comprehension. Finally, greater emphasis needs to be placed on fostering the kinds of talk amongst teachers and students that leads to the most robust reading comprehension development.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter Introduction

“Oh, so you want us to look for story elements and take action when reading does not make sense at the same time? And if you don’t know the story elements then you should take action. I get it. It’s like a puzzle. All the pieces fit together.” – Maria, age 10

I was teaching summer language arts intervention classes at Benchmark School, a private school for struggling readers and writers in suburban Philadelphia. My students and I had been meeting in small groups for an hour and a half each day reading texts, practicing the kinds of thinking good readers use when they read, and reflecting over the entire experience. It was these thinking moves that I hoped students would begin to acquire during their time with me. Acquisition of such expertise required these developing readers to understand how to carry them out with a range of texts and why undertaking the effort required to do such thinking would be beneficial.

I had explained to students how fiction texts are organized into story elements and modeled how to find them, as well as how to make sure their reading makes sense and how to take action when it does not. We had talked extensively about these strategies. Now a glimmer filled Maria’s eyes as she realized her current insight to be powerful.

As her teacher, I was excited that Maria had made an important discovery about how effective readers use thinking moves in tandem to work through a text. This represented a paradigm shift that would allow her to think in more sophisticated ways. However, I was discouraged that it had only been at this juncture that it had occurred to her that reading was a process that involved doing simultaneously all of the kinds of

thinking that we had spent weeks discussing and practicing. Even more so, as I looked around the table, I noticed that the rest of the students seemed perplexed. They had not yet achieved a similar level of meta-cognitive awareness as Maria.

I began to ask myself whether I had ever stopped to make that clear in my teaching. Did I not tell them that good readers do lots of types of thinking together? Did I never bring to their attention how to coordinate their strategy use? Did I even know how to connect these strategies to one another in a way that would help my students understand? Was there a better way to handle this teaching challenge? I began to doubt whether I knew how to develop in students an integrated approach to these reading comprehension processes. I wanted to learn more.

Teaching students how to process and engage with what they read is complex at any level. How do teachers, myself included, make sense of reading comprehension instruction, especially with the many demands in our professional lives? How do we learn to be better at it? It is my contention that we need to spend more time delving into the actual experiences of teachers in order to ensure that teacher growth is facilitated, in ways that are in the best interest of the children whom they ultimately serve.

Statement of the Problem

Educators have made important strides towards supporting a range of students in becoming proficient readers for a variety of needs and purposes. There is still much work to do. Too few American students are able to comprehend texts well (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). According to the results of the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009),

33% of all fourth graders achieved a score that was considered Below Basic, with a Basic level of achievement defined as “partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at a given grade level” (p. 5). This percentage had remained unchanged from the results of the 2007 NAEP assessment. Gaps between students of different racial backgrounds and socioeconomic levels have narrowed, yet still persist. For example, on the 2009 NAEP over 50% of African-American and Hispanic fourth graders achieved scores considered Below Basic, as well as over 50% of fourth grade students who are considered to be eligible for free and reduced lunches.

Scholars have raised legitimate concerns about the validity of the design and execution of the NAEP assessment program (Stake, 2007). However, similar patterns of achievement findings can be seen when examining both international and state level assessment data. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) began the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessment program in 2001. This series of studies examines fourth grade reading achievement amongst international participants every five years. The most recent assessment was in 2006 and included 45 participants from 40 countries (Mullins, Martin, Kennedy, & Foy, 2007). The average achievement scores on the 2006 assessment for fourth grade students from the United States were lower than those of students from 17 other nations in the sample. Many of those participants whose students outperformed American students represented countries that are our economic competition in a global marketplace.

In the Midwestern state where this study was conducted, students take a state administered standardized test yearly. In 2010, over 15,000 fourth grade students, or 20% of the fourth grade students tested, did not pass the English/Language Arts exam (Indiana Department of Education, 2010). That is, one out of every five students in the fourth grade in this state did not perform well enough on the test to evidence proficiency of state English/Language Arts standards. More specifically, one portion of the exam requires students to write responses to questions about informational texts. On average, 23% of students tested, or almost one of every four students, did not receive any points for any of their open response items. These students did not produce a response that reflected an understanding of the text excerpt that could be considered acceptable.

As students move through grades, reading comprehension difficulties become more pronounced for students and more challenging for educators. The reading scores of 17-year olds on the 2008 NAEP long-term trend assessment (Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009) were not significantly different from scores produced by 17-year olds when the testing program began in 1971. That is, the majority of our high school students are no better readers than their parents were as high school students.

However, the world has changed significantly since 1971. Students live in an information society (Alvermann, 2001). More print is more readily available, and technology continues to transform literacy practices. Ideas and information are exchanged rapidly and the need to be able to understand and interpret the writing of others is constant. The reading demands on members of our society, in all social strata, are higher and still rising (Allington, 2006). Thus, the challenge of stagnant achievement

measures is that the students producing them, while similarly skilled to those in their parents' generation, are less well equipped to manage the literacy demands, and, as a result, the life demands of the world in which they find themselves. These students must enter a global economy in which resources and employment opportunities are distributed more competitively (Friedman, 2007). As a result, there has been an increase in the amount of schooling required to secure and maintain a stable career and lifestyle. This convergence of factors means that all of our students need to read, write, speak, listen and think with increasingly high levels of proficiency. It seems that the stakes have never been higher for these students and the schools charged with teaching them.

The most important factor for how well a school impacts and facilitates student progress in reading development is the level of expertise of its teachers. Of particular importance, especially as students move into higher grades, is the level of expertise of teachers for the development of reading comprehension capabilities. The degree to which teachers understand and can facilitate student learning about how to make sense of a given text will have an effect on whether their students acquire the expertise necessary to be effective comprehenders of a range of texts that they will encounter in school and in life.

Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges (2004) explored this relationship statistically by examining data gathered during the Tennessee Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) project, a large-scale experimental study in which both students and teachers were randomly assigned to classes. Using hierarchical linear modeling, the researchers conducted variance component analyses that confirmed that between-teacher variance,

the variance in student reading achievement scores due to differences across teachers, was statistically significant. Their analyses suggested that the difference in achievement gains between a student in the classroom of a 25th percentile teacher and one of a 75th percentile teacher was over a third of a standard deviation.

Observational studies lend support to the assertion that the knowledge and skill of masterful teachers is the primary element of educational practice that results in high student growth and high student achievement in reading. In these studies, exemplary literacy teachers were identified through nomination processes and confirmed by analyses of student performance. The exemplary teacher research literature has consistently documented that students, regardless of entering ability or demographic background, learn to read and write well during their time spent in these teachers' classrooms (Allington & Johnston, 2001; Allington & Johnston, 2002; Knapp et al., 1995; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996; Pressley et al., 2001; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Collins-Block, & Morrow, 2001; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003). This line of research enhances both the breadth and depth of our understanding of what exemplary teachers know and can do to support a range of developing readers and writers.

The literacy instruction provided by these highly effective teachers is complex, balancing skill and strategy learning with reading and writing experiences (Pressley, 2006a). Students are taught word-level decoding strategies, text-level comprehension strategies, and writing process strategies, and are given many opportunities to practice these strategies in text both independently and with teacher guidance. This balance,

however, is not uniform, but student specific, adjusted in response to individual developmental needs (Pressley et al., 2001). Students read and write often, with teachers providing much scaffolding for students' problem solving and use of skills and strategies within literacy experiences. Talk is abundant, purposeful, and productive amongst both students and teachers (Allington & Johnston, 2001), with an orientation towards higher-order thinking processes (Taylor et al., 2000) and meaning making (Knapp et al., 1995). Classrooms are well managed and instruction is intense, with high levels of student engagement. They are also motivating places, where students understand expectations and enjoy reading and writing experiences, while learning to become self-regulated learners and problem-solvers (Pressley et al., 2003). Students are engaging in a great deal of content learning, interacting with significant ideas and information across their literacy experiences (Allington & Johnson, 2001).

In contrast to this body of evidence about what effective comprehension teachers look like and what they do as decision-makers, much less is known about how to support all teachers in becoming effective comprehension teachers. Much has been documented about the demands of teaching reading comprehension in elementary classrooms (Brown, 2008), but very little is known about how contextual demands influence the process of teacher development as comprehension teachers.

The reading research community has begun to notice that the question of how to best support many more teachers in developing the knowledge and skill necessary to teach comprehension well remains largely unanswered. The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) identified teacher preparation and development for comprehension

instruction as one of three high priority domains that deserve attention in a vigorous, cumulative research agenda for the next ten years. This sentiment has since been echoed by other prominent reading researchers and teacher educators (McGill-Franzen, 2005; Pressley, 2006b) as a way of understanding how to better develop the complex classroom interactions that can facilitate and sustain student learning.

Thus, it is imperative that attention remains fixed on supporting the development of teachers. This position stands in contrast to the current educational policy environment. A continuing emphasis on accountability systems, large-scale school reform models, and scientifically based materials (Ravitch, 2010) at best obscures and at worst loses sight of the need to explore the instructional experiences and learning processes of teachers.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of four upper elementary teachers providing reading comprehension instruction to their students. In order to help all teachers acquire the professional knowledge and expertise necessary to become highly effective reading comprehension teachers, it is important to have a sense of teachers' experiences with reading comprehension teaching and the challenges associated with it. It is my hope that this study can take stock of how participating teachers carried out reading comprehension instruction for their students and what participating teachers experienced as challenges and as learning opportunities in their efforts to provide the best reading comprehension instruction possible. The research question guiding the study is:

What is the nature of upper elementary teachers' experiences with reading comprehension instruction?

Sub-Questions include:

1. How do teachers organize and provide reading comprehension instruction, including how they use their core reading programs?
2. What sources of information do teachers use when making decisions about reading comprehension instruction?
3. To what do teachers attribute their knowledge of reading comprehension instruction?

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is an organized set of explanatory beliefs that represent how and why a phenomenon, such as human social behavior, works the way that it does. It offers a truth claim as to the source of the fundamental mechanisms that propel a happening, experience, or pattern that is observable either directly or by proxy (Denzin, 1978; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Wolcott, 1995). Dressman and McCarthy (2004) suggest that there are two benefits to using a theoretical framework as a guiding resource in a research study. First, the theory may offer an opportunity for a study to gain a stronger and more well-established sense of significance than could be achieved without it, particularly when that study can be utilized in turn as a tool for better developing the theory. Second, a theory may contribute explanatory power to the phenomenon under study, and as such function as a lens for identifying points of agreement or discord that may serve as avenues for future study. In addition, the use of guiding methodological,

substantive, and theoretical frameworks in a qualitative study offers the researcher a foundation from which to make decisions that focus the project and orient it within a larger knowledge landscape (Hatch, 2002).

This study utilized the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism as a discursive scaffold (Dressman & McCarthy, 2004) in that it serves as a comparative structure from which the examination of data and the conclusions drawn from that data can be understood. Dressman and McCarthy describe what studies look like that use theoretical frameworks in this way:

In these cases, the larger social scientific implications of the study were usually clearly apparent and the use of theory as a comparative structure – that is, as a way of ‘making sense’ of the data and providing interpretive insight that might otherwise not be perceived – was evident. (p. 342)

Similarly, symbolic interactionism was used here as a theory of human action to analyze the experiences of participating teachers in this study. In addition, it was hoped that the data gathered from participants might also be used to interrogate, build, and extend symbolic interactionism as theoretical framework applicable to future research in this area.

Symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) is an approach to the study of human thought and behavior centered around three fundamental assumptions about how individuals make meaning out of their world and the elements that comprise it. The first premise suggests that individuals act towards things on the basis of the meanings that those things have for them, and that the meanings things have for individuals are

important and worthwhile in their own right outside of the meanings that others might hold for those same things. The second premise states that the meanings things have for an individual arise out of the interactions that person has with others. The third premise outlines the assumption that those meanings are developed and revised through an ongoing, interpretive process.

Through the lens of symbolic interactionism, a person is conceptualized as an “acting organism” (Blumer, 1969, p. 12), one that recognizes him/herself as an acting object within his/her social world. As such, an individual interacts and responds not only to others, but also to his own self. This process of interaction in which an individual notices things in his social world, interprets them, and chooses how to respond to them on the basis of his interpretation drives human action. As Blumer explains,

We must recognize that the activity of human beings consists of meeting a flow of situations in which they have to act and that their action is built on the basis of what they note, how they assess and interpret what they note, and what kind of projected lines of action they map out. (p. 16)

This conceptualization of human interpretation of the social world and corresponding decision-making regarding action can be applied to the present study. There are two particularly salient ways in which this theoretical framework makes sense for this study. First, teachers, as individual actors in social worlds, interpret objects available to them for the planning and design of instruction, such as their core reading programs, on the basis of the meaning those objects have for them. In order to

understand the instructional experiences and decisions of teachers, it is necessary to identify and understand their “world of objects” (p. 11). Blumer writes,

Human group life on the level of symbolic interaction is a vast process in which people are forming, sustaining, and transforming the objects of their world as they come to give meaning to objects. Objects have no fixed status except as their meaning is sustained through indications and definitions that people make of objects. [...] The life and action of people necessarily change in line with the changes taking place in their world of objects. (p. 12)

Secondly, teachers, as mediators and negotiators of the social world of the classroom, interact with students during instruction by interpreting their action and talk, and responding on the basis of those interpretations. This joint action, even within instructional routines that are well established, is constantly undergoing re-formation, as meanings held and interpreted by teachers and students within those interactions are renewed and revised.

Symbolic interactionism serves to inform the methodological approach of the study. Blumer (1969) argues, “exploration and inspection...constitute the necessary procedure in direct examination of the empirical social world” (p. 46). In this study, the use of questioning during interviews and observation guide the process of exploration and the use of inductive analyses processes with case studies of the phenomenon of interest guide the process of inspection. The approaches selected for data collection and data analysis in this study align with such a vision of exploration and inspection that should underlie a study of the human social world.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are found widely throughout this dissertation and are defined here in order to develop a clear and concise understanding of the constructs involved in the conceptualization, design, and execution of this study. There are additional terms that are found and defined in single sections of the dissertation. Although some of these terms have different or differently nuanced definitions elsewhere, these definitions represent the ways in which I understand and utilize these constructs. The constructs are listed alphabetically.

Accountability systems – Systems designed to reward and punish participants on the basis of their performance within it (Ryan, 2004). Accountability systems in education are primarily standardized test-based.

Case study – The study of a contemporary phenomenon within a bounded unit (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003).

Core reading programs – Commercial basal reading programs adopted by school districts to serve as the primary vehicle from which teachers organize and carry out reading instruction (McGill-Franzen, Zmach, Solic, & Zeig, 2006).

Inductive data analysis – An approach to data analysis that involves “a search for patterns of meaning in data so that general statements about phenomena under investigation can be made” (Hatch, 2002, p. 161).

Instructional talk – Talk provided or directed by the teacher for the purpose of accomplishing a specific teaching goal.

Reading comprehension – The understanding of whole texts through the active extraction and construction of meaning (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). It is recognized that comprehension is a complex skill that demands the simultaneous execution of multiple cognitive processes.

Reading comprehension instruction – Teaching that is focused on acquiring meaning from whole texts (Gambrell, Block, & Pressley, 2002).

Teacher learning – The acquisition and development of knowledge and skill for the purpose of improvement. Improvement is engagement with new practices in a specific academic area that have been deemed to work, based on external evidence from across multiple settings, and result in continuous improvement of student performance over time (Elmore, 2002).

Text processing strategy – Any cognitive plan that readers use flexibly and adaptively to support the development of comprehension (Duffy & Roehler, 1987).

Limitations

There are several aspects of the design and execution of the study that could be construed as limitations to the work. First, I was unable to collect as much data as I had intended due to teacher cancellations of observations and interviews. Cancellations were caused by a variety of factors, including district-wide decisions regarding weather, conflicts with whole-school events and professional development experiences, and teacher sick and personal days. I had at least two cancellations with each participating teacher. When possible, I re-scheduled cancelled interviews and observations. I was able to complete 13 of 16 originally scheduled interviews. I was able to complete 47 of 60

originally scheduled observations. The loss of 13 days of observation across the four participants meant that I lost both observational data and the opportunity to spend more extended time in the field with my participants.

Second, a significant amount of time, almost two years, elapsed between the conclusion of data collection and the initiation of formal data analysis. This was unintended at the outset of the study. During the process of collecting data, I was approached by district administration about a teaching position as a literacy intervention specialist at the high school in the district. I chose to take this position because I wanted more school-based teaching experience and because the individual elements of this particular position were of professional interest to me. While I recognize the limitations that this gap represents, I feel that the experience that this time provided me sharpened the lens from which I proceeded with data analysis.

Third, as a result of taking a teaching position in the district, my relationship with the participating teachers and the participating district changed from the beginning to the end of the research process. I did not know or have any personal experience with any of my four participants at the beginning of the study. I met these four individuals when I was in the process of selecting participants, and my initial contact with each of them was for the sole purpose of inviting their participation in the study. Since that time, I have become the professional colleague of three of the participants who remain teachers within the participating district. While we do not work in the same buildings, we see each other at district functions and communicate with one another through inter-school mail and our district e-mail accounts. This communication could be considered both professional and

friendly. In the long run, the changing nature of our relationships could be considered a benefit to the study. The passing of time and accumulation of additional experiences may have allowed the opportunity for better and more forthright reflection from my participants as we worked through our participant audits.

In addition to the limitations that emerged as the study unfolded, there were certain aspects of classroom life and student learning that were not taken into account. I intentionally limited the scope of the study in order to develop a deeper understanding of the specific issue of interest. First, the study focused on one aspect of reading instruction, reading comprehension instruction. This meant that I narrowed my interest in classroom reading instruction to only those elements of classroom life and instruction that were directly related to supporting students in making sense of a whole, connected text. Second, the study focused on how teachers organize and carry out reading comprehension instruction. Therefore, sources of information that teachers draw upon to provide comprehension instruction, including the district-adopted core reading program, were considered to be of particular importance. Third, the study focused on teachers' perceptions of their learning process, exploring how participating teachers believe they have learned to become reading comprehension teachers and from where they believe they have generated new knowledge and skill. Therefore, the reported experiences of the teacher were of primary importance. Student academic performance was not measured. In addition, while every reasonable effort was made to utilize systematic data collection and analysis procedures and to triangulate and member check findings, it is

acknowledged that the experiences and knowledge base of the researcher had a degree of influence in the study.

Significance of the Study

This study has significance in the field of reading education for two reasons. First, in my review of existing relevant literature, I found few instances of studies of reading comprehension instruction that had a central focus on the experiences of the teacher with instruction. Instead, much of the available research focuses on the design of instructional materials and intervention frameworks for reading comprehension teaching and learning (Dewitz, Jones, & Leahy, 2009), or on the impact of such materials, frameworks, and interventions on student reading comprehension performance. This study fills this gap by describing the experiences of teachers with reading comprehension instruction without an additional emphasis on materials, interventions, or professional learning experiences.

Second, the study has significance because the findings reported in this study may inform the direction of future studies, challenge the emphases of the current educational policy environment, and offer reading researchers, teacher educators, and school administrators insight into the form and content of teachers' work. That is, it is hoped that the experiences of the four participant teachers in this study may provide the starting point that can guide future efforts to support teacher development for reading comprehension instruction. In addition, it may be that by beginning with the experiences of participating teachers, more insightful avenues will naturally be illuminated that will

inform the design and execution of studies that emphasize materials and interventions for reading comprehension instruction.

Organization of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is divided into four chapters. In chapter two, I explore the research literature that is most pertinent to the issues of interest in this study. In chapter three, I outline my methodological approaches to data collection and analysis in the study. In chapter four, I present my findings in the form of four case study narratives and a cross-case synthesis of the four case studies. In chapter five, I offer pertinent implications of the study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Chapter Introduction

“Maybe those kids that are good readers do all of that kind of thinking and stuff. That’s not really what I do.” – Guy, age 16

Guy, in a moment of insight, with both clarity and brevity, had illuminated for himself and his classmates the crux of the issue that had confronted us all in our time working together. I, as his teacher, had been challenged to find a way to make concrete the path of transformation that I was hoping students might be able to navigate as readers in my high school literacy intervention course. My concerns, however, might have been a bit misplaced – Guy already seemed to have a nascent awareness of what might bridge the identity and performance gap that he experienced as a literacy user. This, in retrospect, made sense. Guy came into my classroom having already experienced a decade of surely equally well-intended language arts teachers and academic support structures. He had spent numerous classroom hours avoiding language arts tasks while simultaneously observing students who naturally carried them out with both grace and rigor. He was not alone. On the contrary, the literacy stories of his fourteen classmates, while marked by their own unique details, paralleled his own. The task, therefore, was not getting my students to recognize what kinds of efforts would result in opportunities for increasing success. Instead, it was getting them to learn how to undertake those efforts well, and, even more importantly, getting them to own and embrace their personal capacity to do so. This challenge was part of my own experience as a teacher.

The focus of this study is on the experiences of four upper elementary teachers who were responsible for providing reading comprehension instruction to their students as part of their language arts teaching. It is difficult work and the stakes are high, as I have learned first-hand in my own teaching with high school students. Such failure limits opportunities for brain development, for knowledge acquisition, for long-term personal health and wellness, and for the pursuit of work and future schooling (KPMG Foundation, 2009). It increases the likelihood that one will be depressed or suicidal (Daniel et al., 2006), will not complete formal K-12 schooling (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Rumberger, 1987), will spend time being incarcerated (Williams & McGee, 1994), or will be employed in a minimum wage job (Parsons & Bynner, 2007). Thus, failure to develop the capacity to read proficiently has ramifications that extend well beyond the walls of a school building.

The goal here was to understand how these teachers made sense of their teaching worlds. In particular, I was interested in developing an awareness of how they organized and provided comprehension instruction to students, the sources of information they used when making decisions about comprehension instruction, and where and how they believed they had learned about comprehension instruction. Since teachers are given the great responsibility of advancing the reading comprehension abilities of their students, it seemed prudent to spend time trying to understand how to give teachers the support necessary to do this work well. There is a rich body of research that examines the impact of a range of instructional approaches, frameworks, techniques, and interventions for reading comprehension on upper elementary student learning, particularly for struggling

students (Almasi, 1995; Armbruster, Anderson, & Ostertag, 1987; Block, Paris, Reed, Whiteley, & Cleveland, 2009; Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Kucan & Beck, 1997; McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Pearson & Dole, 1987; Pressley, et al, 1992; Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, & Ciullo, 2009). There is some research that examines what teachers do to teach reading comprehension in the language arts classroom with upper elementary students and what they do it with (Brown, 2008; Klingner, Urbach, Goros, Brunnell, & Menon, 2010; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Mistretta-Hampston, & Echevarria, 1998; Taylor et al., 2003). There is less research documenting how teachers experience the process of enacting reading comprehension instruction with their upper elementary students and what teachers believe they have learned and need to learn in order to continue to improve at it. In the end, I wanted to be able to suggest ways to support teachers' knowledge development about reading comprehension instruction after having been allowed the intimacy of observing the teaching worlds of my participants.

This chapter presents a review of available literature relevant to this study. This literature review is divided into two sections. In the first section, I explore what we know about the reading process and how expertise is acquired. I start by describing what proficient reading looks like, and then take into account a model of how such reading capabilities develop. Next, I review research on core reading programs, a common framework for teaching elementary reading, and research on specific approaches to addressing reading comprehension development in the upper elementary grades. I then

consider the types of instructional talk advanced within these different approaches to support reading comprehension growth.

The second section of the literature review considers research knowledge relevant to understanding how to support teacher learning for reading comprehension instruction. I start by taking into account how the presence of curriculum materials such as a core reading program might impact teacher learning, particularly new teacher learning. I then present one model for thinking about the different types of knowledge a teacher might need to have in order to effectively carry out high quality reading comprehension instruction. Finally, I briefly review what we know broadly about how teachers come to do their work differently through professional development experiences.

The Reading Process

Proficient reading. The act of reading can be conceptualized as both a cognitive (Kintsch, 1988; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Paivio, 1986; Rumelhart, 2004; van den Broek, Young, Tzeng, & Linderholm, 2004) and social process. The cognitive dimension of reading involves building and using neural pathways in the brain to take in and make sense of the verbal and visual information carried within a text. It requires developing strategic approaches for such information management, with approaches being strategic in the sense that they are deliberately chosen and enacted by the user with a particular goal in mind (Almasi, 2003). This verbal and visual information presents both word and meaning level demands, and these demands become increasingly complex as developing readers learn to balance the interplay between the two. The social dimension of reading reflects the idea that there are multiple participants and perspectives involved in the act at

any one time, namely those of the reader and the author, but also that of the larger social and cultural world out of which the reader and the author operate.

Literacy theorists and researchers have worked to reconcile these cognitive and social perspectives by situating the act of reading as a transactional one. They suggest that the act of reading is an interaction between the skill, social world, and background knowledge of a reader, the verbal and visual information of a text, and the intentions, reasoning, and writing style of an author (Rosenblatt, 1978). As such, this transactional experience can be influenced and mediated by a teacher (Cambourne, 2002; Ruddell & Unrau, 2004).

Reading comprehension is the process of a reader to engaging ones' own strategic skill, world knowledge, and cultural affiliations in a way that uses the textual information provided to successfully extract and re-construct the intended message of the author (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Reading comprehension is unsuccessful when the reader is unable to determine the meaning that the author was attempting to communicate, as evidenced by the text. Breakdowns in reading comprehension occur when the reader lacks strategic skill or requisite background knowledge to process the textual information that is available, or when the text is inherently inaccessible due to a fundamental issue with the reasoning, syntax, or semantics of the author.

There have been a number of verbal protocol studies that look into the thinking of proficient readers who have achieved the expertise necessary to comprehend most texts successfully. Verbal protocol studies ask participants to report aloud what they are thinking about while they engage in a skilled act, in this case, the act of reading. Pressley

and Afflerbach (1995) offered an integrative analysis of 40 such studies. Using the techniques of grounded theory analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), they present the collective picture of a proficient reader who is both constructive and responsive. This means that such a reader deliberately and flexibly relies on a range of thinking strategies to develop and maintain an understanding of the text throughout the reading act. In addition, he or she makes decisions about what kind of thinking strategies to employ and when in response to the text with a sense of awareness about how the reading is going. The following description of a proficient reader moving through the reading process would be quite consistent with Pressley and Afflerbach's findings (1995).

Such a reader would begin a reading experience by previewing the text to be read. During this preview, the reader would be looking to get a sense of the content and structure of the text, as well as determine whether the text met his or her pre-established goals for the reading. That is, if the reading had been self-selected, the reader would have begun with a specific intent in mind, such as entertainment, knowledge acquisition, or curiosity, and would have selected the text in light of that specific purpose. Naturally, if the reader discovered that the text did not meet that purpose after starting it, he or she might decide to abandon it and pursue an alternate choice. This reader would have activated and began considering relevant information from his or her background knowledge to start the reading process.

Once the proficient reader began working through the text, he or she would have little difficulty with word recognition. In fact, this component of the process would require minimal mental energy. Instead, the reader would process a significant majority

of the words in the text accurately and automatically. If an unfamiliar word were encountered, the reader would use his or her knowledge of how words and our language work to decode it. The reader would use his or her vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and the context in which the word appears to mentally activate the appropriate meaning of words in the text. He or she would monitor the pacing of the reading and decide on an appropriate pace based on the purpose for reading. At some times he or she might slow down and even re-read a particular section, and at other times he or she might skim a section quickly. This reader has the capacity to process the text successfully at a speed that is fast enough to enable completion within a given time frame, and the discipline to know how to decide how fast is fast enough.

As soon as the reading of a text begins, a mental summary starts to form in the mind of the proficient reader. He or she uses background knowledge about the content of the text and the structure of its organization to develop, maintain, extend, and revise this summary throughout the act. In reflection upon the summary, the reader will make predictions, draw inferences, ask questions, and formulate nascent opinions about the author's ideas. This reader recognizes when a breakdown in meaning making has occurred – not only is he or she immediately aware of the confusion, but he or she is also able to determine the source of the confusion and to select from among a range of options for remedying it. The reader will evaluate how successful the effort to clear up the confusion was and decide if any additional action is required. While still in the process of reading, the reader will begin to develop perspectives on the text that he or she will examine more closely upon conclusion.

When finished, the proficient reader will compare the ideas and information encountered to what he or she previously knew or had encountered elsewhere. He or she will decide whether there is agreement or departure from previous ideas and then develop an opinion about the content and style of the author. In conclusion of the reading experience, this reader will revisit the initial purpose for reading, determine whether it has been met, and make a decision about a next step. This next step might include pursuing another book by the same author, pursuing another book on the same topic, or putting the ideas encountered to use in thought or action. Regardless of the specific next step, this reader will keep the big ideas and personal reactions from this reading experience in his or her long-term memory until it is activated again for some pertinent reason.

The goal of all teaching efforts in reading should be to move students closer toward this vision of a proficient reader. However, this is not a sum-zero vision. Instead, research suggests that the acquisition of such reading proficiency is developmental, as is the case with the acquisition of many other forms of cognitive expertise (Sternberg, 2003). This section will now turn to a consideration of a model of such reading development.

Reading development. There are two elements central to defining the acquisition of proficient reading capabilities as a developmental process. First, development implies that change will take place. Second, development implies that such change occurs across a span of time. The widely accepted assertion that individuals develop as readers thus embraces the idea that it takes change over time to become a reader who is proficient. A

developing reader is considered proficient when he or she can employ strategic knowledge in order to successfully comprehend a text that is appropriately leveled. In the world of school, an appropriately leveled text is most frequently determined by grade level, which is most often determined by state content standards and assessed by formal, standardized test measures. An adult reader could be considered proficient when he or she can employ strategic knowledge in order to successfully comprehend a range of levels of text that are expected to be appropriate for an adult audience.

Models of reading development reflect these principles of change across time (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1983; Ehri, 1995; Juel, 1991; Spear-Swerling, 2004; Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1996; Stuart & Coltheart, 1988). Individual models tend to differ from one another regarding what changes occur when and over how much time; however across the most well accepted models there are several common themes. First, it is commonly acknowledged that all readers have to invest significant time and effort learning to deal with word level processing demands in the beginning stages of reading development. While readers will continue to have to learn to manage increasingly more complex words throughout their reading development and their formal reading instruction and beyond, in normal development these later demands require significantly fewer mental resources. Second, the idea that all readers have to learn to emphasize meaning making as the primary task of reading throughout each stage of reading development is common. That is, it is typically agreed that readers must come to understand that reading is a process in which strategic skill is employed in the service of constructing a meaningful message from the author. Third, while each stage of reading development

offers an opportunity for a growing reader to gain the strategic skill and knowledge necessary to take on increasingly more complicated texts, it also offers an opportunity for a growing reader to go off track on his or her developmental path or to experience new or unforeseen difficulty. No stage of reading development offers a buffer from failure.

Spear-Swerling and Sternberg (1996) suggest a widely accepted six-stage model to outline the path to proficient reading. Their stages represent the ways in which readers at different developmental points generally approach and manage most texts common to what is expected of them. The first three stages in the model are oriented around stages of word reading. In the Visual-Cue Word Recognition stage, very young readers do not understand or operate based on the alphabetic principle that printed letters represent speech sounds. Instead, children operate in text through reliance on salient visual cues, such as the octagonal shape and red background of a stop sign, and on oral language knowledge, such as addressing the beginning of a story with the phrase “once upon a time.” When children move into the Phonetic-Cue Word Recognition stage, they understand the concept of the alphabetic principle that printed letters represent spoken speech sounds and know some of those letter-sound relationships. They rely heavily on beginning and ending letters in a word and continue to depend on their oral language knowledge in lieu of strong reading comprehension capabilities. Readers in the Controlled-Word Recognition stage utilize all of the phonetic information within a word to make sense of it and have a growing sight word vocabulary. Word recognition continues to be a laborious task that requires a significant investment of mental energy and, as a result, reading comprehension continues to be a challenge.

Once students move into the Automatic Word Recognition stage, they are able to recognize many words very quickly and accurately. These readers are achieving reading fluency in the sense that they are able to balance word recognition demands with comprehension processes with great success. Reading comprehension is no longer limited by word recognition, but instead by vocabulary and background knowledge. Children show evidence of the Strategic Reading stage when they are then able to exhibit the capacity to regularly use reading comprehension strategies to assist with meaning making. Reading in fact becomes a tool for acquiring new knowledge. Finally, the Proficient Reading stage represents the most skilled phase in reading development. Children who are proficient readers not only use reading comprehension strategies to manage within single texts, but also utilize more sophisticated strategies for processing themes and information across texts in a critical and reflective way.

Spear-Swerling and Sternberg (1996) caution that these stages of reading development should not be thought of as spontaneously unfolding from the starting point of visual-cue word recognition to the desired end of proficient reading with the passing of enough time. Instead, readers require instruction and guided practice over time to support them in moving through the stages of reading development towards the acquisition of reading proficiency. The elementary language arts classroom should be a vehicle through which students are provided such reading instruction. Since this study focuses exclusively on reading comprehension instruction, this review will turn to a consideration of research on reading comprehension instruction that is provided to developing readers in upper elementary classrooms.

Reading comprehension instruction. The end goal of elementary reading instruction is to develop a reader's ability to engage in sophisticated interpretation and analyses of texts. Classrooms in which students achieve such proficient reading have been documented to be decidedly multi-faceted, with sustained and simultaneous foci on developing word and text level processing ability, student motivation and volition, world knowledge, and the adoption of literate activity as a personal and cultural practice (Pressley, 2006a). Students learn to decode and automatically recognize words, fostering a continually growing knowledge of the alphabetic principle and the English language (Ehri, 1991; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Share & Stanovich, 1995), as well as to engage in the ongoing development of background and vocabulary knowledge (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). Students are given extensive opportunities to gain experience with a wide range of appropriate reading materials and receive teaching that addresses actively interacting with those whole texts. Most American schools attempt to offer such a comprehensive approach to elementary reading instruction via the adoption of a core reading program.

Core reading programs. According to Simmons and Kame'enui (2006), "A core reading program is the primary instructional tool that teachers use to teach children to learn to read and ensure they reach reading levels that meet or exceed grade-level standards" (p. 1). Core reading program packages, which in the past have been referred to as basal reading programs, are typically comprised of a student anthology of reading selections and accompanying activities, a teacher's manual outlining a sequence of recommended instructional objectives and priorities, and a range of supplementary

materials. These supplementary materials may include additional student texts, audio recordings of anthology selections, assessment recommendations or materials, and additional instructional materials for differentiating teaching to meet individual student needs.

Core reading programs have been and continue to be a prevailing fixture in the majority of United States public elementary school classrooms. While it is challenging to quantify exactly how large of a presence core reading programs have in the United States, there are several important indicators worth considering. Twenty states are considered state-level textbook adoption states. Schools and school districts in these states must opt to adopt instructional materials from a list provided by their state department of education or to apply for a waiver to not adopt instructional materials from the adoption list. Core reading programs dominate all state adoption lists for elementary reading instruction. The state in which this study was conducted is a state-level adoption state. During the most recent reading adoption, 8 out of 306 school corporations, or less than 3% of all school corporations, elected to apply for a waiver to not adopt a core reading program (Indiana Department of Education, 2007). A 2007 national survey conducted by the firm Education Market Research found that 73.2% of participating schools reported either closely following or selectively using a core reading program (Education Market Research, 2007 as reported in Dewitz, Jones, & Leahy, 2009).

In a 2007 study, Zeig surveyed teachers in the state of Florida, a state frequently looked to as a trendsetter in educational policy and practice. She found that nearly 46% of teachers in the sample reported that a single core reading program was the primary

instructional material for reading instruction in their elementary classroom while many more respondents suggested that they utilized a core reading program along with other supplemental instructional materials in their classrooms. This represented a significant change from a similar study conducted in 1996 (Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, & Ro, 2000) in which a majority of respondents reported a collection of trade books as being the primary instructional materials from which they provided classroom reading instruction. If anything, the requirements of the 2001 Reading First legislation has significantly increased the percentage of United States public elementary schools selecting and enacting a core reading program as the primary instructional framework through which teachers are expected to organize and provide classroom reading instruction, and, specifically, reading comprehension instruction (Gamse, Bloom, Kemple, & Jacob, 2008; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

Research on the use of core reading programs as a framework for elementary reading comprehension instruction has been focused on either the content of those materials or on how teachers utilize them in the classroom. In general, studies of the content of core reading program materials concentrate on teacher manual and student anthology substance, organization, or presentation, either having been prompted by earlier classroom observations or having later attention directed towards the impact of their use on classrooms, teachers, or students (Durkin, 1981; Durkin, 2004; Hoffman et al., 1994; Moody, Schumm, Fischer, & Jean-Francois, 1999). Many of these studies have identified structural elements or instructional recommendations that could be considered problematic for reading comprehension instruction.

Beck, McKeown, McCaslin, & Burkes (1979) conducted an examination of suggestions for directed reading lessons offered in the teacher's manuals of two prominent commercial reading programs in order to evaluate the quality of instructional practice being recommended in relation to reading comprehension development. They found that the suggestions offered to teachers were frequently problematic in that they directed the lesson to ideas or information that were either misleading or irrelevant to the content of the text being read during the lesson. They hypothesized that using the lesson components and suggestions as provided in the manuals might actually detract from student comprehension of the instructional text and the broader development of comprehension skill. In a follow-up study, Beck, Omanson, & McKeown (1982) redesigned two of these story lessons to more closely emphasize relevant background knowledge and central story content and found that third grade students experienced improved comprehension performance when they participated in the redesigned lessons.

Motivated by an earlier classroom observation study, Durkin (1981) analyzed the teachers' manuals of five core reading programs from kindergarten through sixth grade. Durkin was interested in determining whether the recommendations offered in the manuals aligned with the observations that she had made in her previous study (Durkin, 1978/1979). In that study, Durkin observed the reading instruction provided by 39 third through sixth grade teachers. In her observations, she noticed very little explicit, direct comprehension instruction occurring. Instead, teachers frequently questioned students to determine how well they understood a given text or mentioned comprehension skills and strategies briefly enough to be able to give students written assignments to complete

about a given text. Rarely did the teachers in Durkin's study spend extended time modeling, explaining, or practicing the skills and strategies necessary for student reading comprehension development. She then looked to the core reading program manuals themselves to learn more about why comprehension instruction seemed so minimal.

For the purposes of her analysis, Durkin (1981) defined comprehension instruction as any segment in the manual that "suggests that a teacher do or say something that ought to help children acquire the ability to understand, or work out, the meaning of connected text" (p. 518). Further, she coded each segment based on the function it played in a larger instructional cycle, using the following five codes: preparation, application, practice, review, and assessment. Durkin found that the frequency of comprehension segments by code aligned well with what she had observed in classrooms. That is, the manuals gave significantly more recommendations for practice and assessment, and significantly fewer recommendations for preparation, application, and review, the types of segments that would most likely be characterized by a teacher providing direct comprehension instruction to students. The recommendations in the manuals guided teachers to be "mentioners" (p. 516) who managed student practice with connected text and assessors who determined how well that practice was done. She concluded that the way in which reading comprehension instruction was structured and recommended in core reading program teachers' manuals was most problematic because it framed the texts being read successfully as an end in itself, not a means to acquiring further reading comprehension capacity.

With limited attention having been directed to this particular line of inquiry in the interim, McGill-Franzen et al. (2006) extended Durkin's (1981) analytical framework and undertook a content analysis of three weeks of instruction presented in the teachers' manuals of two core reading programs that were widely adopted in the state of Florida at the time. In addition to labeling instructional segments by Durkin's original codes, they also labeled each instructional segment by its degree of explicitness, connectedness to the instructional text of the week, relatedness to the other segments within the week, and comprehension skill or strategy content. They found that significant differences existed between the two manuals in the amount of preparation offered before reading the instructional text, the amount of independent practice offered to students during reading the instructional text, and the relative amount of comprehension skill and strategy content offered throughout the manual. However, significant consistencies across the manuals also existed. Both manuals offered very limited instructional review, informal assessment, and fluency and vocabulary development.

The researchers also examined the student texts and the program supplementary materials, finding that significant differences existed in the number of student texts offered, the number of total words that students would have the opportunity to read across those texts, and level of difficulty of the student texts. While the supplementary materials for both programs suggested that they offered extra resources for struggling students, neither set of materials offered meaningful support for the teacher in how to utilize those materials in the service of struggling students.

This finding motivated the researchers to pursue a second phase of study of the project, analyzing state level third grade achievement test data by school, disaggregated by the core reading program that had been adopted by that school. In their univariate analysis variance, significant differences existed by program in the percentage of students scoring at high and low achievement levels, but not middle achievement levels of the state standardized reading test. The authors concluded that the implicit whole class instructional structure of the core reading programs, with limited emphasis on or support for differentiation, resulted in limited opportunities for non-average students, particularly struggling students, to experience significant reading comprehension growth.

Dewitz, Jones, and Leahy (2009) specifically examined the presentation of reading comprehension instruction in the teacher's manuals of 2003 and 2005 editions of the five best-selling core reading programs at the time. They conducted a content analysis to determine what the core reading programs recommended in terms of comprehension skills and strategies to teach, the ways in which the skills and strategies should be offered to students, and whether this organization of comprehension strategy instruction aligned with how those strategies had been originally validated in prior research. The researchers read each component of the weekly lesson plan for third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' manuals and coded each individual instructional move recommended to teachers in three ways. First, the researchers coded what comprehension skill or strategy was being taught. Researchers identified and coded 51 named skills and strategies being taught across the five programs. Second, the researchers coded what was being done with the skill or strategy at that point in the

instructional cycle. Researchers identified 10 codes for the types of instructional moves that the manual recommended that the teacher employ in relation to the skill or strategy. These 10 codes included: skill mentioned, skill and explanation, modeling, information, question, question and modeling, guided practice, direct explanation, independent practice, and discussion. Third, the researchers coded whether the instruction was recommended to take place inside or outside of the anthology reading selection. Instruction that received a code of inside was recommended to occur while students were reading the anthology selection. Instruction that received a code of outside was recommended to occur either before and after students read the anthology selection.

The researchers then plotted codes for each type of skill and strategy by type of instructional move across a unit of instruction in each program for three specific skills and strategies: using narrative text structure, making inferences, and summarizing. The goal was to compare the array of instructional recommendations made by the core reading programs to the recommendations for effective comprehension skill and strategy in the research literature. The researchers had a particular interest in whether skill and strategy instruction was recommendation in a way that aligned with a gradual release of responsibility model for instruction, as well as with the ways in which the skills and strategies had previously been validated as effective.

While there was some variation across programs, this content analysis yielded important consistencies. All five of the programs offered many more comprehension strategies and skills for instruction than is recommended in the research literature. Across programs, the number of skills and strategies presented ranged from 17 to 29.

This occurred for two reasons. First, programs frequently called the same processes by multiple different names and fragmented complex, integrated processes into individual sub-components that they then presented as separate, individual skills. Second, programs frequently labeled elements of genre and text structure knowledge and various types of responses to text as comprehension skills and strategies. In addition, the researchers noted that four out of the five programs made no consistent distinction between a comprehension skill and a comprehension strategy in either how the manual explained the skill or strategy or how it recommended the skill or strategy be taught, supported, and developed in students.

None of the programs presented comprehension strategies for instruction in ways that reflected previous research. For example, none of the programs taught any strategies for an appropriately recommended length of time or through a complete gradual release of responsibility model. Specifically, the researchers found that all of the programs lacked recommendations to offer explicit explanations about the comprehension skills and strategies to students or to provide students with guided and independent practice experiences with the skills and strategies. In addition, questioning continued to remain the predominant form of engagement with skills and strategies both inside and outside of the reading of the anthology selection. The authors raised concerns about what teachers might come to believe about comprehension skill and strategy instruction from being asked to be faithful to the way instruction is presented in core reading programs. They suggested that the core reading program should be conceptualized as a flexible structure

from which to elaborate and integrate the talk and principles of effective comprehension instruction, particularly in the service of the development of the most struggling readers.

These projects reflect an assumption that better understanding the content of core reading programs is an important starting point for evaluating the experiences of students with these materials. They suggest that core reading programs seem to be designed and organized in ways that may conflict with expert comprehension teaching. Teachers are left with the challenge of using these materials and designing high-quality comprehension instruction in conjunction with their own level of knowledge and expertise.

Research oriented more directly on classroom usage have attended to the enactment of curriculum materials by teachers and students, intending to shed light onto what and how material gets covered for the sake of developing a further nuanced understanding of student outcomes (Barr & Sadow, 1989; Durkin, 1978/1979, 1984; Pressley et al., 1998). There is one finding that seems to dominate the literature. First noted by Durkin (1978/1979) in her observational analysis of comprehension instruction in classrooms using popularly adopted core reading programs of the time, she reported that little instruction of comprehension processes was occurring, with many practices labeled as instructional actually serving assessment functions instead. This early finding has been replicated with remarkable consistency over time.

Barr and Sadow (1989) studied how seven fourth grade teachers across two different school district, with two different core reading programs, used the core reading program in the course of their reading instruction. The researchers analyzed the core reading programs themselves, observed each teacher eight times during reading

instruction over the course of a school year, and interviewed each teacher nine times (once at the beginning of the school year and once following each observation). The researchers concluded that the design of the two core reading programs significantly influenced the type of contextual reading experiences and comprehension skill activities that the teachers choose to provide to their students. Teachers varied in the amount of time that they choose to devote to instruction out of the core reading program. However, all of the teachers spent more instructional time doing comprehension skill activities, but not direct comprehension skill instruction, than engaging in contextual reading experiences.

Pressley et al. (1998) spent a year observing the literacy instruction of ten teachers in fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Each teacher was observed approximately ten times during an entire block of literacy instruction and was interviewed twice over the course of the school year. Utilizing qualitative data analysis procedures, the researchers developed and offered a picture of what kinds of literacy instruction was and was not occurring in these classrooms. In regards to reading comprehension instruction, the majority of the classrooms offered students regular experience with reading and sharing trade books as well as opportunities to participate in teacher-led discussions of reading. All of the teachers used a variety of instructional groupings, providing their students with a range of whole group, small group, partner, and independent work experiences. All of the teachers expressed that a primary goal of their reading instruction was to have students develop the capacity to apply reading skills to new texts. However, the researchers noted that none of the teachers were observed offering students direct instruction about

comprehension strategies, either what they were and why they were important to use or how to carry out them individually and collectively.

These classroom observation studies continue to reinforce the conclusion that reading comprehension instruction in the upper elementary grades, particularly that oriented around comprehension strategy instruction is sparse, possibly because it is difficult to do well (Pressley et al., 1998). On the whole, the research literature on reading comprehension instruction in core reading programs suggest that the composition and reading comprehension content of these programs may stand to exacerbate this challenge. As a result of these findings, as well as stagnant student reading achievement, many researchers turned their attention to developing specific approaches to developing student reading comprehension capacity to be integrated into existing classroom instruction.

Instructional approaches to address reading comprehension. There have been a range of instructional approaches developed in the past two decades that researchers intended to be integrated into classroom reading instruction to specifically address and promote reading comprehension growth in the upper elementary grades. McKeown, Beck, and Blake (2009) have grouped these approaches into two categories: those that emphasize student development of a mental processing system of strategies that facilitate meaning making of texts and those that emphasize student engagement in discussion and reasoning routines that result in a coherent understanding of the content of texts. I will now turn to a discussion of relevant research on these strategy and content approaches to reading comprehension learning.

Strategy approaches. Since gaining attention in the late 1970s, many educational researchers have considered a variety of approaches for comprehension strategy instruction. This movement was borne out of a growing research base that suggested that expert readers use a small repertoire of processing strategies purposefully and flexibly and that students can be taught and scaffolded to use these same strategies individually and as a coordinated system (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Early studies focused efforts on validating the teaching of individual strategies for the purpose of improving reading comprehension ability. This line of research produced strong evidence for directly teaching readers a small group of individual thinking strategies including predicting, visualizing, connecting, monitoring, summarizing, questioning, setting purposes, and activating background knowledge. Instructional approaches soon followed which taught students to use sets of these strategies in coordinated ways, as proficient readers seem to do. There are now a number of existing instructional approaches for developing knowledge of individual comprehension strategies and of coordinated strategy use. These have most notably included Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994) and Transactional Strategy Instruction (Brown, Pressley, VanMeter, & Schuder, 1996).

In Reciprocal Teaching, a teacher and students take turns modeling and leading each other through text using four different comprehension strategies: summarizing, questioning, monitoring understanding, and predicting (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Over time, teachers gradually relinquish more and more responsibility for using the individual strategies and for leading discussion through texts to student participants. Eventually,

students are placed into small reading groups in which each student in the group is responsible for teaching students about and leading students to use one target comprehension strategy. The teacher plays a significant role in introducing the strategies to students and teaching them about their use in the beginning of the process and gradually transitions to the role of observer within the groups over time.

In two early studies, Palincsar and Brown (1984), the original developers of the Reciprocal Teaching approach, validated the procedure with two separate groups of students, the group in the first study being taught by members of the research team and the group in the second study being taught by teacher volunteers. In the first study, 24 seventh grade students were assigned to one of four conditions: Reciprocal Teaching, Locating Information, Test Only, or Control. Students in the Reciprocal Teaching condition experienced that teacher led approach to comprehension strategy instruction. Students in the Locating Information condition experienced instruction from a teacher on how to locate information in a text to answer assessment questions. Students in the Test Only condition experienced daily practice with taking reading comprehension assessments. Students in the Control condition experienced no reading instruction or practice opportunities and solely participated in the study pre- and post-tests. Students in the Reciprocal Teaching condition showed significantly greater comprehension gains than students in any other condition both during the course of the study and following its conclusion.

In the second study, 21 seventh grade students across four different classroom teachers were taught by their classroom teacher using the Reciprocal Teaching approach

in their normally assigned small reading groups. Results were similar to those of the first study, indicating that the Reciprocal Teaching approach could be learned and utilized by classroom teachers to better serve the comprehension learning needs of their students. Student reading comprehension improved significantly over the course of the intervention and continued to improve as students continued to apply acquired strategy knowledge to new texts. This despite the fact that all four of the participating teachers expressed concern at the beginning of the study about whether their students could handle participating in the Reciprocal Teaching approach.

Since these original studies, a variety of follow-up studies have examined the use of the Reciprocal Teaching approach in different instructional settings with students of different grade and starting ability levels. Rosenshine and Meister (1994) located 16 such experimental studies that had been conducted since the publication of the original Palincsar and Brown (1984) studies. In their review, they found 10 studies with significant effects favoring Reciprocal Teaching, working with readers ranging from fourth grade students to adult learners. Across these studies, there were no differences on the effect of the intervention based on whether it was being led by a research or a classroom teacher. As a result, strong evidence exists that Reciprocal Teaching is a viable instructional approach for helping upper elementary students and older to acquire the capacity to use the four target reading strategies in such a way that improves their ability to understand texts.

In Transactional Strategy Instruction, the teacher leads students, often in small-groups, through a designated text while modeling, explaining, scaffolding, and supporting

student use of a range of reading comprehension strategies over an extended period of time, most often a school year or longer. The teacher occupies and moves between different positions with the group over the course of time, depending on the difficulty of the text, the current strategy of focus, and the needs of the individual students in the group (Pressley et al., 1992).

One of the earliest studies of the Transactional Strategy Instruction approach is that of the Students Achieving Independent Learning (SAIL) program (Brown, Pressley, VanMeter, Schuder, 1996). In this study, 10 teachers with students ranging from first through third grade participated in the SAIL program for the course of an entire school year, with five of the teachers serving as intervention teachers and five of the teachers serving as control teachers. The control teachers did not make any alterations to their typical classroom reading instruction during the year. The intervention teachers utilized the principles and design of Transactional Strategy Instruction with small reading groups throughout the course of the school year. Six target students were chosen in each classroom for participation in the study. Students were chosen as target students because of their status as below grade level readers at the beginning of the school year. Each student participated in two administrations of a standardized reading test in reading comprehension and work attack skills, two strategy interviews, one story retelling session, and one story think aloud session over the course of the year. By the end of the school year, students who had experienced Transactional Strategy Instruction as a component of their classroom reading instruction evidenced greater awareness about

reading comprehension strategies and their use in understanding a text, as well as greater improvement of their reading comprehension on the standardized reading test.

Students who are directly taught how to use comprehension strategies evidence improved reading comprehension performance. Instructional approaches intended to teach students about the use of comprehension strategies offer students information about what strategies will help them as readers and how and why to use these strategies as well as opportunities to practice using these strategies in connected text over time.

Content approaches. In the late 1980's and early 1990's some researchers began to grow frustrated with the ways in which approaches to reading comprehension that emphasized strategy instruction privileged strategies over the acquisition of text content and the development of a coherent mental models of the texts being read. This led a subset of researchers to advance a group of instructional approaches that utilize discussion arrangements and focus on building a coherent sense of individual texts, through which students would learn processes for reasoning their way through new texts. These approaches have most notably included Questioning the Author (Beck, McKeown, Sandora, Kucan, & Worthy, 1996; Beck & McKeown, 2001) and Collaborative Reasoning (Chinn & Anderson, 1998; Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001; Clark et al., 2003).

In Questioning the Author, a teacher leads a group of students through discussion of an instructional text while reading that text together. The teacher is responsible for initiating and maintaining discussion queries that focus the content of the discussion around analyzing the intentions of author for the text and identifying places in the text

where the author made ideas difficult to comprehend. The goal of the discussion is for students to recognize text as the written down words of a human author, someone who makes mistakes or miscommunicates at times, and for students to appreciate that reading is the process of making sense of that author's ideas. When the researchers studied the application of Questioning the Author discussion techniques in two fourth grade classrooms (Beck et al., 1996), they found that such a discussion format improved student engagement and motivation to read as well as increased the likelihood the students would recognize breakdowns in the instructional text or in their meaning-making of the instructional text.

In Collaborative Reasoning, students regularly participate in text-based discussions. However, over time, students are given complete control over turn-taking and text interpretation and share control with their teacher over discussion topic. The emphasis of discussions is placed on evaluating the argumentation used by individual readers to support their interpretation of a text. Researchers studied the implementation of Collaborative Reasoning in four fourth grade classrooms with 84 students (Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001). They videotaped and transcribed a total of 40 discussions across the four classrooms over the course of a school year. The Collaborative Reasoning discussions resulted in greater student engagement with the text and in the discussion and in greater student use of higher level reasoning processes.

Students who experience content-based discussions of text have improved engagement in those discussions, exhibit increased motivation to read, and use more sophisticated reasoning strategies over the course of time spent in such discussions.

Researchers who advocate the use of content-based discussion approaches suggest that improved engagement and increased motivation in particular will result in continually improving reading comprehension over time.

While strategy and content approaches differ in their primary goals, with strategy approaches intended to improve student acquisition and use of comprehension strategies and content approaches intended to improve student engagement in and reasoning during text-based discussions, they share a common interest in being utilized to improve student reading comprehension outcomes. In addition, both strategy and content approaches advance and emphasize particular ways of talking during the course of instruction as a key element for how to enhance student reading comprehension learning.

Instructional talk. An interest in the relationship between instructional talk and student learning has been ongoing within the educational research community (Cazden, 2001). Since Mehan (1979) recognized the primary mode of instructional talk between teachers and students as an initiate-respond-evaluate (IRE) cycle, researchers have been exploring instructional talk content and processes that best contribute to the development of student reading comprehension. An initiate-respond-evaluate cycle of instructional talk occurs when a teacher poses a question to students, thus initiating an interaction with them, then a student offers a response to the initial question, and the teacher closes the interaction by evaluating the quality of the student response, either recognizing it as a correct response or acknowledging it as an incorrect response and asking for additional responses, thus extending the cycle until a student responds correctly. This effectively ends the talk cycle until the teacher poses another question and begins the initiate-

respond-evaluate cycle anew. There have been numerous criticisms of initiate-respond-evaluate as a mode of instructional talk, predominately that it narrows opportunities for students to think independently or to engage actively in the life of the classroom. In designing new instructional approaches to better promote reading comprehension instruction and development in the upper elementary classroom, particular attention has been paid to the studying the types of talk that should be advanced within each approach.

Strategy approaches have involved studies of instructional talk effective for the purpose of promoting the knowledge and use of processing strategies (Duffy et al, 1987; Gaskins, Anderson, Pressley, Cunicelli, & Satlow, 1993; Kucan & Beck, 1997). This includes talk that directly explains processing strategies and talk that models the use of processing strategies for the purpose of better understanding text. These explanations include declarative knowledge of what the strategy is and why it is important and useful to readers, conditional knowledge of when and where the strategy can and should be used, and procedural knowledge of how to carry out the strategy (Almasi, 2003; Gaskins, 2005). Duffy et al (1987) examined teachers' use of explanatory talk about processing strategies and its impact on the comprehension development of their students. The explanations of processing strategies that seem to be most effective for supporting student comprehension, particularly that of the most struggling readers, were those that were most explicit (Duffy, Roehler, & Rackliffe, 1986) and contributed to an integrated understanding of being strategic (Duffy, 1993).

Content approaches have focused on instructional talk employed by the teacher in order to facilitate the meaning making of texts through discussion before, during, and

after reading (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Chinn & Anderson, 1998; Goldenberg, 1992). Teachers are typically responsible for both initiating discussion queries and maintaining instructional productivity and coherence through the use of follow-up discussion moves. Teachers using these types of discussion approaches seem to generate improved text comprehension in students (Beck et al, 1996).

In a more recent study, researchers examining upper elementary comprehension instruction have begun to characterize patterns of instructional talk teachers and students utilize during text discussion as they relate to creating accountability for meaning-making (Wolf, Crosson, & Resnick, 2006). These researchers have identified three types of talk that teachers use that seem to contribute to comprehension development: talk that develops accountability to learning community, accountability to accurate knowledge, and accountability to rigorous thinking. Accountability to the learning community represents teacher talk that creates links between the thinking of different class members. Accountability to accurate knowledge represents teacher talk that demands student adherence to the text and promotes student use of textual evidence to build meaning. Accountability to rigorous thinking represents teacher talk that promotes student reasoning and requires students to share and elaborate their logic in drawing conclusions about the text. Teachers who used more strongly rated accountable talk in each of the above categories were able to more effectively develop higher levels of comprehension in their students.

Significant efforts have been undertaken in the past several decades to develop, validate, and promote the use of specific instructional approaches, in tandem with broader

frameworks for upper elementary literacy instruction, in order to better meet the reading comprehension needs of students. These approaches offer both new opportunities and new challenges to the teachers attempting to use them. First, teachers must learn about the approaches themselves, about the philosophies that underlie them, about their execution in the classroom, and about how to handle the problems and issues that arise during their use. Second, teachers must learn how to integrate the approaches into their existing frameworks, including melding instructional philosophies and making instructional time available for their use. Finally, teachers must learn how to adapt both the approaches and their broader teaching frameworks to flexibly meet the needs of a range of students. This is clearly no small task for any teacher to take on. There must be a compelling rationale to drive such an endeavor and a support system for engaging in the learning and development necessary to complete it.

Conclusion. Reading is a complex developmental process. The desired outcome of this developmental process is that readers acquire and evidence the dispositions and strategic knowledge of proficient adult readers. Elementary reading instruction is one of core vehicles through which young readers are provided the teaching and the experience through which they can develop such reading proficiency. In the United States, the utilization of a core reading program is the most common material and instructional framework through which elementary reading instruction is offered to students. Unfortunately, the design of many core reading programs obscures and misrepresents effective reading comprehension instruction, and the teachers using these core reading programs often offer instruction that is limited in modeling and explaining the

dispositions and processes involved in effective reading. There is a body of teaching approaches intended to supplement or be integrated with ongoing classroom reading instruction that have been validated to improve student reading comprehension learning. Classroom teachers have the challenge to manage classroom environments, core instructional frameworks, and supplementary teaching approaches in the best interest of the readers for whom they are responsible. It is clear that such a challenge requires extensive knowledge and skill on the part of the classroom teacher.

The Teacher Development Process

Regardless of instructional framework or teaching approach, upper elementary teachers are the providers of reading comprehension instruction that will allow students to acquire reading proficiency. Teachers must provide instructional experiences that create opportunities for students to engage in text processing that is representative of the thinking moves of proficient readers. More specifically, teachers must ensure that their classrooms are places that are rich in the kinds of talk that, within those instructional experiences, will create the most accountability for comprehension learning. We know that there are teachers that embody all of the knowledge and skill required to be such providers for their students. We are beginning to learn and conceptualize about exactly what that knowledge and skill entails and how to help other teachers acquire it. However, many questions about this teacher development process remain, including how the presence of core reading programs as a part of elementary reading instruction might influence it. This second section of the literature review will take stock of the ideas that are most relevant to these questions.

Curriculum materials and learning. Ball and Cohen (1996) have advanced an argument for considering the value of curriculum materials in the process of teacher learning, citing that curriculum materials are well-positioned to reach large numbers of teachers and are a routine part of many schools, in effect already scaled up in a way that may be difficult for many other forms of professional learning that are most viable on smaller scales to do. Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball (2003) further theorize that teachers mediate the impact of resources, such as curriculum materials, provided by schools for the purpose of enhancing learning. By the same token, those educational resources potentially offer a learning opportunity for teachers and could serve to mediate learning for both teachers and students.

A line of research on curriculum materials that aligns with these perspectives has emerged in the field of math and science education that may have implications for reading education as well. It holds that curriculum materials themselves may have educative potential for supporting teachers to become more knowledgeable and skillful at providing domain-specific instruction. There has been more limited work done on this in relation to reading instruction, however, so ideas about the potential for teacher learning with core reading programs are much more speculative.

Curriculum materials that seem to have the most educative potential for math and science teachers support them as they design their teaching (Brown & Edelson, 2003). Remilliard (1999) identified four design phases that math and science teachers use that include reading the materials, selecting tasks, enacting tasks and responding to students during them, and mapping curriculum over time. These phases will be considered

discretely, however it is worth noting that in practice it is reasonable to expect that they are overlapping.

A first phase of using curriculum materials in a pedagogical design process is reading the curriculum materials. As readers, teachers bring their prior knowledge, experiences, and belief structures to bear on curriculum materials as text. When exploring experienced elementary math teachers' learning as a result of utilizing a new, reform-oriented math curriculum and teachers' manual, Remilliard (1999) found the reading process and the interaction that occurred during it to be a crucial location of learning or lack thereof. The ways that teachers interpreted the materials when they read them in preparation for thinking about instruction dictated how the materials were utilized. One teacher, in finding the ideas encountered early in her reading of the text incongruent with her own philosophies and former teaching practices chose to disregard it. Another, giving the materials a more generous read, chose to suspend judgment until she had spent time trying out the suggested practices, and ultimately transformed her practice in ways that resulted in improved student learning.

A second phase involves the selection of instructional tasks for students to engage in. This occurs in advance of instruction, but is often informed by knowledge of content and students and the interaction of the two. Researchers involved with the LeTUS project (Brown & Edelson, 2003), a science curriculum development project addressed the idea of using curriculum materials to support the selection of tasks and experiences by analyzing how teachers shared responsibility for instruction with their materials. In their work with science teachers, they observed and conceptualized different ways in which

teachers share responsibility with their materials as a continuum. On one end an “offloading” relationship existed, in which teachers place all responsibility for planning and guiding instruction onto the materials. On the other end there existed an “improvising” relationship, in which teachers relied very little on the materials, choosing instead to take full responsibility for instruction. Within either end of the continuum, a variety of levels of sharing relationships existed in which responsibility was jointly shared. These teachers used material with a lens towards adapting them to meet the needs of their students in their context. This relationship, however, is not a de-contextualized one, but instead is fostered while embedded in specific political and organizational contexts (Spillane, 1999).

A third phase was that of enacting selected tasks and reacting to student experiences with them, including responding to student questions and misunderstandings. Teacher learning from the enactment process can be strongly influenced by the compatibility of personal belief structures about instruction and about students. Collopy (2003) noted this issue when studying how two elementary teachers learned about mathematics instruction while enacting a new set of math curriculum materials. She examined these teachers during their first year with the materials, when they had been asked to pilot a new curriculum without making deliberate adaptations to it. She discovered that for these teachers the opportunity to learn from the materials through enacting the tasks embedded in them was influenced by their prior knowledge with mathematics instruction and their belief structures regarding the role of student problem solving in learning to do math. For example, one of the participating teachers believed

in the value of rote-learning of mathematical facts, and felt her belief structure was validated by students having difficulty with the problem-solving oriented tasks, instead of learning about student problem-solving processes, as was intended by the new curriculum.

A final phase involves mapping curriculum, or making those choices that determine content and organization over time, that is, the scope and sequence of instruction. This seems to be influenced by teachers' feelings of self-efficacy in understanding the subject area content and its organization as a knowledge domain (Stodolsky, 1988). When Sosniak and Stodolsky (1993) examined curriculum materials use in fourth grade classrooms, they discovered that teachers utilized materials over time in different ways across subject areas. All four participating teachers made some use of a textbook and teachers' guide in each subject, but none used them in the same manner across subjects or over time, even if they taught in the same school, grade level, and with the same materials. Each teacher worked with the textbook across subjects and time in distinct ways from each other teacher. In some situations the textbook and teachers' guide served as resources to support and develop both day-to-day practice and wider curriculum mapping. Thus, materials sometimes challenged and educated the teacher using them. In other situations, however, the materials served to free the teacher from thinking about the particular subject matter, its organization over time, and accompanying pedagogy. In this way, materials allowed the teacher to engage in routine, ritualistic, and rigid practices.

The utilization of curriculum materials in math and science instruction seems to involve a series of phases including reading the text materials, selecting tasks and experiences, enacting those tasks and responding to students during them, and mapping curriculum over time. Materials intended to be educative for providing more effective instruction should support teachers in each of these phases. They should also consider issues that affect each, including the compatibility of materials with belief structures and prior knowledge; the role of teacher self-efficacy in planning for and providing instruction; and the distribution of responsibility for providing instruction across materials and teachers, both as perceived by individual teachers and fostered by context.

It is less clear what this process may look like for reading instruction, whether it is similar, whether it is influenced by similar issues, and whether learning can occur through it in the same sort of way as in these studies. However, we may be able to glean a few conclusions from studies that examined teachers' experiences with learning to integrate new instructional approaches, such as comprehension strategy instruction, with their existing language arts teaching frameworks, as well as from studies that examined beginning teachers' experiences with language arts curriculum materials.

Hilden and Pressley (2007) worked with five fifth grade teachers across two school buildings on improving their reading comprehension instruction over the course of a school year. The teachers received two professional texts on comprehension strategy instruction and met with the researchers monthly for coaching and discussion. The researchers also observed reading instruction in the teachers' classrooms on a monthly basis. These researchers documented that the teachers with whom they worked faced a

range of challenges as they attempted to become comprehension strategies teachers. The two most significant of those challenges seemed to be being entirely unfamiliar with the concept of strategies instruction and unaware of the nuances of the strategies that they were being asked to teach and not having access to the kinds of texts that were most appropriate for the needs of their students and the demands of strategy instruction. In particular, the teachers did not find their textbooks to be the kinds of student texts that they wanted or felt they needed to do the work well. In the end, the researchers concluded that all of the teachers experienced a degree of success throughout the process, with the most visible successes being that the teachers felt positive about comprehension strategy instruction and expressed a desire to continue learning about this approach and that their students began to evidence acquisition of the strategies.

Brown (2008) studied the experiences of sixteen fourth and fifth grade teachers with two different types of support systems as they attempted to learn to integrate transactional strategy instruction with their core reading program. One group of teachers received materials with model transactional strategy lessons that were intended to complement and extend what was available in their core reading program manuals. The other group of teachers received monthly small-group instructional coaching. Each teacher was observed and audio-taped during a block of reading instruction at three points in time over the course of the year. Teachers in both groups had several common difficulties including being able to find adequate time to devote to strategy lessons, being able to keep pace with requirements for core reading program coverage and pacing, being

able to distinguish between comprehension skills and strategies, and being able to follow a gradual release of responsibility for transitioning students to independent strategy use.

When examining change in teaching practice over time, Brown found that the teachers in the materials group consistently made more growth in their strategy instruction practices over the course of the year. Many of these teachers began the process by trading out their materials. That is, they took instructional time that they would have devoted to teaching with the core reading program and used their new comprehension strategy materials in lieu of it. Brown hypothesized that this kind of approach resulted in the teachers having instructional experiences that were more authentic to the spirit of transactional strategies instruction, consequently allowing them to make more growth in becoming strategies teachers. In contrast, teachers who had received modeling and coaching on instructional lessons that specifically integrated strategy instruction with core reading program instruction struggled with this integrated approach, particularly in light of administrative mandates to attend to fidelity in their implementation of the core reading program.

New teachers and materials. Beginning teachers' relationships with curriculum materials and their educative potential has been a particular population of interest for researchers. The limited work on curriculum materials as sources of learning for teachers about reading and language arts instruction has been undertaken with small sub-samples of beginning teachers at the elementary (Valencia, Place, Martin, Grossman, 2006) and secondary (Grossman and Thompson, 2004) level.

Ball and Feiman-Nemser (1988) first highlighted the difficult relationship between beginning teachers and their curriculum materials by examining a disconnect that seemed to exist across teacher education programs, student teacher experiences, and student teacher beliefs about materials. They followed six pre-service teachers from two different teacher education programs for two years, through their last year of coursework and their year of student teaching experience. They observed in both the teachers' courses and student teaching, conducting interviews at various points in time as well. In courses in both teacher education programs it was emphasized that good teachers do not follow teachers' guides, although for decidedly different reasons – one program strongly suggested that textbooks are to be regarded primarily as resources, the other espoused that teachers are professionals and should make decisions for themselves. Regardless, all teachers in their study used and followed the teachers' guides to some extent during their student teaching experience, revealing in interviews that they found planning for instruction overwhelming. Even those who attempted to modify or avoid the textbook eventually came back to it, with the researchers concluding that the student teachers in their sample lacked a deep enough understanding of their field and the theoretical ideas framing it to independently represent content and develop activities effectively. Thus, Ball and Feiman-Nemser suggested a dilemma did indeed exist for beginning teachers, as textbooks were widely criticized in their preparation programs yet widely used, often mandated, and frequently needed to support their early teaching. They concluded that telling pre-service teachers to be curriculum developers is simply not enough – they need

opportunities to learn to justify their curricular choices, to acquire deep subject matter knowledge, and to be scaffolded in developing curricular independence.

As part of a longitudinal study of beginning language arts teachers, researchers at the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, & Place, 2000; Grossman & Thompson, 2004; Valencia, Place, Martin, & Grossman, 2006) followed five elementary and five secondary teachers from their last year of teacher education into their first three years of teaching. Within both sub-samples, elementary and secondary, the researchers found that for the beginning teachers they studied, the early encounters they had with curriculum materials were extremely powerful and lasting – the teachers grew attached to the curricula quickly, latched onto them in an uncritical way, and adapted them without addressing their instructional lapses and flaws. Over the first couple of years, some teachers began to adapt the materials to better fit their particular students and context, and thus experienced some opportunity to try out new ideas and strategies, however, these shifts were largely those of degree and not kind. That is, teachers did not alter practice dramatically with radically new or different approaches but instead made tweaks to existing practices. They concluded that the limitations of the materials were also limitations to teacher learning, and that initial experience with more comprehensive programs may potentially provide for better learning experiences, particularly for beginning teachers with less well-developed background knowledge about language arts instruction. They echo the recommendation of Ball and Feiman-Nemser that beginning teachers need to be supported in learning to make and justify curricular choices, suggesting the most effective early professional

development experiences may be those that support teachers in analyzing and critiquing the strengths and weaknesses of their materials.

It seems that the promise of core reading programs as educative tools to promote teacher learning, particularly that of newer teachers, about reading comprehension instruction remains unfilled and not well studied at this time. It is possible, however, to draw some conclusions about what might be required in order for language arts instructional materials to better realize this potential. In the final sub-sections of this literature review, I will turn more broadly to what we know about the content and form of teacher learning in the service of instructional improvement efforts.

Content of teacher learning. Ball and Cohen (1999) offer a practice-based framework for the ongoing professional education of practitioners that outlines four distinct categories of teaching knowledge important for instructional improvement. According to Ball and Cohen (1999), those four categories of knowledge are knowledge of subject matter, of children, of pedagogy, and of professional learning. Knowledge of subject matter includes an understanding of what reasoning in their content field entails, the relationships among the big ideas of the field to other fields and everyday life, how those big ideas had evolved to become important, and the questions people in the field are currently asking and debating about those big ideas. Knowledge of children involves both a broad understanding of how children typically respond to the subject matter – what they find interesting, what they will have difficulty with, and how they approach reasoning. It also involves an understanding of individual children. Knowledge of pedagogy entails an understanding of how to facilitate the acquisition of subject matter

knowledge through the establishment of a classroom culture of learning and the engagement of students in instruction that is adaptive and responsive. Knowledge of professional learning represents an understanding of how to learn in and from teaching practice by sizing up situations, operating experimentally, and gathering information intended and utilized to inform practice.

Ball and Cohen's categories of knowledge important for instructional improvement can be extended to hypothesize what teachers might need to know for reading comprehension instruction. In terms of subject matter knowledge teachers need to know that reading is a social act, a cultural practice, and a cognitive process. As a cultural practice, readers have beliefs about why literacy is important, why one uses literacy practices, and how to go about doing so. As a cognitive process, it is important for teachers to know how reading ability develops, how students develop an understanding of the alphabetic principle, how readers use letter-sound information to problem-solve unknown words, and how readers use a small repertoire of comprehension strategies to make deeper, richer meaning of texts. In terms of children, teachers need to know about students and the development of their thinking about reading and writing, and about how one reads and writes. They may learn how to anticipate common misunderstandings about the processing involved in both creating and accessing texts. In terms of pedagogy, teachers need to know about reading instruction and that students need a balance of instruction that supports cognitive processing of text and extensive authentic reading and writing experiences. They need to learn about modeling problem solving through text by thinking-aloud for students, about matching readers with

appropriate texts, and about ongoing assessments to track students' progress and plan responsive instruction. Finally, in terms of professional learning, teachers need to know how to attend to important sources of information, and how to use information to transform, improve, and evaluate practice. Teachers need to know, for example, about how to reflect on student difficulty in a manner that supports analyzing and improving their own practice.

With a sense of what types of knowledge teachers might need to acquire in order to become more effective developers of student reading comprehension capacity, it is important to consider the ways in which teachers effectively acquire new knowledge and, as a result, transform teaching practices.

Form of teacher learning. Responsibility for ongoing teacher learning experiences after initial teacher preparation and licensure has most widely been accepted by individual teachers or school districts or both. This has resulted in a system of professional development that could best be characterized as piecemeal and fragmented (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Individual teachers may choose to pursue additional university courses or teaching workshops or engage in personal study around teaching topics of interest or informal troubleshooting with colleagues. School districts commonly offer professional development in-service days, in which large groups of teachers participate in single event workshops, the topic of which has been pre-determined by the district. There is a collective sense among teacher educators and researchers that a significantly more embedded, consistent, long-term approach to professional development structures will be required in order to provide teachers with the experiences necessary to acquire

new knowledge and skill and to put that new knowledge and skill to work in their classrooms with their students.

This collective re-visioning of the kinds of learning experiences that result in improved teaching acquisition of new knowledge and skill, and consequently more rapid instructional improvement has led a new set of suggested principles for guiding the development and implementation of professional development, one that stands in stark contrast to the splintered system described above (Ball, 1996; Little, 1994). This revised vision is guided by a belief that professional development efforts need to be embedded within the teaching context in which the new learning will be applied over an extended period of time, need to privilege the teachers participating in them as active and appreciated learners, need to be collaboratively designed, executed, and revised, and need to emphasize their impact on students and student learning.

New efforts to create and implement professional development experiences that reflect an alignment with the above principles have resulted in programs of professional development that accomplish one or more of the following aims: offer teachers the opportunity to talk about and do work in the subject matter that they teach in the same manner as subject area professionals or expert (Florio Ruane, 1994; Wineberg & Grossman, 1998), offer teachers the opportunity to talk about students and their learning processes and outcomes, offer teachers the opportunity to talk about their teaching and practice new teaching routines. All such efforts share a common orientation towards fostering small-scale supportive and collaborative communities of teacher learners who,

in conjunction with the guidance and expertise of the lead professional developers, scaffold each other towards the acquisition of new knowledge and expertise over time.

Studies of such newly conceptualized professional development efforts have been presented with a new set of challenges (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Researchers must determine what kinds of professional knowledge and skill they are trying to develop in their teacher participants and then must measure that knowledge and skill and its acquisition in ways that can be linked to learning outcomes of their students. In addition, researchers must begin to develop theoretical explanations for why teacher participants were able to learn or able to learn better within their new frameworks or how such learning experiences were able to promote changes in teaching practice. Finally, researchers must consider the ways in which the differential characteristics of knowledge and how it is built and through which it is reasoned across subject areas and must be able to defend the ways in which their efforts align with such knowledge structures. How the teacher research community continues to respond to these challenges will determine how transformations in the form of teacher learning and how efforts to apply new guiding principles to practice will impact what teachers know and can do with their students and what students learn as a result.

Conclusion. The process of offering learning that will help teachers to acquire new knowledge and skill in the service of instructional improvement is multi-faceted and complex. Attention must be paid to both the content and form of learning experiences, to what it is that is desired for teachers to learn about and in what ways. There is continuing ambiguity over the role that curriculum materials can and do play in such learning

processes, however, it is understood that they have a role to play somehow. Teacher learning specific to reading comprehension development and instruction continues to be even less well understood than other subject areas.

Chapter Summary

This chapter offered a review of literature relevant to the issues of interest in this study. The first section of the literature review perused theoretical ideas about reading and reading development, linked those idea to a framework of reading comprehension development as expertise, and considered approaches to reading comprehension instruction in the elementary grades. The section closed with a look at how text processing strategies and instructional talk emerge as particularly significant elements of models for reading comprehension instruction. The second section of the literature review examined relevant information about the teacher development process. It began with a consideration of how theoretical perspectives on the act of teaching influence judgments about teaching quality and success. The discussion then turned to perspectives on the content of teacher knowledge and the form of effective teacher learning experiences. Finally, this section closed with a consideration of the impact of core reading programs and a look at how curriculum materials could be positioned as an element of teacher learning. The next chapter offers an explanation of the methodological theory and approach employed during data collection and analysis in the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of four upper elementary grade teachers when providing reading comprehension instruction to their students. Elmore (2004) suggests that the core of instructional improvement must emphasize the transformation of the three components of any learning experience: teachers, students, and the work that they do together on a day-to-day basis in the classroom. This study hopes to support efforts to emphasize the development of the knowledge and skill of teachers as one element of instructional improvement. The significance of the study will in large part be determined by the ways in which it has been conceptualized and brought to fruition (Alvermann, O'Brien, & Dylan, 1996). This chapter describes the research design, participants, data collection and data analysis procedures that I chose for use in this study.

Methodological Approach

Paradigm declaration. This study is qualitative case study research (Stake, 2005), based on post-positivist principles, as conceptualized by Hatch (2002). I assume that reality does exist, but that it cannot be fully known or even fully captured due to the limitations of human inquiry. I accept that this reality may be experienced and interpreted differently by different people who participate in it but acknowledge that there is a truth embedded within those varied perceptions. As with all scholarship that is conducted through the lenses of the individual who conceptualizes it and carries it out, this act is inherently imperfect.

As the primary data collection instrument, I attempted to utilize systematic data collection and analysis techniques (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2003) in order to arrive at conclusions that best approximate the reality under study. It is accepted that a person operating as a vehicle for data collection and analysis is limited by a variety of factors. These factors influence what gets seen, heard, recorded and valued as significant to answering the research question. I brought my background knowledge about the reading process, the nature of teaching and learning, and the act of research to bear on each component and interpretive decision of the study. The methodological tools and procedures selected for use in this study reflected such a post-positivist paradigm.

Design logic. This is a qualitative research study. I use the descriptor qualitative to reflect the concept advanced by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as follows:

By the term “qualitative research,” we mean any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. [...] In speaking about qualitative analysis, we are referring not to the quantifying of qualitative data but rather to a nonmathematical process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into a theoretical explanatory scheme. (p. 10-11)

In this study, I collected qualitative data in the form of observational notes, interview transcripts, and artifacts and documents that I took through a series of analytical processes in order to arrive at findings and interpretations that reflected the experiences of the individuals whom I studied.

The case study as a comprehensive research strategy is an empirical inquiry that is defined by its scope and technical characteristics (Yin, 2003). In scope, the case study is an inquiry that examines a phenomenon of interest in an embedded context, within an intrinsically bounded unit, also called a case (Barone, 2004; Stake, 1978). Identifying a case for study demands recognizing the boundaries of the case. However, the act of doing a case study also carries the expectation that the context in which the case exists, outside of its own boundaries but within which it is embedded, receives consideration. This is because when embedded in a specific context, phenomena “take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 189). Thus, a case study is an appropriate methodological choice when a researcher is interested in studying a set of events in which the dimensions are so deeply embedded within their context that they are difficult to exercise control over (Yin, 2003) or identify ahead of time (Merriam, 1998).

As a technical approach, data collection and analysis of case studies require a reliance on multiple sources of evidence that result in logical and transparent answers to the research questions. When conducting case studies, the researcher, “gets as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by means of direct observation in natural settings, partly by their access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires)” (Bromley, 1986, p. 23). Credibility is achieved through the triangulation of conclusions through those multiple data sources (Firestone, 1993). Case studies should result in end products that are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 1998). This means that the presentation of findings in a case study should introduce the case

with an emphasis on descriptive detail and an orientation towards the meaning making that is being done in the context in which the case exists.

The research questions in this study fit well with the defining elements of the case study research strategy. The phenomenon of interest, reading comprehension instruction, could not be disentangled from the classroom contexts in which it takes place without fragmenting an understanding of the entire act. A teacher instructing students to process and make sense of texts occurs in a specific time and place with an intentionality that is guided by the particulars of that teacher with those students in that time and place. Analysis of such a phenomenon is contingent upon a thorough accounting of the contexts in which it is carried out. The cases in this study, individual teachers responsible for providing reading comprehension instruction, have clearly defined boundaries within which to engage in data collection and analysis. The case begins and ends with the act of that person engaging in language arts instruction, and, more specifically, reading comprehension instruction, with the students for whom that person is responsible. For the purpose of this study, the students for whom the teacher is responsible were defined as the students who are assigned to that teachers' room for their language arts instructional time, whom that teacher is required to give a language arts grade, and whose standardized language arts test scores will be used when the teacher is evaluated.

The nature of the research findings demanded a descriptive discussion of these individual cases as a way to focus on and illuminate answers to the research questions. Each teacher is the only person who could provide, through her observations and interviews, the evidence that would speak to the research question. That evidence could

only be obtained through a careful and close analysis of the data that represented the classroom and thought world of that individual teacher. To access such worlds required piecing together through descriptive processes an understanding of how and why it is constructed the way that it is.

I choose to use a multiple case study design in order to lend strength to the findings (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). As Yin (2003) suggests, “the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust” (p. 46) as compared to a single case study design. The advantage that added support from multiple case study designs offers also presents the challenge of demanding either an increase in time and resources required to do such a study or a tradeoff in the amount of time and resources devoted to each case under study. Yin (2003) also warns, “Therefore, the decision to undertake multi-case studies cannot be taken lightly. Every case should serve a specific purpose within the overall scope of inquiry” (p. 47). Cases need to be selected with care and intentionality in order to satisfy the demands of the research question. The purpose of the present research is to use such selected individual cases in order to understand and analyze the phenomenon of interest, reading comprehension instruction, and to consider the findings of that analysis in relation to a larger theoretical frame.

Participants

Participant selection. My selection of participants was purposeful (Patton, 1990), embracing Merriam’s (1998) assumption that “the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can

be learned” (p. 61). My intent was to identify participants who represented typical cases of upper elementary teachers providing reading comprehension instruction as part of a program of elementary language arts instruction. A typical case is that in which the case is chosen because “it is not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual” (Patton, 1990, p. 173). In this study a typical case was considered one in which the teacher herself or the make-up of her classroom did not deviate from what would be considered common within an American public school system in terms of training experiences, years of experience, or demographics. This study focused on the upper elementary grades because of the well-documented increase in literacy and knowledge demands made upon students during that time (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Hirsch, 2003). These demands require students to have or to be acquiring more sophisticated and complex reading and writing capabilities. The study included four participating fourth and fifth grade teachers, drawn from across two different buildings within one school district. Participating teachers varied in their years of classroom experience and levels of educational attainment.

Replication logic, specifically the logic of theoretical replication (Yin, 2003), informed my identification of multiple participants. Yin suggests that researchers select multiple cases “so that it either (a) predicts similar results (*a literal replication*) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (*a theoretical replication*)” (p. 47). In this study, I expected that participants differed from each other in ways that could be understood through the application of my theoretical lens of symbolic interactionism. The reading comprehension instruction each teacher provided to students should have

differed on the basis of how that teacher symbolically interacted, that is, how she interpreted and responded to the objects and individuals within her classroom environment and teaching world.

Access and entry procedures. Participants were recruited through the following procedure. I identified potential participating school districts based on two factors. The district had to have participated in the state core reading program adoption during the 2006-2007 school year and had to have multiple elementary schools that included buildings that served students from families that represented a range of income levels. I used the state Department of Education website to access core reading program adoption lists and district and school level demographic information. Once I identified four potential school districts that met the above criteria, I used individual district websites to identify the assistant superintendent for instruction in each potential district and I contacted that individual in each of the four potential districts via e-mail during the last week of October 2007. This initial e-mail included a personal introduction with background information about myself, an explanation of the purpose and key features of the study, and a request to schedule a meeting for further discussion. The assistant superintendent for instruction from the participating district forwarded my initial e-mail to the director of professional development for the district, who responded with interest to the inquiry. I did not receive a response from any of the other district representatives whom I initially contacted.

During the second week of November 2007 I met with the director of professional development at her office in the central administration building of the district. At that

meeting, I explained and presented a copy of the Study Information Sheet (see Appendix A), answered questions regarding the study, and requested permission to contact the building administrators of elementary schools in the district and to receive a written document of support from the district for inclusion in my Institutional Review Board application. The director of professional development at that time expressed the willingness of the district to participate in the study and to write a letter of support for the Institutional Review Board application. She requested the opportunity to discuss the study with all of the elementary building principals herself at an administrators meeting taking place the next week and agreed to follow up with me with the names and contact information of any interested principals within a few weeks.

The director of professional development called me during the last week of November 2007 to let me know that two building principals had expressed a willingness to participate in the study. She gave me the names, e-mail addresses, and school telephone numbers for each of the two principals. In the first week of December 2007 I called and left a message at the buildings of each of the two interested principals. Each principal returned the initial message and I scheduled a meeting with each principal at his or her building during the second week of December 2007.

At those principal meetings, I explained and distributed my resume and the Study Information Sheet, answered questions regarding the study, and requested permission to approach third through fifth grade teachers in the building to invite their participation in the study. Each principal agreed to discuss and distribute study information to third through fifth grade teachers during regularly scheduled grade level team meetings the

next week. The principals agreed to follow-up with me via e-mail following the meetings.

One principal e-mailed me during the third week of December with the names of two teachers who had expressed interest in the study. I e-mailed both teachers at the same time and we agreed to meet during the first week of January, following the winter break, to discuss the study. At that meeting, I introduced myself to both teachers and shared the Study Information Sheet and the Research Bargain (Hatch, 2002; see Appendix A) that outlined the roles and responsibilities of both participants and myself. Both teachers agreed to commit to participating in the study at that time, signed both their Informed Consent documents and Research Bargains, and scheduled observation and interview times with me.

The second principal did not respond to me prior to the winter break. I sent a follow-up e-mail to this principal in the first week of January, to which he did respond with the name of one teacher who expressed potential interest in the study. I contacted this teacher in the second week of January and scheduled a time to meet with that teacher during early February. At that meeting, that teacher committed to participate and expressed a willingness to talk to the other teachers in her grade level team at their regularly scheduled meetings in order to find a fourth study participant. One of the other teachers in the building agreed to participate following that team meeting.

Once I had met with each individual teacher and he or she had signed her Research Bargain and Informed Consent documents, I scheduled a day prior to the start of data collection to introduce myself to their students. On this day, I introduced myself,

read my Assent Statement to the students, and asked students to complete an Assent document (see Appendix A). The Assent Statement informed students that I would be taking notes and collecting audio recording about what their teacher says and does during language arts time in their classroom and that it was possible that their actions or words might be captured in either my notes or my audio recordings. Students who agreed to participate in the project signed their names to the document at that point and then took a separate parental consent document (see Appendix A) home for their parents to read, sign and return. Participating teachers collected the returned Consent documents from students and gave them to me on the first day of data collection. If a student decided not to sign the Assent document or a parent decided not to give permission or not to return the Consent document, then no notes were taken that pertained to the action of that child in the classroom and that child's voice was not transcribed from the classroom recordings, if it was possible to identify his or her voice. All Institutional Review Board related documents were collected from each participating teacher prior to data collection beginning in his or her classroom.

School and participant descriptions. This study took place in one school district located near a mid-sized midwestern city. The districts initially approached for inclusion in this study were ones that were in their first year of a new core reading program adoption cycle, meaning that the schools and teachers in these districts were in the first year of their implementation of a new core reading program. All names in these descriptions and the case study narratives are pseudonyms.

The participating district was a large, suburban district with a declining but diverse population. The district has 11 elementary buildings, 3 middle schools, and 1 high school. The high school is the 3rd largest in the state in terms of size, with over 3,500 students and 100 faculty members. The district encompasses a large geographic area that includes wealthy residential areas, small and large family farms, apartment complexes, trailer parks and low-income housing communities. Elementary schools in the district are neighborhood-based and tend to reflect the singularity of the demographic population of the neighborhood(s) being served.

Hilltop Elementary is nestled along the edge of a thriving residential subdivision. The front entrance of the building can be seen from across a series of athletic fields that sit in front of it. The fields are shared with a second elementary school located adjacent to Hilltop, built ten years prior to accommodate the demand from a then fast growing suburban population. Hilltop regularly receives state accolades for academic achievement. Tracy Newsome was a 4th year teacher at Hilltop. She graduated from an out-of-state teacher preparation program and moved to the area while her husband pursued graduate work at a local university. She spent a year substitute teaching in several school districts in the area before getting a permanent position at Hilltop. During her time at Hilltop she spent 3 years teaching in 4th and 5th grade multi-age looping classrooms. During this year she was teaching 5th grade. Carol Stevens was a 5th year teacher at Hilltop. She came to teaching after having stayed home to raise young children and then pursuing a career in nursing. She spent her first three years teaching language arts at a middle school in the same district as Hilltop. She was bumped out of her middle

school position because of seniority, and she was now in her second year as a 5th grade teacher at Hilltop. Tracy and Carol decided to work as partner language arts teachers during the year that the study was conducted, and during this time they shared adjacent classrooms and common planning time.

In previous years the district had grouped elementary students heterogeneously in multi-age classrooms and students frequently looped with their teacher. This year, district administrators decided to end 4th and 5th grade multi-age instruction and group students by standardized assessment data. Tracy and Carol were teaching language arts to the 5th graders whose standardized assessments placed them in the top half of 5th grade students in the school.

Fieldview Elementary is located on the far southern edge of the district. In fact, one of the greatest spans of distance between two schools in the district is between Hilltop and Fieldview. Fieldview is nestled towards the back of a sprawling country meadow that sits amidst stretches of rural farmland. The school has a lengthy, winding, lamppost-lined front drive through tall grasses leading up the parking lot in front of the building. It is not uncommon to spot hawks perched on the lampposts, seeking a brief respite from the work of scouring the surrounding fields for prey. Rachelle Davis was a 1st year teacher at Fieldview. She came to teaching after staying home to raise children and then spending time working as a freelance artist and graphic designer. She had just completed a transition to teaching pre-service teacher preparation program at a local university. She was teaching language arts to the 4th grade students whose standardized assessments placed them in the bottom half of the 4th grade class. Jessica Reilly was in

her 5th year of teaching at Fieldview. She completed a teacher preparation program at an in-state university with a program emphasis on multi-age teaching. Jessica student taught in a multi-age classroom and spent her first three years at Fieldview teaching 4th and 5th graders in a multi-age arrangement. This year she was teaching language arts to the 5th grade students whose standardized assessments placed them in the bottom half of the 5th grade class.

Both Fieldview and Hilltop were built during the same time period in the district and thus share an identical layout. Tracy and Carol occupied the same two classrooms in their building that Rachelle and Jessica occupied in theirs. Much more will be shared about Tracy, Carol, Rachelle, and Jessica in their individual case study narratives (see Appendix I).

Data Collection Methods

Timeline. Data collection began on Wednesday, January 16th, 2008. Prior to the start of data collection, I scheduled 15 consecutive days of classroom observations and 4 interviews with each participant. I was able to complete 13 observations and 4 interviews with Tracy, 12 observations and 3 interviews with Carol, 12 observations and 3 interviews with Rachelle, and 10 observations and 3 interviews with Jessica (see Appendix D). Scheduled observations were cancelled due to district-wide weather events, teacher absences, district assessments, or special school engagements that resulted in cancelled language arts instruction on that day. I observed and interviewed Tracy in the last two weeks of January and the first week of March, Carol in the first three weeks of February, Rachelle in the last two weeks of March and the first and third week of

April, and Jessica in the last week of April and the first two weeks of May. I conducted my final interview with all four teachers during the third week of May, which was the last week of school in this district. Data collection ended with the final teacher interview on Thursday, May 29th, 2008.

Interview procedures. The goal of interviews was to come to understand the teaching world of each participant in her own language (Spradley, 1979). I hoped to give participants an opportunity to respond to my inquiries about their current and prior teaching experiences, their growth as teaching professionals, and their perspectives on reading comprehension instruction in such a way that their language would provide me a lens into those perceptions. Patton (1990) discusses this goal of interviews in these terms:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. [...] We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 196)

Each interview was scheduled to last one hour. Interviews took place during either the hour before students arrived at school (6:30 – 7:30 a.m.) or the hour after students left school (2:30 – 3:30 p.m.), in the classroom of the participating teacher being

interviewed. I planned to conduct one interview during the first week of observations, one interview during the second and third week of observations, and one interview during the last week of the school year. With my first participant, Tracy, I was able to conduct one interview during each of the three weeks of observation and one interview during the last week of school. With my other three participants, I was only able to conduct one interview across the second and third weeks of observation, resulting in only three total interviews for each of those participants.

Interviews were formal and semi-structured (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998). I came to each interview with a written set of guiding questions, but was open to following the lead of the participant. Guiding interview questions included descriptive questions, structural questions, and contrast questions (Spradley, 1979). Each guiding question was intended to elicit a response from the participating teacher that would provide a lens into how she organizes, understands, and works within her language arts teaching world.

Spradley (1979) suggests that this approach to interviewing implicitly asks participants,

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand? (p. 34)

I had hoped that my guiding questions would allow participants to become my teacher in this same way.

I wrote a master set of guiding questions (see Appendix B) that I wanted to cover over the course of all of the interviews. I divided the master set of guiding questions into guiding questions for each individual interview in the interview series. The guiding questions for the first interview addressed participants' background and training as teachers as well as their early induction and professional development experiences up to this point in their careers. The guiding questions for the second interview addressed participants' experiences with their new core reading program as well as previously used curriculum materials. The guiding questions for the third interview addressed participants' perspectives and beliefs about reading development, reading comprehension, and reading instruction. The guiding questions for the fourth interview addressed participants' reflections on the research experience and observations made about themselves and their students. For participants with whom I completed three interviews, the guiding questions for the second, third, and fourth interviews were combined across the two interviews that I was able to conduct.

Guiding questions were also informed by my classroom observations and prior interviews with each participant. The night before each scheduled interview, I prepared an interview guide (Merriam, 1998) in a Word document with the guiding questions for that specific interview with that participant, which included both guiding questions divided up from my master file of guiding questions and questions specific to that participant that seemed most pertinent at that point in the data collection process. The interview guide also included the research questions for the entire study in the header of the document (Hatch, 2002). In order to prepare participant specific questions, I

reviewed the observational notes that I had collected up to that point in the process as well as skimmed any interview recordings from prior interviews.

With participant consent, interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder (Merriam, 1998). I sat the voice recorder between the participant and myself during the interview. I turned it on during the introductory greetings and turned it off following the closing remarks of the interview. Interview files were transferred immediately following the conclusion of the interview from the digital voice recorder to my laptop computer. Files were downloaded onto the computer in a wma format. I used the software program Switch to make a copy of each file in an mp3 format for use in transcription. I transcribed each interview on my laptop in a Microsoft Word document using the software program Express Scribe. Using my computer's keyboard, Express Scribe allowed me to listen to, control, and transcribe verbatim from the mp3 audio file saved on my laptop. Merriam (1998) recommends that, "Ideally, verbatim transcription of recorded interviews provides the best database for analysis" (p. 88); and that it is most advantageous, when possible, to transcribe your own data because when you outsource transcription responsibilities, "You do not get the intimate familiarity with your data that doing your own transcribing affords" (p. 88). I chose to do my own transcription in order to gain such a familiarity with my data as I prepared it for analysis.

The transcribed Word document (see Appendix C) was then saved in a folder designated for all of the data for that participant, including these interview transcripts, as well as the audio wma and mp3 interview files. All folders related to the study that were saved on my computer were also saved onto an external hard drive at my home office.

Once each interview audio file was transferred onto my computer and saved on the external hard drive, I deleted it off of the digital voice recorder in order to make room for additional recordings. I transcribed the interviews from all of the participants during the last week of May and the first week of June 2008.

Observation procedures. The goal of observations was to objectively record the actions of the participating teacher and the interactions of the teacher and the students (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Spradley, 1980; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). I noted what the participating teacher did, said, and how she moved through the classroom during the course of instruction. I noted the arrangement of the classroom and the students within the classroom and when and how those arrangements changed during the course of instruction. I noted the time frames within which various components of daily instruction took place and the resources utilized during each component of instruction. I tried to capture in my notes as much actual language as I could from both the teacher and individual students, and I noted the actions of individual students in response to the teacher when it seemed pertinent to do so. I hoped that this observational data would support and enhance my understanding of what I was learning from each teacher during our interview time, as well as shape the content of upcoming interviews (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1980).

I spent 29 hours observing in Tracy's classroom, 26 hours in Carol's classroom, 22 hours in Rachelle's classroom, and 20 hours in Jessica's classroom. Differences in observational time spent in each teacher's classroom were due to two factors. First, even though I had initially scheduled to observe for a full fifteen consecutive days of

instruction in each classroom, the number of days of observation varied across teachers from 10 to 13 days total because of cancelled observations. Second, the amount of time devoted to language arts instruction varied depending on the building. In Tracy and Carol's building, the building schedule allowed for three hours of language arts instruction four days per week, with one 90-minute day that had been shortened to allow time for specials such as art, music, and physical education. In Rachelle and Jessica's building, the schedule allowed for two hours of language arts instruction per day. That resulted weekly in 14.5 scheduled hours of language arts instruction in one building and 10 scheduled hours of language arts instruction in the other.

Observations occurred during entire blocks of scheduled language arts instruction. Since reading comprehension instruction is one element within a larger language arts teaching framework, I observed all language arts instruction. I approached observations with the understanding that I would later be interested in narrowing in on just those routines and events that were intended to help students more effectively process and make sense of whole written texts. In the early days of data collection, I made several decisions about the boundaries of my observations. I accompanied classes to anything that occurred during language arts time that was planned and executed by their classroom teacher for the purpose of contributing to students' language arts learning experience. For example, this included reading buddy sessions with second grade students and work time in a computer lab. I did not accompany classes to the Instructional Media Center if this occurred during an observation because those sessions were planned and executed by the school media specialist and not by the classroom teacher. I did not accompany

classes to the administration of their district-wide computerized Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) (Northwest Evaluation Association, n.d.) assessments per the request of district administrators. I did not observe on days when the classroom teacher had a substitute teacher.

For each observation, I arrived at the classroom before students entered for the language arts period. In Tracy and Carol's building, the language arts block was the first period of the day. I would arrive during their twenty-minute homeroom period, after which students moved from their homeroom classroom to their assigned language arts classroom. In Rachelle and Jessica's building, the language arts block was the second major instructional period of the day. I would arrive during either content or specials instruction, after which students moved to his or her assigned language arts classroom. I carried a black shoulder bag with my laptop computer and my digital voice recorder to each observation. In each classroom on the first day of observations I chose a seat that I utilized during every day of observation. I tried to select a location in each classroom where I could easily see all of the central areas of the classroom, including the whiteboard, the student tables, and any large or small group meeting areas. I also tried to select a location that would not interrupt the movement of the teacher and students during instruction. I did not sit at the teacher's desk in any of the classrooms, although in three of the classrooms the best seating location was near or in front of the teacher's desk. If it became necessary to move in order to minimize any interruption to movement or student groupings during an observation, I did so; but I would return to the same observational spot when it became less disruptive to do so.

I engaged in the life of the classroom as an “observer as participant” (Merriam, 1998, p. 101). The teacher and students were aware of my activities as an observer, but I did not participate with the teacher and students in the life and activity of their language arts classroom. Merriam (1998) cautions,

The researcher’s observer activities are known to the group; participation in the group is definitely secondary to the role of information gatherer. Using this method, the researcher may have access to many people and a wide range of information, but the level of information revealed is controlled by the group members being investigated. (p. 101)

Thus, by assuming a position on the periphery of the life of the classroom, I did not see the life of the classroom through my own eyes as a participating member. Instead my lens was limited to what the participating classroom members allowed me to see. Both participating teachers and their students seemed to acclimate to my presence in a short span of time. I did not get a sense that what was unfolding before my eyes was not what would have unfolded had I not been present in any of the classrooms.

Throughout the course of the observation, if students chose to approach or engage with me, I would gladly respond; but I would not initiate engagement with the students or adults in the classroom. I sat in my selected location for observation with my laptop open on either my lap or a desk or table and took field notes in a Word document. When students engaged in independent or small group work, I would set my open laptop down on my seat and circulate among students. When I circulated among students, I was looking to get a more specific sense of what kind of work students were supposed to be

doing and was mentally gathering additional details to include in the descriptions of the work in my field notes. After circulating among students, I would return to my seat, pick up my laptop and continue adding to my field notes.

Observations were audio recorded with a digital voice recorder. I added a lapel microphone attachment to the recorder for audio recording during observations. The lapel microphone had a small length of wire between the microphone piece and the part of the wire that plugged into the recorder unit. The participating teacher would clip the lapel to her shirt and either slip the recorder into her pants pocket or wear the recorder clipped onto her pants. If the teacher preferred to wear the recorder clipped, I put it inside a small cell phone holder that had a belt clip attachment on it. Since I did not know in advance when language exchanges that were relevant to reading comprehension instruction would occur, I audio recorded each language arts block that I observed in its entirety. I would start the audio recording and then hand the recorder to the teacher during the time period when students were transitioning from their prior location, homeroom in one building and other classes in the other building, to language arts class. The teacher would then hand the recorder back to me and I would stop the audio recording during the time period when students were transitioning from their language arts class to their next instructional block, math class in one building and lunch in the other building.

The purpose of the audio recordings was to capture the actual language exchanges that occurred between the teacher and students during the course of instruction (Hatch, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The goal of having such a source was to be able to

fill in language exchanges that I may have missed or had incomplete records of in my observational protocols but that were deemed important to understanding the nature of the reading comprehension instruction that that teacher was providing. More will be explained about the specifics of the process for selecting language exchanges and transcribing them from these audio recordings in my data analysis procedures section.

After each day of observation, I returned directly from the participating school building to my home office. During that time, I worked through my field note file and saved a separate Word document as the filled in observation protocol (see Appendix C) for that day of field notes (Hatch, 2002). In order to fill in the field notes, I would first ensure that the file had page numbers, line numbers, and a header that included a statement of the building, teacher, date, start and end times, and participants involved. Then I would go line by line through the file and transform the notes into complete sentences, adding details if I could specifically remember additional pertinent information that I had not captured during the time of the observation. I did not include any names in either the field note or observation protocol files. Instead speakers and actors were indicated by the role that they played in the life of the classroom (i.e., teacher, student, program assistant, parent volunteer). I started a new line in the file any time that the action of the classroom changed or someone spoke. I left a blank line between each line change.

Any direct quotes that I was able to capture were marked with quotation marks. The beginning of the quote included an indication of who was speaking. For example, if I had included a direct quote from the teacher, I would use a capital letter T and a colon

(T:) at the beginning of the line to show that the teacher was speaking. When I captured student talk, I would use a capital letter S to show that a student was speaking. When there was more than one students speaking, I tried to use S and a number to indicate the individual speaker when possible. For example, S1 and S2 would mark two students contributing to a large group discussion. Number indicators did not remain consistent throughout the file. That is, the student that I marked as S1 at one point in the file was not necessarily the student marked as S1 at a different point in the file. Instead, each time I was able to directly capture student talk, students would be indicated by the order in which they joined the conversation. Additionally, I re-started numbering speakers each time the teacher re-directed the discussion in a different direction. I chose to do this because I was not interested in analyzing student participation or turn taking within the classroom discourse. Instead I was interesting in both ensuring an accurate record of the teachers' language within the classroom and in abiding by the promises of my consent documents. When one member of the classroom specifically indicated another member of the classroom by name, I noted that in parentheses. Inside the parentheses I recorded the label that the speaker used. For example, if the teacher called a student by his or her name, I recorded that in my notes as follows (Student name).

Any observer comments that were in the field notes were bracketed within square brackets [] and separated onto a new line in the file with a blank line above and below it (Hatch, 2002). Any talk that I had thought I would want to eventually transcribe from the audio recording of that day of instruction was indicated within parentheses as (Transcribe this).

Once I had finished filling in my observation protocol, I saved the original field notes, the filled in observation protocol, and the audio recording from that day in a folder designated for the data for that participating teacher. I then used the software program Switch to convert the wma audio recording into an mp3 file for later transcription purposes. I named each file by the participating teacher (I had assigned each teacher a number one through four to keep track of their data), the day of data collection, and the type of file that it was. For example, the files from my first day of data collection with Tracy, Teacher 1, were saved as follows: T1D1raw.doc, T1D1filledin.doc, T1D1record.wma, and T1D1record.mp3. I labeled and filed any new pieces of unobtrusive data that had been collected on that day in their three-ring binder. I logged each piece of new data that had been gathered that day in my master Excel spreadsheet of all data collected in the study. Then I recorded a summary of my progress from the day, including any thoughts, reactions, or recommendations, in my research journal (Hatch, 2002). Finally, at the end of each day of observation and home office work time, I backed up all of my files from up to that point in the study on an external hard drive.

Unobtrusive data. During the course of my observations, the teachers gave me an opportunity to collect pieces of unobtrusive data (Hatch, 2002) that were components of their instruction. These data were considered unobtrusive in the sense that “their collection does not interfere with the ongoing events of everyday life” (Hatch, 2002, p. 116). I categorized such data as either documents or artifacts. I considered documents to be any written item related to or utilized for reading comprehension instruction that had not been principally developed by that classroom teacher. I considered artifacts to be any

written item related to or utilized for reading comprehension instruction that had been principally developed by that classroom teacher.

Whenever the teacher utilized a written item either to plan and carry out her reading comprehension instruction or to assign to students to complete as part of her reading comprehension instruction, I collected a copy of that item. In most cases, the teacher offered me a copy of the item when it was being distributed during instruction, and, if not, I requested a copy or an opportunity to make a copy at the conclusion of the observation on that same day.

When I returned home following an observation, I stored all of the unobtrusive data that I had collected in one three ring binder, separated with dividers for each individual teacher, on a bookshelf in my home office. I marked each artifact or document that I had collected with a label of the teacher that it had been collected from, the date, and the role that it had played within the reading comprehension instruction provided by the teacher on that day (i.e. informational handout, student assignment sheet, practice worksheet) and I noted that it had been collected on my master Excel spreadsheet of all data collected.

Data Analysis Procedures

Timeline. Data collection ended in May 2008 and data analysis began in early Spring 2010. The span of time separating data collection from data analysis represents a potential weakness of the study, as simultaneous data collection and analysis allows the opportunity for the two processes to inform and enhance one another (Hatch, 2002) and for the researcher to better ensure that domains, patterns, and themes identified are rooted

in and drawn out of the data itself. This gap represented a period of time during which I engaged in full-time classroom teaching and providing reading comprehension instruction to high school students. These opportunities may have influenced the lens that I brought to the task of examining the data for the purpose of understanding how participating teachers experience enacting reading comprehension instruction for students. However, the richness of my own teaching experience may also have informed the lens through which I processed my data and made interpretive decisions about the experiences of the teacher in the present study.

Case study database. I organized all the evidence generated during data collection and analysis into a case study database (Yin, 2003). The purpose of the case study database was to provide “a formal, presentable database, so that, in principle, other investigators can review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written case study reports. In this manner, a case study database increases markedly the reliability of the entire case study” (Yin, 2003, p. 102). Thus, I expected that the case study database would lend transparency to the process of data analysis by making the chain of evidence from my data to my conclusions available to outside scrutiny at each point in the process.

My case study database included four sets of files: data files, data reduction files, data reconstruction files, and process files (Baumann & Ivey, 1997). Data files represented all of those files generated during the process of data collection and constituted all of the raw data of the study. Data reduction files represented all of those files generated during the phases of data analysis that were intended to focus and organize the analysis around teachers’ experiences with reading comprehension

instruction (Hatch, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reconstruction files represented all of those files generated during the phases of data analysis that were intended to draw conclusions about teachers' experiences with reading comprehension instruction (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Process files represented all of those files generated throughout the entire study that were intended to organize and reflect upon my experience as researcher.

I stored all of the files related to the study in a folder labeled "Dissertation" within the "Documents" folders on my laptop computer. All of the contents of the "Dissertation" folder were also stored on an external hard drive and on my Google Documents account. I also stored in my home office one set of hard copies of all interview transcripts and observation protocols in a binder separated with dividers by individual participant.

Within the "Dissertation" folder, I stored the data files, data reduction files, and data reconstruction files for each participant in her own individual electronic folder. I had four individual folders labeled by teacher number (i.e. "Teacher 1", "Teacher 2", "Teacher 3", and "Teacher 4"). Within each individual teacher's folders, there were three sub-folders labeled "Data", "Data Reduction", and "Data Reconstruction." As data was generated and analyzed throughout the data collection and data analysis processes, new files were added to the appropriate sub-folder in each participant's electronic folder.

The "Data" sub-folder for each teacher held within it four sub-folders labeled "Audio Files", "Field Notes", "Interview Transcripts", and "Observation Protocols." As suggested by their labels, these folders included my wma and mp3 audio files of

interviews and classroom observations, field notes, interview transcripts, observation protocols, and interview transcripts for each participant. In the “Data Reduction” folder I created two Word documents. These documents consisted of files generated during the process of identifying and organizing salient domains in the data (Phases 3 and 4 of data analysis). The first Word document I entitled “Data with Domains.” Within this document, I cut and pasted electronic copies of each of my filled in observation protocols and interview transcripts in the chronological order in which they had been collected so that all of my data would be contained in a single document. I used this document as the place where I recorded instances of included terms during the domain identification process. The second Word document I entitled “Domain Summary Sheets.” Within this document, I kept both a domain cover page where I recorded all possible domains to take through the identification process and individual domain summary pages where I recorded the name of relevant included terms for that domain and the locations of instances of included terms in the data.

In the “Data Reconstruction” folder I created two Word Documents. These documents consist of files generated during the process of analyzing salient domains (Phases 5, 6, and 7 of data analysis). The first Word document I entitled “Within Domain Analysis.” Within this document, I organized within domain analyses for the domains that had been taken through the domain identification process in phase 4 of data analysis. The second Word document I entitled “Case Study Outline.” Within this document, I consolidated the categories created during individual within domain analyses into a single case study outline from which to write my findings into case study narratives. More

detail will be shared about each of these files in the sections describing each phase of my data analysis procedures.

Within the “Dissertation” folder there was a fifth folder labeled “Process Files” and a sixth folder labeled “Writing.” The “Process” folder held files intended to organize and unpack the research experience. These files included a master Excel file that was a catalogue of all of the data files from the entire study, organized by file type and participant, as well as my data collection and data analysis calendars, a Word file of the observed language interactions selected for transcription, and my research journal. The research journal was a place where I recorded the experience of carrying out the study throughout the process, including ideas, concerns, roadblocks, and breakthroughs (Hatch, 2002; Spradley, 1980). The “Writing” folder held drafts of this dissertation document, a copy of my dissertation prospectus, my Institutional Review Board documents, and all other files related to my preliminary work on the dissertation and my graduate program in general.

Inductive data analysis. The goal of data analysis was to develop answers to the research questions through a systematic search of the evidence generated. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that this can be thought of as a part of process of explanation building that begins with data collection, “Data are, so to speak, the *constructions* offered by or in the sources; data analysis leads to a *reconstruction* of those constructions” (p.332). The data analysis phases utilized in this study followed an inductive approach to developing conclusions (Hatch, 2002), with the aim of proceeding from the particulars of

each individual case, to the common patterns and themes that emerge across cases, to a broad theoretical frame intended to make sense of them.

I began data analysis after the completion of data collection. I acknowledge, however, that implicit data analysis began as a function of data collection, as I asked particular questions, focused on particular classroom interactions to record, and made choices about what to pursue further based on those initial decisions. Dey (1993) explains that for data to be analyzed they have to be collected and for data to be collected, “they have to be noticed by the researcher, and treated as data for the purpose of his or her research” (p. 15).

My data analysis continued until answers to the research questions could be logically justified with evidence from the data. I chose to analyze the cases in the order in which I collected my data, analyzing Tracy’s case first, then Carol’s, then Rachelle’s, and then Jessica’s. I chose this order because I had organized the study up to this point chronologically and felt comfortable with such an organizational framework. Upon the conclusion of all of the individual case analysis, I worked on conducting a cross-case analysis.

Phase 1: Identify frames of analysis. Phase 1 began with a full reading of all of the data for all four cases. The intention of this reading was to develop an understanding of the ideas and information contained in the data and to identify initial frames of analyses. A frame of analysis is a conceptual category that specifies the level at which data will be considered for analysis (Hatch, 2002). These frames of analyses served as

mental boundaries in the data from which to proceed with further organizing and questioning.

I anticipated that my frames of analysis would be an extension of the research question, and thought they would probably be events and conversation related to reading comprehension instruction. Being able to identify, narrow, and remain consistent within these guiding frames seemed important in this study because there was an extensive amount of observational data from which to mine information. I did not directly mark the data into these frames, but instead began to look and think through the data in terms of these frames.

For this reading of the data, I printed out double-sided hard copies of all of the interview transcripts and observation protocols for each case. I organized the data chronologically in one large three-ring binder, using dividers to create an individual section for each participant. In each individual participant section, I organized their interview transcripts and observation protocols chronologically. Thus I read the entire data set, stored in this binder, in the exact order in which it was collected.

At this point, I read the data with two focal questions in my mind. I tried to use these questions as a way to engage with the information and as a way to develop insights that would help guide later phases of data analysis. One of the questions I asked was, “What is going on here related to reading comprehension instruction?” This question helped me to see where my frames of analysis might offer clarification and focus to the task of processing so much information. I knew that I needed to be able to identify where the participants had given me access to information that would be relevant to

understanding their experiences with reading comprehension instruction specifically. I also needed to be able to move quickly past information that was not as relevant to my research questions. I tried to frame this as broadly and generously as possible because I knew that it was too early in the data analysis process to narrow too much without losing potential unforeseen insight. The other question I asked was, “What kind of answers to my research question does this data allow?” I knew from the beginning of the research process that one of the defining elements of many qualitative studies is that while they should be organized with clear and sensible procedures from the start, they also embraced the idea that those procedures had to allow for the flexibility to be responsive to what emerged from the participants (Hatch, 2002; Maxwell, 1996). I wanted to ensure that I was able to recognize those points where allowing for flexibility would ultimately lend strength to the work of data analysis.

One of the elements that these initial readings caused me to reconsider was the quantity and structure of my research questions. I had initially begun the study with one main research question, three sub-questions, and one or more additional sub-questions for each initial sub-question. I realized two things about my research questions during these readings. First, I thought that I had too many research questions, some of which were redundant. That is, it became obvious that the evidence in the data that would address certain research questions would address other research questions in the process. The intent of raising sub-questions was to highlight specific individual elements of the larger question for closer study and to ensure a focus in data collection and analysis around these elements. However this focus did not need to be repeated throughout the questions.

For example, I had previously identified core reading programs, text processing strategies, and instructional talk as issues of interest within my original sub-questions. However, I noticed as I read the data that those individual elements would emerge in the process of answering the larger question, especially if those elements were as significant as I had thought that they might be when I first posed them. Additionally, if they did not emerge, I would have to recognize that in these contexts those individual elements were not as salient to these teachers' experiences as I had suspected that they might be prior to beginning the study.

Hence, I began to recognize that the issue that I had originally identified as most central, the presence of core reading programs, did not seem to be emerging as having the same level of centrality for the teachers as for myself. I still wanted to ensure that I maintained a degree of focus on the core reading program as one component of their reading comprehension instruction, but I felt that I did not need to highlight it as a central component within my research questions. As a result, at this step in the data analysis, I decided to re-organize my research questions. I transformed my research questions from one main research question and seven sub-questions to the one main research question and three sub-questions presented in Chapter 1.

Phase 2: Identify language exchanges for transcription. Upon completion of the full reading of the data, I went back through each observation protocol for each teacher and identified specific language exchanges that I thought needed representation as a full transcription in the data. I waited to make decisions about the transcription of language exchanges in the observation protocols so that I could do so after having

reviewed the full data set at least once and given myself an opportunity to think carefully about how I was going to narrow and focus my frames of analysis.

I did not transcribe the entire audio recordings from each day of instruction. Instead, since I had recorded over 97 hours of classroom instruction across the four participating teachers, much of which was not pertinent to reading comprehension instruction, I used the following procedure for determining which portions of the audio recordings needed to be transcribed. First, I began a second review of just the observation protocols, during which I determined which interactions were important for filling in with the audio recordings by looking for interactions that were related to the act of reading, understanding, sharing, or enjoying a whole text. I tried initially to be as inclusive as possible about what kind of interactions met those requirements. I began a Word document that I included in my “Process Files” folder entitled “Classroom Audio Identified for Transcription.” Within this document, each teacher had her own table that had a column for the day of observation on which the interaction occurred, for the time frame within the observational protocol during which the interaction began and ended, and for a brief description of what the interaction entailed. After I identified this information for each interaction, I went back to the audio recording itself and listened to the entire exchange. At this time, I changed the time frame in the table from the estimated beginning and ending times noted from the observational protocol to the exact beginning and ending times on the audio recording. As I completed the process of listening to each initially identified interaction and determining its exact time frame on

the audio recording, I decided to again narrow the interactions that I was going to transcribe from the audio recordings.

Since the study focuses exclusively on reading comprehension instruction, I chose to narrow the transcription list to those interactions that were directed by the teacher for the primary purpose of ensuring student comprehension of a whole text. I highlighted those interactions on the Word document in bold. Those interactions I decided not to highlight for transcription were student read aloud sessions, teacher read aloud sessions, student reading project presentations, poetry presentations, and small group work sessions. The transcription list began with 66 interactions and was narrowed to 22 interactions. The remaining 22 interactions included text-based class discussions and instruction with core reading program anthology selections.

During the summer of 2010, I used the Express Scribe program to transcribe these interactions directly into my existing observation protocols. I chose to do so for several reasons. First, I chose this approach because the observation protocols were where I already had my notes that included these language exchanges that I had written down during my actual observations. In places where I was transcribing interactions, I replaced my notes of the language used with the actual language from the audio recording. Second, since I did not intend to analyze these language exchanges separately, I wanted to have them with the rest of my observational data in order to expedite data analysis procedures. Finally, by transcribing directly into my previously recorded observational protocols, I was able to compare the notes that I had taken during observations with the actual audio recordings. In most cases, it seemed that my notes did accurately reflect the

conversation occurring. The main deviation between my notes and the recordings was the absence of complete individual comments during the course of a discussion. This informal comparison gave me additional confidence in the notes that I had taken in my observation protocols.

At the conclusion of this process of identifying and transcribing language exchanges, I decided to re-organize the data set to further expedite upcoming data analysis phases. I had originally intended to proceed with my data analysis by recording the work of domain identification, within domain analysis, cross domain analysis, and cross case analysis on legal size pads and the printed out hard copies of the data. At this point, I choose to organize this work electronically. I choose to use an electronic recording system for three reasons. First, the amount of domain identification work that I was going to be doing seemed as if it would make it difficult to record instances of included terms on my printed out data in an orderly way. I felt that using the Add Comment function of Word to insert electronic comments in the margin of the data document to track instances of included terms would better maintain organization and clarity. Second, I wanted to have a way to do data analysis work that I could back up on other storage devices, such as my external hard drive and my Google document account. Third, I wanted to have a more transparent way to share my data analysis work with my readers, including committee. Therefore, at this point I worked to set up the data reduction and data reconstruction files as described in my case study database section.

I also decided to create a new process file that would serve as a new research journal (Hatch, 2002) for the data analysis process, as opposed to continuing to use the

research journal I had begun during data collection. I wanted to have a fresh and distinct place where I could informally record my emerging thoughts and observations about both the data analysis process and my findings. I felt that this was important so that I could capture thinking that I was doing that might not get represented during the formal phases of data analysis or that might inform decisions made about directions to pursue during formal data analysis. I also wanted to be able to separate findings that were emerging directly from the data as a result of moving through the phases of data analysis and insights that were occurring to me as a result of applying my knowledge and experience to the data. I added to this journal on an as-needed basis, as I developed ideas, reactions, and reflections that seemed significant to but not yet directly represented within the data analysis work that had been completed.

At this point in time I felt prepared to move on to data analysis work with each individual case because I was comfortable with the progress I had achieved in the first two phases of data analysis. I had a sense of the frames of analysis that would streamline my work with such a large data set. I had decided on a revised set of research questions that seemed to appropriately focus the ensuing data analysis work. I had identified and transcribed the classroom language exchanges that I felt needed to be fully represented in my observation protocols. I had my data organized in a format for analysis that seemed orderly and efficient. I had created and started contributing to a new place to personally process my thinking about my data analysis work. I now moved on to taking each individual case study through the phases of domain identification, within domain analysis, cross-domain analysis, and participant audit.

Phase 3: Domain identification. In Phase 3, the data were read for the purpose of identifying relationships within categories of information, or domains. According to Spradley (1979), domains are “any symbolic category that includes other categories [...] All the members of a domain share at least one feature of meaning” (p. 100). Using the processes of domain identification, within domain analysis, and cross-domain analysis as the procedures which organized and guided this data analyses reflects an alignment with Spradley’s assumption that cultural knowledge is “an intricately patterned *system* of symbols” in which “*the meaning of any symbol is its relationship to other symbols*” (p. 97, emphasis in original). In order to come to an understanding of the culture of reading comprehension instruction in each of the teaching worlds of my participants, it is thus necessary to determine the meanings of the symbols and categories of symbols that comprise this world. To do so, Spradley suggests, “requires that we discover the relationships that occur among these symbols” (p. 97). Identifying domains as categories of cultural symbols organized in relationship to one another and analyzing how they are structured individually and collectively is the key function of my data analysis procedures. Phases 3 through 5 of my data analysis procedures are specifically intended to do just that in the reading comprehension teaching worlds of each of my participants.

Each domain is comprised of a cover term that names the category being explored in that domain and establishes a boundary between what is and is not included in that category, a set of two or more included terms that define what elements found in the data belong to that category, and a semantic relationship that outlines how the cover term and the included terms are connected to one another. Organizing categories around semantic

relationships makes explicit the meaningful links between ideas in the data, as represented by participants, and ensures systematicity in the analysis process. For example, one domain that I included in the domain identification process for all participants was a domain with the cover term “reading comprehension instruction” and the semantic relationship “is a component of.” As I read the data set for each individual participant during domain identification for this domain, I was looking for instances of included terms that would logically be included as examples of components of the reading comprehension instruction in that teacher’s classroom, as evidenced by my observational protocols and interview transcripts.

The work of this phase of data analysis was recorded on the Word document entitled “Domain Summary Sheets” in the “Data Reduction” folder for each participant (see Appendix E). The first page of this file was a domain cover sheet that listed all of the potential domains I wanted to consider identifying in the data for that participant. After this first page of the file, each proceeding page was a domain summary sheet for that individual domain. Once a potential domain was listed, that domain was added to my domain cover sheet. If I decided that that domain was significant or salient enough to spend time searching for examples of included terms in the data for that participant, a new domain summary sheet page was started within the file for that domain.

Each domain summary sheet included a cover term, a semantic relationship, and a purpose question for that domain. The purpose question was a question that I wrote, based on the cover term and semantic relationship being search for in the data for that domain as a way of further focusing my reading of the data on the identification of

pertinent included terms. For example, when I began searching for included terms for the domain and semantic relationship “is a component of reading comprehension instruction”, I wrote the purpose question “What do you use to help students make sense of whole texts?” These questions allowed my search of the data during the domain identification process to take the form of an inquiry in which I was seemingly questioning the teacher herself through the evidence available to me in the observational protocols and interview transcripts. I found this to be a helpful approach to ensuring that I identified all possible included terms that would belong to each domain.

Once I had created the domain summary sheet for the domain, I read the entire data set for that participant, keeping in mind my previously established frames of analysis, and searching for instances of included terms that would fit within that domain. I read the data set by scrolling on my laptop computer through the “Data with Domains” file in which I had copied and pasted all of my individual data files into a single file for participant. I recorded instances of included terms on the domain summary sheet for that domain as I found them during my reading of the data set.

Other potential domains were uncovered during these searches as well, and I added those to my domain cover sheet to go back and consider later. In the end, I generated many more potential domains than those that I actually took through the domain identification process. I created domain summary sheet pages on 10 out of 28 potential domains for Tracy, 10 out of 29 potential domains for Carol, 9 out of 19 potential domains for Rachelle, and 9 out of 22 potential domains for Jessica. There was both consistency and variation in the domains identified across each participant. There

were seven domains that I generated that I took through the domain identification process with the data for each participant, and one to three additional domains that were specific to the experience of that individual participant.

Once the data were read to identify included terms for the domain, the data were then re-read to mark the exact locations of instances of included terms in the data file and to record locations on the domain summary sheet. This was done in order to give me an accurate record of where and when each instance of each included term was located. This was important for two reasons. First, I wanted to have a record of each instance of each included term in order to be able to quickly find those instances again when I was developing my case study outlines and writing the case study narratives. Second, I wanted to be able to get a sense of the presence that each included term that had been identified actually had in the data, and, as a result, be able to make determinations about whether those included terms deserved to be represented in the domain as an element of that teacher's experiences. This accounting of included terms gave me a record from which I could begin to re-evaluate the included terms as part of the within domain analysis process.

I wanted to mark the included terms in both the data file and the domain summary sheet in order to have two locations from which to find the information when necessary. In order to do so, I developed a two part coding system that would accomplish this. First, I gave each domain and each included term within that domain a code that I would use when I found instances of the included terms in the data. I assigned these codes on the domain summary sheet pages within the "Domain Summary Sheet" file. I started by

giving each domain a Roman numeral label based on the order in which I had worked on identifying included terms for the domain. I then gave each included term within a domain an alphabetic label that I could use to mark instances of that specific term in the data. For example, the domain “is a component of reading comprehension instruction” was the fourth domain for which I had searched the data for included terms, and thus was domain IV. The included term “peer read aloud” was the first included term within this domain, and thus was A. When I located instances of a peer read aloud in my data, I indicated it with the label IV-A. If there were more than 26 included terms within a domain, I doubled the alphabetic label when assigning codes. So after I used the label Z, I began the alphabetic again with the label AA. If there were more than 52 included terms, I began the alphabet again, thus after I used the label AZ, I began with the label BA. I did not have any domains with more than 78 included terms.

Second, I devised a system for also marking instances of included terms within the data file “Data with Domains.” When I identified an instance of an included term in the data, I would use the Comment function of Microsoft Word to insert a comment in the margin of the file. In the comment box I inserted the assigned label for the domain and included terms, as with the code of IV-A for an instance of a peer read aloud in the domain “is a component of reading comprehension instruction”. I would then go over to the included term on the “Domain Summary Sheet” document and make a record of where this same instance had occurred in the data file. In order to make such a record, I would note the specific component of the data file, with a “D” for a day of observation and an “I” for an interview, and then the line number at which the instance occurred. For

example, the code D6L250 would indicate that an instance of an included term occurred on line 250 of observation day 6 within the data.

In addition, when I marked the location of exact instances of included terms from the data on my “Domain Summary Sheet” document, I also indicated which specific instances seemed particularly representative or powerful examples of the included term being documented. I did so by including an asterisk (*) next to the location code of those instances of the included term. I did this so I would have a starting point from which to evaluate examples and data excerpts for inclusion when I began to write the case study narrative.

While I worked on marking exact instances of included terms in the data, I had both the “Data with Domains” and “Domain Summary Sheet” document open at the same time in Microsoft Word. I positioned the two documents next to each other on the screen of my laptop so that I could be looking at both at the same time. I had the “Domain Summary Sheet” document open to the page of the domain that I was working on identifying at the time. When I began, the domain was listed and labeled across the top of the page and each included term was listed and labeled on an individual line on the page. I began to scroll through the “Data with Domains” document from beginning to end. I was looking for specific instances of the included terms of that domain within my frames of analysis in the data.

I continued in this fashion until I had identified instances of all of the included terms in all of the domains that I considered most salient to addressing my research questions and representing the experiences of that teacher. In some cases, I had started a

domain summary sheet page for domains for which I chose not to complete a full domain identification where I located and marked instances of each included term. In these cases, throughout the process of domain identification, I had decided that some domains were not worth pursuing any further at that time either because they did not directly address a research question or because they did not seem as pertinent to the experience of the teacher as other domains. I completed full domain identifications for 8 out of 10 domains for Tracy, 9 out of 10 domains for Carol, 9 out of 9 domains for Rachelle, and 9 out of 9 domains for Jessica (see Appendix F).

At this point, I had identified each domain that I felt was most salient to representing the experience of teacher with reading comprehension instruction and to providing the evidence necessary to logically justify answers to my research questions. I had also created a record of each instance of each included term in those domains and made an indication of those instances that seemed particularly powerful or representative of the included term. I then decided to move forward with the next phase of data analysis, within domain development.

Phase 4: Within domain development. In Phase 4, each domain was individually analyzed in order to create a framework that would indicate how the information in that domain was organized, according to the evidence provided by the participant. Included terms grouped into sub-categories for each domain was the end product of this phase of data analysis. To do so, I had to organize the included terms within the domain into categories and sub-categories and to make any final determinations about the level of support that existed in the data for the identified included terms of that domain.

I conducted my within domain development by having two Word documents open on my computer screen. On one side of the screen, I had the “Domain Summary Sheet” file that I had completed in Phase 3 with each domain and each included term listed and each instance of each included term recorded. On the other side of the screen, I had a new document entitled “Within Domain Analysis” that I saved in the “Data Reconstruction” folder for each participant (see Appendix E). In this document, each domain had its own within domain analysis page. Working with each individual domain one at a time, I took each included term from the domain summary sheet, considered what it represented within the given domain, and attempted to group it into a sub-category with other included terms from that domain.

I created sub-categories with each domain on the basis of several factors. These factors included the existence of a common element that the included terms shared with other included terms in the category, a common function that the included terms played for the teacher within the domain, or a common idea or perspective that the included terms represented in the teacher’s thinking and decision-making. I would start by taking an included term that stood out to me and creating a sub-category specific to that included term and then I would go through the list of all of the included terms to identify any other included terms that would also fit into that sub-category. I would list the sub-category and the included terms that fit within it on the within domain summary page. I would then begin the process again with another category until I had worked through all of the included terms in the domain. In some cases, I ended my first round of within

domain development with a set of included terms that I had not yet fit into a pertinent category and needed to be considered further as a part of the domain.

Once each included term had either been placed in an initial category or had been identified for further consideration on my within domain summary page, I went through each individual category and reviewed the placement of included terms within that category. During this review process, I was attempting to accomplish three goals. First, I wanted to determine if there were any sub-categories in which the included terms could be organized into further sub-categories. If so, I created and organized those further sub-categories at that time. Second, I wanted to determine if the initial categories that I created accurately encompassed both the larger domain itself and the included terms within those domains with the most brevity. I wanted to see if there were any different types of categorizations that I could use to organize my included terms that would make more sense. Third, I wanted to identify any included terms within the domain that did not seem to fit well with the remaining included terms or did not seem to represent the domain itself as well. This was so that I had a starting point for going back to the data to look for negative or contradictory evidence related to that domain.

For example, for each participating teacher I identified a domain entitled “is a component of reading comprehension instruction.” The intent of this domain was to identify any element that the participating teacher used with her students during the course of instruction for the purpose of enhancing their capacity to make sense of a whole text. As I began to work on the within domain outline for the included terms in this domain for Tracy, I immediately noticed that some of the included terms in the domain

represented activities that the teacher used repeatedly with students. I first began to group these included terms as “routines.” Next, I noticed that some of the remaining included terms represented tools or sources of information that the teacher used or directed students to use during the course of instruction. I began to group these included terms as “resources.” Then I noticed that many of the remaining included terms represented various comprehension skills and strategies that the teacher was teaching, had taught, or prompted her students to use during the course of instruction. I grouped these included terms as “skills and strategies.” Once I had finished grouping included terms into these three sub-categories, there were a few included terms remaining that had not fit within any of these groups. At this point in time, I returned to my data file and reconsidered the instances of these included terms that I had marked.

The data were re-read with the included terms of particular domains in mind, specifically the included terms that are confusing or contradictory in light of how the other included terms in the domain had been grouped, with the purpose of identifying the included term as a negative case (Miles & Huberman, 1984) or determining that the included term rightfully belonged in a different or new domain, or determining that the included term actually lacked necessary support in the data to justify continuing to include it in the domain. Instances that were dissonant or disconfirming were noted and kept with the domain to be considered for explanatory value. Instances that were misplaced were moved to a better domain. Instances that lacked support were eliminated from the domain. For example, in the domain “is a component of reading comprehension instruction” for Tracy, “reading choice” was an included term that had been left

ungrouped. Upon returning to the data, re-reading the instances of this included term that had been marked in the data, and skimming the remainder of the data, I decided that while the teacher did seem to appreciate the value of students having the opportunity to self-select reading materials in principle, there was limited evidence that self-selected reading procedures, beyond independent reading, played a central role in the reading comprehension instruction that she was providing students, as evidenced by the data I had collected. Therefore, I chose to eliminate “reading choice” from this domain, however, it was still represented in a different domain for this teacher.

As a result of this Phase, the included terms for each individual domain were grouped into sub-categories, and, at times, sub-categories within those sub-categories. In the next phase, these individually organized domains were considered together and used to develop a full case study outline of the evidence that existed in the data surrounding that participating teacher’s experience with reading comprehension instruction.

Phase 5: Cross-domain analysis. In Phase 5, all fully developed domains were examined together to identify connections and relationships among the individual domains. It was expected that the meta-relationships discovered among the individual domains would represent themes that would organize master case study outlines and would reflect the larger components of the teachers’ experiences with reading comprehension instruction. A theme (Hatch, 2002; Spradley, 1979, 1980) is a pattern that repeats in the data in such a way that it is capable of tying the individual pieces of the data together in a sensible way. In short, a theme is a relationship that connects the

individual relationships discovered during the domain identification and within domain analysis process.

I decided to use two approaches to identify broad, organizing themes in my data. First, I utilized a whole-to-part approach in which I read the data set from start to finish with the question, “What is going on here that helps make sense of all of the pieces?” As I conducted this reading, I was using the data file that had each instance of a domain and its included terms indicated in a comment box in the right-hand margin. Reading the data file with the indicators of each instance present provided me with a visual reminder of where I had discovered noteworthy elements, components, or excerpts in the data. This assisted me in my search for themes by offering points from which I could compare the data to the larger questions through which I was reading the data. That is, as I read, I compared these instances and excerpts to my focal question and tried to explain to myself what I was seeing within those instances and excerpts and how they related to any larger patterns or connections that might be present in the data.

During this reading of the data, three themes began to emerge. I noticed that one sub-set of elements noted in the data related to how the teacher was thinking about reading comprehension, one sub-set of elements related to what the teacher was doing and saying in classroom with regard to reading comprehension, and one sub-set of elements noted in the data related to what, how, and when the teacher was learning about reading comprehension. Once I noticed these categories of relationships across the data set, I continued my reading of the data set with these specific themes in my mind. I was trying to determine if the remainder of the data and the instances of domains and included

terms reflected in them would continue to fit with these three themes. I concluded this reading of the data set by attempting to develop a broad, working definition of each theme. I did not formally write these definitions down because I did not want to unduly narrow my search for themes until I felt confident that the individual domains would reflect those same patterns. I named each theme as follows: definitions of reading comprehension, reading comprehension instruction, and learning about reading comprehension instruction.

Second, I used a part-to-whole approach in which I reviewed the individual domains, as I had them organized in my “Within Domain Analysis” file, in light of my three potential themes. I read the “Within Domain Analysis” file from start to finish and asked myself, “How does this individual domain fit within these three themes?” At this point in time, I was not trying to commit myself to an organization framework of domains across themes; I was simply looking for the degree of fit between the individual domains and themes. As I finished reviewing this file, I felt that each of the individual domains as they had been independently analyzed could logically fit within the three themes I had identified in my most recent reading of the data. Thus, I felt confident that I could move on to using these three themes to create a master outline that would organize my findings in preparation for writing the case study narratives.

Phase 6: Create a master outline. The goal of this phase of analysis was to generate a comprehensive master outline that offered a well-supported answer to the main research question for each individual participant. A master outline provided me an organizational structure through which I could complete a final check of my domains and

the strength of my included terms, including those that seemed weak, dissonant, or redundant in relation to the larger vision and from which I could draft case study narratives.

In order to do so, I had the “Within Domain Analysis” file that I had completed in Phase 4 open on my computer. Next to this file I created a new Word Document entitled “Case Study Outline” that would be saved in the “Data Reconstruction” folder for each participant (see Appendix E). In the “Case Study Outline” file, I began to transform domains and their sub-categories into a formal outline. I used the three themes that I had identified in the previous phase, definitions of reading comprehension, reading comprehension instruction, and learning about reading comprehension instruction as the main headers of my master outline for each teacher, and I worked to integrate the individual domains of that teacher within them.

I started with the first domain in “Within Domain Analysis” file and turned its sub-categories into an outline format, making determinations about what order the sub-categories needed to go in and with which of the three themes they belonged, as evidenced by either the content of their included terms or the relationship that it seemed to have with individual other domains. I worked through the domains chronologically, from the first domain in the file to the last. I knew that I would also need to consolidate or group the domains together on the basis of their relationship to my three themes and the similarities and differences of their included terms, therefore, I did those consolidations at this point in time. As I looked at the particular sub-categories of each domain, I also went back to the data file to review the examples of the included terms that

I had identified in the data itself. At this point, I did so as way to think through what these included terms and domains represented about each teacher's experience with reading comprehension instruction to ensure that I had organized the individual domains in a logical way within the case study outline.

Once I had placed all of the individual domains within the larger case study outline, I determined which sub-components I wanted to specifically highlight within the case study outline. I chose which sub-components I would highlight on the basis of several factors. First, I considered the degree of support that existed in the data based on the number of instances that I had recorded for that sub-component. Second, I considered the degree of support that existed in the data based on the types of instances that I had recorded for that sub-component during the domain summary process. That is, there were certain sub-components that did not appear in the data a large number of times, but nonetheless did seem particularly important or valuable for understanding the experience of that individual teacher. In addition, I returned to my "Domain Summary Sheets" to evaluate the data excerpts that I had previously determined to be powerful indicators of the included terms in my individual domains. I copied the locations of those excerpts that I wanted to highlight into the case study outline. Finally, I considered how all of the individual sub-components across the three themes contributed to a holistic understanding of the participating teacher as a reading comprehension teacher. I intended to represent each teacher in her narrative in a fair and accurate way that contributed to a well-developed understanding of her experience. I tried to identify sub-components that would contribute to such a focused sense of each participant. After having identified the

sub-components of the outline that I intended to highlight, I returned to the domain summary sheets and data files to identify the specific data excerpts that supported the description of those sub-components. Then I wrote each case study narrative.

Phase 7: Participant audit. In Phase 7, participating teachers were asked to conduct a “member check” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 236) on the findings in order to audit the conclusions of the researcher. This was accomplished by asking each participating teacher to review her case study after a draft of the case study narrative had been written from the master outline. This was an important component of the data analysis process because it provided an opportunity to check my findings, ensuring that they were accurate and reasonable reflections of each teacher’s experience and engendering confidence that I could use the individual case study findings to describe larger patterns across the experiences of the teachers.

I e-mailed all four participating teachers in January 2011. Tracy had moved out of the area. Carol, Rachelle, and Jessica still worked within the participating district. Carol and Jessica now worked in a different school building than they had when the study began. They all taught at different grade levels than they had during the study. In my e-mail to Carol, Rachelle, and Jessica, I asked for an opportunity to meet for an hour after school to share and discuss what I had learned about their experiences with reading comprehension instruction from spending time with them in their classrooms. They all responded willingly, indicating that they were interested in hearing more from me about the project. In my e-mail to Tracy, I asked if she would be willing to review my

written case study narrative and give me feedback via an e-mail response. I did not receive a response from Tracy.

I arranged a time to meet with each of the three teachers who responded to my initial e-mail in their classrooms in their current school building after school during the last week of January and the first two weeks of February 2011. A week prior to each meeting, I e-mailed each teacher again in order to remind her of our upcoming meeting. In addition, I attached a copy of a Word document of the case study narrative that I had written about that teacher to this e-mail. I requested that the teacher read the narrative before our meeting, if she had time to do so. I noted that when we met I was going to be asking her if she believed that the narrative accurately represented what had been happening in her teaching world and her classroom in regards to reading comprehension at the time that the data was collected. I concluded this reminder e-mail by letting the teacher know that I valued her feedback and that I would do the best I could to accommodate and represent her thoughts about the draft in the final narrative.

During our meeting, I asked the participating teacher to respond to the document by indicating her agreement and disagreement with it as a whole and with its individual components, in terms of how accurately it represented herself and her teaching during the time that I spent in her classroom. I talked through each theme of the document, explaining the conclusions that I had drawn about each teacher's definitions of reading comprehension, the key elements of her reading comprehension instruction, and the learning that she had experienced around reading comprehension instruction. I asked the participating teacher to offer additional clarification for those points that she felt were not

representative of herself and her teaching or to ask me questions about those points about which she felt unclear or were unsure.

I did not audio record the contents of our conversation, but instead took notes on my copy of their case study narrative and a yellow legal pad. I answered any questions that the participating teacher had for me about what I saw and heard in their classrooms, about the process of carrying out the study, and about reading comprehension instruction in general. I communicated to the teacher that I would be revising the narrative, partially based on her feedback, and that I would re-consider any points of concern that she had raised by re-visiting my data and data analysis files. I concluded each meeting by thanking the teacher for her participation in the study and asking if there was anything I could do to support her in their current reading comprehension teaching. Following each participant audit, I reviewed the notes that I had taken during the meeting. I made note of those elements that the teacher felt had been accurately and fairly represented and those elements that the teacher felt were not representative in the narrative.

I conducted my first participant audit with Carol. Carol was now working as a sixth grade language arts teacher in one of the three district middle school buildings. She had returned to language arts teaching at the middle school level immediately following the year during which the study had been conducted and expressed that she was much more content at the middle school level. However, during the time in which Carol had been teaching at the elementary level, the middle school buildings had transitioned from a team-teaching block schedule with 90 minute classes to a seven period day with 55 minute classes. Carol felt frustrated by the change in the school day and felt that it

inhibited her from continuing to grow as a reading comprehension teacher due to the lack of longer blocks of instructional time. Carol had read the case study narrative that I shared with her prior to our meeting. She felt that on the whole the narrative did accurately represent her and the reading comprehension instruction in her classroom at that time. She shared that she was pleased that I had emphasized that she felt that reading was an “interactive process” and that readers need to develop a sense of relationship with reading, with other readers, and with individual texts. She thought that the excerpts that I had included and my analysis of those excerpts was a fair and reasonable representation.

I conducted my second participant audit with Rachelle. Rachelle was still working in the same elementary building that she had been working in during the study, but was now teaching at the second grade level. She had spent two years teaching at the third grade level beginning the school year after which the study had been conducted and was now in her first year of teaching at the second grade level. Rachelle had skimmed the case study narrative and reviewed the case study outline prior to our meeting. As we discussed the dimensions of the case study outline that were represented in the case study narrative, Rachelle shared that she was struck by how much she had forgotten about that year of her teaching. She felt that I had represented her accurately and fairly from that point in time, but also felt very strongly that that representation was not an accurate reflection of the teacher she was at this point in time. Instead, she communicated that some of the significant structural changes that she had experienced in her teaching context in the years that followed data collection had resulted in her having a very different kind of experience as a teacher and a reading comprehension teacher. She noted

that in the school year after the year of the study she had requested and been assigned a different formal mentor teacher, someone from within her school building, who had been extremely supportive during that next year of teaching and from whom she had learned a great deal. She also noted that she now had 17 students who had a range of literacy capabilities and needs in her current classroom, as opposed to the 34 students who had all exhibited significant literacy learning needs who were in her classroom at the time of the study.

In particular, Rachelle felt that the way in which she thought about and defined reading comprehension was now significantly different. Again, she shared that my interpretation and representation of her beliefs about reading comprehension from that time felt fair and accurate to her but would probably no longer stand as accurate. She cited three reasons for this change. Those reasons were that she had been in her first year of teaching at the time, she had just transitioned from working full-time as a private tutor with the Wilson[®] Reading System, and she had been working hard to respond to the overwhelming needs of her students at that time. She felt these three factors had strongly shaped the belief systems out of which she had been operating and from which she had been teaching at the time. Rachelle reiterated several times during our meeting how grateful she was for that year of teaching experience because nothing in her teaching experiences that have followed have seemed nearly as overwhelming or as daunting.

I conducted my third participant audit with Jessica. Jessica was now working in a different elementary building than the one she had been working in during the study. She had transferred to her new building during the summer after the year in which the study

had been conducted. She was now teaching at the third grade level after having taught second grade in the most recent school year. Jessica had read the case study outline and reviewed the case study narrative that I had sent her via e-mail prior to our meeting. During the course of our discussion, Jessica communicated that she did believe that I had represented her accurately from that point in time in her teaching career. She felt that while many of the elements of her experience as described in the case study had remained the same in the interim, that there were certain elements that had changed a great deal.

Jessica shared that she had decided to transfer to a different school building following the close of the study because she felt overwhelmed by the number of demands that had been placed on the fourth and fifth grade teachers at Fieldview. In particular, she was frustrated with the school intervention program and the amount of time it consumed to plan and execute in relation to the amount of time it took up during the school day. In addition, she had grown tired of being responsible for helping to plan and supervise the many auxiliary activities for which the fourth and fifth grade students were responsible (e.g., the daily television program, the talent show, and the school field day) on top of her normal instructional responsibilities. Not only had such responsibilities consumed a great deal of additional time and effort, but also Jessica believed that they had distracted her from focusing on her teaching and her personal instructional improvement efforts.

In terms of reading comprehension and instruction, Jessica noted that she continued to believe that knowledge played a critical role in the reading comprehension process and that she continued to emphasize knowledge development in her classroom. She commented that she continued to utilize a questioning style through which she tried

to eliminate potential mental distractions and to keep students thinking through the text. She highlighted that student interest and book selection continued to be important to her but that she had still yet to have a learning experience that was directly centered on reading comprehension instruction.

In contrast, Jessica felt that there were several elements of her instruction that had changed. She believed that she had learned, as a result of additional teaching experience, more about the value of summarization, teaching students to summarize while they read, and supporting students in creating written summaries of text after reading. She had learned more about young adult and children's literature, which was a particularly good thing, since the school district decided to eliminate funding for Accelerated Reader and she was unable to rely on it as a resource in the ways in which she had at the time of the study. She had learned how to utilize the leveled books that accompanied the core reading program, and felt that she had the capacity to be able to do so in her classroom now because she had groups of students who represented a wider range of reading levels.

Two weeks after I had sent my original e-mail to Tracy, I sent Tracy a follow-up e-mail. In this e-mail, I again expressed my desire to touch base with her and share what I had learned about her and her reading comprehension instruction during my time in her classroom in this area. I attached a copy of Tracy's case study narrative directly to the e-mail and asked that she consider reviewing it if she had time to do so. I asked that she respond to me with any reactions or feedback if she was able to take a look at the narrative. I did not receive a response from Tracy to this follow-up e-mail.

As a result of the participant audit meetings, I felt confident that I had fairly represented the perceptions that the teachers had of their thinking about reading comprehension, their classroom reading comprehension instruction, and their learning about reading comprehension instruction from the time I had been collecting data in their classrooms. As such, I felt prepared to move ahead with comparing the individual experiences of the participating teachers in my cross case synthesis.

Phase 8: Cross case synthesis. In Phase 8, the elements of each individual case, as represented by their case study outlines and case study narratives, were compared. In particular, the individual cases were compared to identify instances of both alignment and divergence with reading comprehension instruction across the experiences of the individual teachers. I conducted these comparisons through the development of a data display in the form of a matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) define a data display as “an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action” (p. 11). They recognize that the most common form of data display in qualitative research is “*extended text*” but suggest that the use of extended text as a tool for making comparisons, particularly within and across large data sets, is problematic because it can “overload humans’ information-processing capabilities and preys on their tendencies to find simplifying patterns” (p. 11). Instead, they advocate the use of visual displays of data that “are designed to assemble organized information into an immediately accessible, compact form so that the analyst can see what is happening and either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next step of analysis the display suggests may be useful” (p. 11).

In my cross case analysis, I integrated case-oriented and variable-oriented approaches to the synthesis process. Case-oriented approaches use a theoretical framework to begin to analyze one case and then look to see if similar patterns of explanation exist across additional cases. Variable-oriented approaches use the presence of recurring themes across cases to organize emerging patterns of explanation. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that one strategy for integrating efforts to link a theoretical framework with emerging themes in multiple case studies is to utilizing “stacking” (p. 176), through which you can bring together individual cases and their variables in a single data display called a “meta-matrix” (p. 176).

I began by creating a partially ordered meta-matrix that summarized the key components of each teacher’s experience across the three themes of each case study narrative. I identified a set of variables and factors upon which to compare the experiences of the four teachers. Each individual teacher occupied one column in the matrix and each variable occupied one row in the matrix. I filled in the matrix by working through the column for each teacher, filling in the pertinent information for that teacher related to each variable (see Appendix H).

Then, I reorganized this meta-matrix by clustering it into patterns of similarity and difference. I first clustered the rows of variables by organizing the variables within the three dimensions around which I had organized my case study outlines and narratives. Then, within each dimension I clustered the variables by grouping the ones that showed areas of difference across the four teachers first and areas of similarity second. Finally, I chose a set of core variables that I wanted to focus on in particular. I chose these core

variables on the basis of how central they seemed to the experiences of all four of the participating teachers as evidenced in my data. I intended to focus on the similarities and differences across the experiences of the teachers that could best address the nature of their experiences with the phenomenon of interest in this study, reading comprehension instruction. I also sought to develop a focus on discussing those similarities and differences that were illuminated by and could illuminate symbolic interactionism. I developed a cross case outline that reflected these matrices and used this cross case outline to write the cross case synthesis.

Chapter Summary

This study utilized a qualitative case study approach embedded within a post-positivist paradigm. I collected interview and observational data from four upper elementary teachers across two schools in one suburban district in the Midwest. In chapter 4, I present my findings from the study described here.

Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of four upper elementary teachers with the process of providing reading comprehension instruction to their students. The study sought to answer the research question, “What is the nature of upper elementary teachers’ experiences with reading comprehension instruction?” It was further guided by the following three sub-questions:

- (1) How do teachers organize and provide reading comprehension instruction, including how they use their core reading program?
- (2) What sources of knowledge do teachers use when making decisions about reading comprehension instruction?
- (3) To what do teachers attribute their knowledge of reading comprehension instruction?

The findings in this study are reported in the form of four individual case study narratives that outline the specific experience of each teacher participant and a case study synthesis that describes patterns of similarity and difference across the four participant experiences.

Each case study narrative is organized around three dimensions related to components that emerged as significant within the experiences of the participants: Definitions of Reading Comprehension, Classroom Reading Comprehension Instruction, and Learning about Reading Comprehension Instruction. Each of these dimensions in turn represents a link through which all three collectively inform and address the research question and sub-questions of the study (see Appendix F).

Definitions of reading comprehension. The first dimension, Definitions of Reading Comprehension, addresses the main research question and first sub-question. The ways in which the teachers conceptualized reading comprehension as an independent construct influenced the ways in which they organized and carried out instructional routines that were intended to support student comprehension development. It also shaped the attributions they made about why students had success or difficulty as comprehenders of text that in turn shaped their own feelings of success and frustration with their teaching.

This dimension is divided into two sub-categories: key components of reading comprehension and attributions for student success and failure. Each teacher directly and implicitly utilized a working definition of reading comprehension in thinking about, planning for, and carrying out reading comprehension instruction in her language arts classroom. This definition was communicated through both the components that the teacher identified or valued as important for reading comprehension and the attributions that the teacher made as to why students either succeeded or struggled with reading comprehension. Key components of reading comprehension outline the way in which the teacher conceptualized of the construct of reading comprehension and the elements that the teacher privileged within that conceptualization. In the section on attributions for student success and failure I discuss the factors that the teacher identified as important for understanding why students experience success or failure with the reading comprehension process. These attributions both reflected and extended the ways that the teachers defined reading comprehension.

Classroom reading comprehension instruction. The second dimension, Classroom Reading Comprehension Instruction, addresses the main research question and the first and second sub-questions. This dimension outlines the specific ways in which the teachers have organized their classrooms for reading comprehension growth and how the teachers carry out instruction intended to promote reading comprehension development. It examines the role that the core reading program plays in the reading comprehension instruction of each teacher as well as the other types of resources that the teacher finds important for planning and enacting reading comprehension instruction. Finally, it addresses the factors that play a role in how that teacher makes decisions related to carrying out reading comprehension instruction.

This dimension is divided into three sub-categories, classroom routines, reading comprehension content, and decision-making factors. Classroom routines refer to those activities that were repeated on a regular basis for the purpose of enhancing student reading comprehension learning. The classroom routines described here are further organized into three types of classroom routines that together constitute an approach to reading comprehension instruction: sharing routines, practice routines, and core reading program routines. Sharing routines refer to those activities that were intended to give students an opportunity to share thinking about and experiences with text with others. Practice routines refer to those activities that were specifically intended to help students practice processing and making sense of a text. Core reading program routines refer to those activities that involved the use of the core reading program. This includes attention to which portions of the core reading program are consistently selected for the use in

reading comprehension instruction and in what ways as well as which portions of the core reading program are disregarded or not utilized.

While each of the three types of routine will be considered separately, it is important to note that there was significant overlap across the routines as the teachers enacted them with their students. For example, during a sharing routine like a whole class discussion, Tracy would have students share thinking that they had generated during a previous practice routine, for example, recording text-based examples of a strategy or skill. Or, during a core reading program routine, such as during the reading of an anthology selection, Carol would use a sharing routine, such as a reading web, to organize the reading experience, and a practice routine, such as a doing a written response, following the reading. It is also important to note that these are the routines Tracy, Carol, Rachelle, and Jessica utilized for the purpose of developing student reading comprehension capacity. There are other components of their language arts instruction that are not contained here because they were not directly related to reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension content refers to the types of skills and strategies taught during instruction that are related to developing reading comprehension capacity or helping students to understand the meaning of a given text in a more sophisticated or efficient way. These categories of skills and strategies together represent each teacher's enacted reading comprehension curriculum. There are two categories of skills and strategies that are discussed in each case study narrative: core reading program skills and DesCartes skills (Northwest Evaluation Association, n.d.). The content of these two

categories include skills that are presented in the curricular resources and materials provided to the teachers by the school district. Some of the case studies include additional categories of skills and strategies that are specifically incorporated into reading comprehension instruction by individual teachers. Those categories will be discussed as they appear in the case studies.

The participating school district had adopted a standardized assessment framework for language arts and math that was independent of their adopted core reading program curriculum. Students took multiple-choice computerized assessments called Measures of Academic Progress®, or MAP® tests, in reading twice a year. These assessments would be considered high-stakes, as student scores, called RIT scores, were used to determine class placements, determine eligibility for both high ability and remedial programming, and informally measure teacher effectiveness. The RIT score was a numeric score that represented a student's level of skill mastery in a subject area along an extended numeric continuum. This numeric continuum was linked to a curricular framework called the DesCartes Continuum of Learning. DesCartes is intended to give teachers information about what subject area skills and vocabulary students are capable of using and are capable of learning next based on where their RIT score falls on the larger continuum. Teachers in the district were expected to integrate instruction on the content of the DesCartes framework with their other instruction in order to ensure that students continue to improve on their district assessments. In language arts, the DesCartes framework is oriented around vocabulary and skills related to literary and informational text analysis (see Appendix G). During the school year

when this study was conducted, the district had made the decision that all elementary language arts classes were to be grouped by assessment scores in order to make the integration of DesCartes skill instruction an easier process for teachers. Teachers were supposed to have students with similar MAP® RIT scores in their language arts classrooms.

Finally, it is worthwhile to make a note about the treatment of the labels of “skill” and “strategy” within the case studies. It is commonly recognized in the reading comprehension research literature that a reading comprehension skill and a reading comprehension strategy are different entities with distinct defining characteristics (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008). A skill is an automatic action that occurs without awareness of its core components or of the executive control that may be involved in performing it. A strategy is a deliberate, goal-directed attempt to control and modify the efforts undertaken to achieve the goal. Just as it is recognized in the literature that skills and strategies should be conceptualized independently, it is also recognized that in practice, including within many language arts curricular frameworks, not only is the difference between a skill and a strategy often made fuzzy, but also the terms are frequently used interchangeably. Therefore, when using the labels of skill and strategy in this study, I have taken care to ensure that I maintain the same labeling preference that participating teachers used during the course of instruction or interviews. For example, all four teachers consistently referred to all instructional skills and strategies offered both within the core reading program and the DesCartes framework as skills. Thus, I utilize the label of skill in reference to these. However, in places where I am labeling the skill

and strategy instruction that I have observed but have otherwise not been labeled, I utilize the definitions presented above. I consistently maintain this approach to applying the skill and strategy labels throughout the case study narratives and case study synthesis.

Decision-making factors refer to the ways in which the participating teachers make choices about what to do and in what ways during reading comprehension instruction. That is, each teacher evidenced and identified a set of ideas or core principles that influenced the kinds of decisions that she made about reading comprehension instruction. This sub-component describes the nature of the decision-making that each teacher did in relation to reading comprehension instruction and the guiding principles or key ideas that seemed to be guiding the way those decisions were made.

Learning about reading comprehension instruction. The third dimension, Learning about Reading Comprehension Instruction, addresses the second and third sub-questions. This dimension looks at the avenues of learning that have been available to the teacher to support her growth as a reading comprehension teacher. These avenues include specific sources of information that the teacher has accessed as well as experiences that have shaped her own knowledge and expertise. Finally, it addresses the concerns that the teacher currently has about her reading comprehension instruction.

This dimension is divided into three sub-categories: sources of information, critical experiences, and concerns. Sources of information refer to entities that the teacher identifies as a past or present resource that she found important for providing knowledge, suggestions, information, or support as she plans and enacts reading

comprehension instruction. Critical experiences refer to past interactions from which the participating teacher believes that she has acquired professional knowledge, skill, and capacity for reading comprehension instruction. Concerns refer to those elements that the teacher identified as a problem, a challenge, a difficulty, or an issue that she has in relation to reading comprehension instruction. It is assumed that the kinds of concerns evidenced by the teacher may shed light into her learning about reading comprehension instruction, or, more specifically, her desire for future learning about reading comprehension instruction.

Conclusion. The findings suggest that while each teacher had a different experience with reading comprehension instruction depending on her definition of reading comprehension and her opportunities for learning and support around reading comprehension instruction, there were several important commonalities that emerged across those experiences. The ways in which the teachers differed from one another and the commonalities that existed across their experiences will be shared in the case study synthesis at the end of the chapter.

Since several data sources were analyzed to generate findings, excerpts from the data will be identified with an alphabetic and numeric label. The letter will indicate what source in the data the excerpt originated from, with (I) representing an interview and (O) representing an observation. The number will indicate the point in time at which that data was collected with (1) representing the first interview or first observation with that participant and so on. For example, an excerpt that originated from the first interview I held with a participant would be referenced as (I-1).

The case study narratives will be presented in the order in which their data was collected and analyzed, with Tracy's case appearing first, followed by Carol's, Rachelle's, and Jessica's. There is no particular meaning to this order except that it is the order in which it worked for me to originally schedule to spend time with each teacher during data collection. The case study synthesis will follow the individual case study narratives.

Case Study Narrative #1: Tracy

Definitions of reading comprehension.

Key components of reading comprehension. For Tracy, reading comprehension was an act that hinged on and reflected ones' engagement with a text (see Appendix I). She viewed effective reading comprehension as an outcome that is achieved by engaging well with the central content of a text and that is influenced by the broader engagement of oneself and others around the act of reading. The elements of these two types of engagement, engagement with the content of a text and engagement with oneself and others around the act of the reading, are the two components necessary to understanding how a reader makes sense of what he or she reads.

Tracy's perspective on reading comprehension as a function of engagement was comprised of the underlying belief that it is easier and more efficacious for a student to comprehend a text when he or she is fully engaged in the act of reading on a personal level and when that student is able to share that personal engagement in a larger literate community. Both individual affective factors and opportunities that are made available to him or her in and out of school influence the degree of personal engagement a student

reader ultimately has. The affective factors that Tracy identified as significant included readers having a sense of confidence, a regular reading habit, a knowledge of one's genre and topic interests, and a willingness to invest effort in reading. Tracy felt that readers who have an actualized sense of their reading selves are more likely to find comprehension an easier task. This means that they willingly read regularly, they know what they like and do not like as a reader, and that they feel competent as a reader.

During our last interview Tracy commented,

They have to have a solid base. They have to feel comfortable and confident with themselves as readers to go anywhere with it. I think at this age they have to feel like they're capable of it. Before they can do anything they have to feel that they're worthy and capable of doing it so that's the most important thing. (I-4)

She reinforced the idea that readers need to have a sense of a reading self and then a willingness to work within and beyond that sense to her students. During the following discussion, Tracy asked students to share what they had written in response to the question, "Do you like *The Wright 3*? Why or why not?"

Student 1: I said I think *The Wright 3* is okay. It gets boring a lot of times too. It is not my type of book and it makes me very drowsy.

Tracy: Great. I appreciate your honesty. What a bold comment to start. I'm happy that you told me that you feel that way. Who else wants to share their feelings?

(Two more students share.)

Tracy: Thank you. One more please.

Student 4: I think the novel study is interesting. This isn't a book I would normally choose. It has some boring parts. I like the fact that it is set in Chicago.

Tracy: I'm happy that we started this way. I want to explain that it's perfectly okay. Some of the stories we read out of our basal, some people enjoy them more than other people enjoy them. After all if everyone enjoyed the same style of book, the same genre of book, then we would all only read Sharon Creech or we would all only read, um, name your favorite author. So that's a beautiful thing. We shouldn't all have the same interests and that's great because you help make these authors famous. One person enjoys something and another person enjoys something else. Nonetheless it's school. This is what we're doing in school and I really appreciate you putting forth your best effort into doing this. [...] Let's appreciate the fact that we all appreciate different styles of books. (O-6)

Tracy wanted her students to understand that it is not only acceptable, but also valued for readers to have varying interests and to know what those interests are. However, she also worked to stress that the most successful readers are those who are willing to invest time and energy into the act, and at certain times regardless of one's degree of interest in the text. The message she sent is that the ability to choose to work hard at reading well can and should be separated from one's degree of interest.

This is not to suggest that Tracy did not value the power of interest. Instead, Tracy has a keen sense that interest is an important component of personal engagement. Having access to opportunities that allow students to explore their reading interests and share those interests with others are some of the opportunities that Tracy believed to be

most important in maintaining a personal engagement in the act of reading. She wanted to have readers who have the opportunity to see, hear, experience, and share accessible, interesting, self-selected texts inside and outside of her classroom. This became even more important to her when students experience comprehension difficulty, as Tracy explains,

As far as comprehension goes I think if it's an issue then choice would be very very important and start with building their confidence and letting them pick books of interest to them. Have them get comfortable and feel like they are comprehending and that they can do it. Then from there a lot of small group talking and discussing the book and trying to get them to make connections. So choice and connections I think are two very very key things in elementary students as far as comprehending and understanding text and being able to analyze it. (I-4)

The social dimension of sharing reading with others through having discussion, making book recommendations, and appreciating the interests and perspectives of others seemed to play a particularly central role in Tracy's perspective on reading comprehension.

These were the opportunities to Tracy that create long term engagement as opposed to fleeting appeal, which is what she deems is required to support readers in growing over time. Tracy's belief in the central role of personal and social engagement in the process of reading comprehension was evidenced by her reflection on the school year:

The way they recommend books to each other is probably the biggest success of the year for me. They now know how to share literature and how to appeal to

people's interests. They each know what they like as readers and they'll go into the world, maybe not the world, but middle school having that solid background.

That's what makes someone a reader. That's what a reader is. (I-4)

These broad sources of engagement were important for establishing conditions in which students can experience comprehension success. However, when it comes to making sense of a specific text, the most important element for Tracy was for readers to have the abilities necessary to engage with the content of that text.

Tracy oriented her thinking about the act of reading comprehension with a specific text around direct avenues for engagement with the content of the text. All of the avenues for engagement with text content that Tracy prioritized as important share a sense of accountability to the author. Readers must be able to think and act around text in ways that keep them honest and accountable to the words and purpose of an author. However, before readers can uphold their responsibility to an author, Tracy recognized that prerequisite skill is required, specifically word recognition skill that allows the development of fluency. Tracy deemed fluency to be important because of the role that it plays in influencing comprehension processes. She shared,

I think it has to flow and make sense in your head for you to be able to comprehend. If you listen to some of them read aloud and it's super choppy and doesn't really make sense and sentences aren't put together, I think that's going to make it challenging to comprehend. I think the flow of the story has to work in order for them to comprehend. Obviously you have to consider the basics like

word recognition and an appropriate level text but it has to sound like it makes sense. (I-3)

Once a reader has established a sense of fluency with texts at his or her level, Tracy believed he or she can begin the process of engaging with an author through both noticing clues and making connections. The ability to notice textual clues is important because it allows a reader to recognize main ideas or events, analyze the actions of characters or authors, and make text-based inferences and predictions. This was something Tracy actively sought to encourage in her students. As she circulated amongst students writing daily chapter summaries and responses to a novel study text, she praised a student, “Oh, you are catching up on so many great clues. I love how excited you are to fit these clues together” (O-1). In another individual conference about a previously read chapter in the book, Tracy discussed the role of textual clues further:

Tracy: That is a very good inference. Do you remember what we said an inference was?

Student: Using clues when you read.

Tracy: Yes. An inference is using word and picture clues to make a conclusion about something in a text. (O-4)

Even more so, Tracy seemed to have a sense that having the ability to make or find connections to a text was the component that would best motivate students to look carefully for those clues that were most important for textual analysis and would best contribute to the development of meaning making. Students having and making connections to a text organized and drove Tracy’s other assumptions about reading and

reading comprehension. When asked what the most important type of thinking for reading comprehension is, Tracy responded,

Connections. I think that's huge and for me it's key. For me, it's like, "Oh, right, I remember hearing about this", so I'm interested in wanting to read more. I think the same is true for them like if it's something they have heard about or a recommendation they got. The thing with making text to self, text to text, text to world connections is you're going to be more engaged in what you're reading and want to read well so that's key. (I-3)

For Tracy, direct engagement with the content of a text was the avenue to successful reading comprehension. This engagement is supported by fluency development, motivated by connections to text, and enacted by looking for textual clues that allow text-based accountability to the ideas and purpose of an author.

Attributions for student success and failure. Over the course of my observations in Tracy's classrooms and our interviews together, Tracy made four types of attributions for student success and failure at reading comprehension. She attributed student reading comprehension ability to the extent to which students use good reader strategies, felt positive about the act of reading and aware of themselves as readers, had access to and took advantage of opportunities to see, hear, and share reading with others, and had well-developed general school skills. Tracy was regularly on the look out for students attempting to do the types of thinking or to use the kind of good reader strategies commonly recognized in the research literature as effective, including summarizing, making predictions, making inferences, and forming mental images. When asked to

reflect upon a student who shared an inaccurate text-based inference during the course of a class discussion, Tracy's response illuminated this recognition of the value of student attempts to use thinking strategies. She explained,

I think I always hope that they see that. If they can see those, that's awesome.

That means that they're really trying to analyze what they're reading. I was really excited that she said that, and I struggled with that during my first year of teaching. I thought it had to be black or white, this or that, and I don't think that it has to be that way anymore. [...] I thought it was good too for the whole class to hear her thought but it just kind of showed too that she just didn't have an understanding of it. I just wish I could have taken the time to meet with her one-on-one afterwards and really explain it to her. (I-1)

Tracy was especially concerned about the students in her classroom who chose not to embrace reading as a regular personal habit. She had a well-developed sense of the literacy habits of her students, commenting,

There are three students in here who don't like to read. They just happen to score well on tests and they have the potential to do it, the potential to be there and have an interest in reading but they don't and would rather be doing other things. (I-2)

Her concern was that their seemingly natural capacity to be effective test-takers would not continue to buoy them to reading success as they got older and encountered more difficult reading challenges at the middle and high school level. At the same time, Tracy believed that certain general learning skills, such as the capacity to take effective notes, to be an effective test-taker, or to participate in a discussion also contributed to

why some students were more successful comprehenders than others. She regularly attempted to recognize students in her classroom who used such performance skills, most frequently with a passing remark during a transition such as, “I would like to compliment (Student name), (Student name), and (Student name) for what amazing listeners you are. You really showed good friendship to (Student name) while he was reading” (O6) or “I see lots of people with marking in their novel study books. That will really help you write your summary and participate in discussion today” (O-2). While she had classroom routines and procedures that scaffolded students in using such skills, she was constantly promoting them in her informal talk with both individual students and her whole class.

In summary, Tracy recognized that reading strategy use, learning skills, affective factors, and reading opportunities and habits all play a role in influencing the degree to which a student is able to be a successful comprehender of text. These attributions for success and failure were both shaped by her definition of reading comprehension as engagement with text and helped to shape her approach to reading comprehension instruction in her classroom.

Classroom reading comprehension instruction. Tracy’s fifth grade classroom was located in the back corner of the fourth and fifth grade pod, which was situated in the back corner of the Hilltop Elementary building. One had to loop around the cafeteria and gymnasium, which sat in the center of the building, past the kindergarten and first grade pod area, the second and third grade pod area, the music room, and the computer lab to arrive at the fourth and fifth grade pod area. Open student cubbies were located in the pod area and each classroom had a small whiteboard easel just outside its entrance,

announcing what supplies students needed to bring to each class. Students switched from homeroom classes to each of their subject area classes. Tracy stored reading binders for each student in her language arts classroom on a small bookshelf in front of her desk, and students stored their reading anthologies and independent reading books in their cubbies.

The door to enter her classroom from the pod area was located in the right front corner of the room. Inside the classroom to the left of the door was an area of open floor space directly in front of the classroom whiteboard. The open floor space was bracketed by a large rocking chair on the right and several bookshelves containing Tracy's classroom library to the left. Her student tables were located in the back half of the classroom, in front of the open meeting area. There were eight student tables pushed together into groups of two, resulting in four seating areas. Tables were grouped together in either the shape of an "L" or a "T", and each seating area had chairs to accommodate eight students. In between the front two tables was a cart with an overhead projector, which projected onto the slanted ceiling above the whiteboard. In the back left corner of the classroom was Tracy's desk, and in front of it a bookshelf that held supplies and a small group meeting table with six chairs. There were two computer stations along the left wall of the classroom. The right wall of the classroom had a door in the middle of it that led into the adjacent classroom. On one side of the door sat two large wicker chairs and on the other side of the door sat a table holding various handouts and supplies. The back wall of the classroom was lined with cabinet units. There was a small window in the right corner of the back wall of the classroom.

Tracy's language arts classroom was composed of herself, thirty students, and one program assistant assigned to a student in the class with autism spectrum disorder. The classroom had relatively even numbers of girls and boys, which Tracy utilized by assigning students to single gender tables and single gender small work groups.

The students assigned to Tracy's classroom represented half of the students that had scored in the top half of the incoming fifth grade class on the MAP® language arts assessment at the end of the previous school year. In order to place students across the four available fifth grade language arts classrooms, the teachers had divided the pool of students into an upper half and a lower half. Then, two teachers worked together to split up each half between their classrooms on the basis of demographic characteristics such as gender and personality.

Classroom routines. Tracy used three types of routines during the course of her reading comprehension instruction. Routines represent those acts that Tracy repeated with students on a regular basis over time in order to contribute to organizing classroom instruction and supporting reading comprehension development. Tracy utilized a deliberate set of sharing routines, practice routines, and core reading program routines in her reading comprehension instruction.

Sharing routines. Tracy's sharing routines afforded students many opportunities to share their literacy practice and their thinking about texts with her, their families, and other students. During each instructional day, Tracy held two types of read aloud sessions. She began her language arts day with a morning meeting and teacher read aloud at the front of the room. Tracy sat in the rocking chair in the front of the classroom

and students sat on the floor space in front of her. She intended for this read aloud to be an opportunity for her students to hear and appreciate fluent reading, as she confirmed, “We start each day with the read aloud. It’s really important to hear reading and it just kind of focuses them and gets them to transition to language arts” (I-1). Tracy kept discussion around the read aloud brief, typically limiting the length of the discussion to no more than five minutes and the scope of the discussion to reviewing the main events of the story and making predictions about upcoming events.

Later in the language arts day, Tracy held a peer read aloud session. This was a required assignment for students. Each student had to read aloud at least once a quarter. Most students clamored for opportunities to have a read aloud session, so much so that Tracy began planning for two peer readers a day. Students were responsible for selecting one or more excerpts from a text to share aloud. Tracy allotted 10 minutes of read aloud time to each reader. Tracy led post-reading discussion, and again maintained a sense of brevity around the act. The following represents a typical discussion surrounding one of Tracy’s peer read aloud sessions:

Student: I’m going to read from *Eragon* by Christopher Paolini.

Tracy: Every time I think of *Eragon* or hear of the book I think of. Do you have any guesses? Your reading project. Your life-sized character. That was incredible.

(Student reads excerpt.)

Tracy: Great selection because I’ve never read *Eragon*. It’s a great introduction to what it’s about. How come you chose the choices that you did?

Students: It gives you a sense of who the bad guy is and how he drives the story.

Tracy: Okay. Great introduction to the bad evil guy. Great choices. (O13)

The reading project to which Tracy referred in this discussion is another sharing routine that Tracy utilized for students to bring their individual literacy practice into the life of her classroom. Each student was required to complete one reading project a quarter on an independent reading book. Each quarter the requirements for the project changed. In the first quarter, students created a life-sized model of one character from an independent reading book. In the second quarter, students had to read a book with an adult from their lives outside of school and then co-create a book talk to be delivered to the class by the adult and the student. Tracy shared,

We did this really awesome thing last quarter. They did parent student book talks and they had to read a book with a parent. The big thing was we really wanted parents to hear them read aloud because it tells a lot about comprehension. I think if it doesn't sound okay in their head, I don't know how, I think it's a struggle to comprehend so we wanted parents to see where they were with that so they did a book talk with them. [...] So we had thirty different presentations with parents and students and from there there's probably been, I don't know number-wise, but several students who have read books because of the recommendations. That's huge because that's how I choose books and so I'm big on recommendations too.

That's another reason why we do the peer read alouds. (I-1)

Tracy was such a fervent believer in the power of recommendations that she had made one of the bulletin boards in her classroom into her reading recommendation board.

Students posted recommendations on index cards for one another to take down and use. If a student wanted a book recommendation, he or she removed a card from the bulletin board and either returned it when finished or created a new one. Tracy encouraged all of her students, including those in her homeroom and other subject area classes to use her recommendation board.

There were also whole school initiatives that Tracy integrated into sharing routines that worked for her. Her class always participated in initiatives that were going on across the school building, but did so in a way that reflected an alignment with Tracy's principles. For example, Tracy's school had adopted the use of the Accelerated Reader program. Tracy's students did take Accelerated Reader tests, but she and Carol, her partner teacher, used the results differently than the rest of the building. She used student Accelerated Reader information to calculate estimated reading volume for a given period of time and awarded recognitions accordingly. Each teacher in the building had been given a set of trophies to award to students regularly. As she was preparing to award reading trophies, she explained her thinking to students as follows,

This is different from any other class in the school except Mrs. Stevens (Carol). Mrs. Stevens (Carol) and I do everything alike. You are expected to do 20 simple minutes of independent reading a night. I don't look at your points. I don't want you to choose a book for a number. AR for me is a big, big question mark. I'm not sure it works for me. I just went by the minutes read in the month of December, although it might be different every time. (O-1)

During our next interview, Tracy shared more about why she handled Accelerated Reader that way that she did.

I love to just meet with them and talk with them about why they choose books. That's a big thing in this school too Accelerated Reader. That's what those trophies are supposed to be for. I really struggle with it. I know I kind of sound like I have a bad attitude about a lot of things. This is just my personal opinion and I could be way off but my biggest pet peeve is when they choose a book and then they say how many points is this book and that's the only way that they're determining if they're going to read the book. I really don't get into that at all and we spend a lot of time at the beginning of the year going over why you choose books, ways that we choose books, and how to determine if it's a just right book. I really think that's really really important that they understand what they're interested in and again I just don't think that's applicable to real life. (I-1)

Tracy and her students held whole group discussions frequently. Over thirteen days of observation in Tracy's classroom, she held ten whole group discussion sessions. Out of those ten discussion sessions, eight of the sessions were text-based, meaning that the discussion session was oriented around exploring the content of a text. Those texts included both a class novel study book and core reading program anthology selections. Discussions were one of the primary sharing vehicles through which Tracy mediated student reading comprehension. The content of Tracy's text-based discussions was focused around three central elements: reviewing the main events or ideas of the text, sharing personal reactions and responses to the text, and reviewing text-based examples

of a target strategy or skill. During the following session, Tracy began by having students share their reactions and response to their nightly novel study reading. She closed the discussion with a review of the main events in the chapters that had been read:

Tracy: I'm going to stop you there except for the one last thing we're going to do. Since you didn't get time to do your summary today, let's talk about the main idea at the end of each chapter. Please turn to page 145. That would be Chapter 16. Let's see here. (Student name), what were the main events that happened?

Student 1: The main things were that Tommy watched the movie *Rear Window* with his mom.

Tracy: That was the main thing. Remember I said I don't want any details, so I like how you said that.

Student 1: And Calder met Mr. Dare.

Tracy: Exactly, two main things without any details. Let's move on.

Student 2: What about that Tommy heard tapping?

Tracy: Well, maybe if you wanted to say that Tommy heard some sort of tapping. We don't really know it that's anything yet. We don't really know too much about it. Now page 155. (Student name) what was the main event in that chapter?

Student 3: Petra visits Mrs. Sharp.

Tracy: She does visit her and maybe even one thing about that.

Student 3: She told Petra about the talisman.

Tracy: Right. Maybe we could just keep it to she shared her stories of the Robie House.

Student 4: Mrs. Newsome, there was one other thing because Mrs. Sharp gave Petra cookies and she was really glad because she didn't have to wait to get one.

Tracy: Oh yeah. That's awesome. I wouldn't say that that's a main event but that's a really awesome thing to highlight. Petra got to have just one-on-one attention. She didn't have to wait for the cookies. She got to have as many as she wanted. Oh, I'm really glad you pointed that out. That was really neat. Thank you, (Student name). Okay, we're at the end of Chapter 18. (O-3)

Tracy wanted to ensure that students picked up on the central elements of any given text. She spent time in each text-based discussion reviewing main points or main events with students. She also used discussion time as an opportunity to utilize text as her primary tool for teaching language arts skills and reading strategies. In the following exchange, Tracy is using the novel study text to teach her students about figurative language:

Tracy: I'm on page 79. Can you go there? I'm just going to point out things that I noticed and if there's anything you noticed as well please, please let us know. I'm at that paragraph on the bottom of page 79. Did anyone highlight that? Oh, fantastic. *The windows were a tease. There was something about the entire building that invited you in and at the same point it pushed you away.* That's just great, great description. By the way, what would we call that? If the home was inviting you in and pushing you away, what might we call that literary device?

When we give something that's not human a human characteristic, what do we call that, (Student name)?

Student 1: Personification.

Tracy: Personification. It's a really great picture. Such a cool picture. What picture does that put in your mind? Let me describe it for me. You might have something different but I picture the second floor of the house having windows and arms are coming out of the windows and kind of bringing you in a hug and I think the first floor is maybe pushing you away. That's the picture that it puts in my head. (Student name)?

Student 2: I see the house saying come on in and you come on in and then it pushes you out.

Tracy: Okay, great picture. Is there anything else that anyone wanted to share? (Student name), did you?

Student 3: Well I just had a picture that the front door kind of pulls you in and then the back door pushes you out.

Tracy: Oh, so then opposite ends of the home. Also a good picture. (Student name)?

Student 4: I'm seeing that you're just about to walk in the door and the door slams in your face.

Tracy: Oh, that's another great picture. (O-3)

Tracy used a text as the vehicle through which she taught every text-based skill and strategy in her curriculum, frequently during the course of discussion. In fact, Tracy did

not use a written handout for any reading comprehension-related purpose during 13 days of observation. Instead, at every juncture, a piece of connected text was the fodder from which instructional skill and strategy practice originated. Discussion evidenced itself as a significant sharing routine through which she gave her students the opportunity to develop as text analyzers and comprehenders. But Tracy rarely initiated a discussion without first asking students to engage in some kind of practice with the text about which they would talk. If discussion was one of the primary teaching routines in Tracy's instructional world, then Tracy's practice routines were the elements that maintained discussion as focused and productive time.

Practice routines. Students in Tracy's language arts classroom read frequently. Tracy utilized a small number of consistent practice routines to help students continue to learn to practice processing and making sense of text. Throughout the year, her students read primarily from their core reading program anthologies. In addition, Tracy conducted one whole class novel study. Tracy expected students to read independently from a personally selected book for a minimum of twenty minutes every night. She assigned nightly novel study reading during the novel study unit and occasionally assigned nightly reading selections from the core reading program anthology, particularly when the class was in a unit that was not reading-based, such as their persuasive writing or poetry units.

She regularly asked her students to engage in four different types of practice activities during and after reading assignments. These types of practice activities included: recording the main ideas or events of a text, creating a written summary of the

text, creating a written response to the text, or recording text-based examples of an instructional skill.

During the novel study unit, Tracy taught students to place short bullet points with the main events of the chapter at the end of each chapter. She asked students to use these bullet points to construct a written summary of the chapters that had been read the previous night in class the next day. The first time Tracy introduced this procedure, she modeled how to identify the main events of a chapter:

At the end of each chapter, you're going to write one or two main ideas of that chapter. Not details. I don't want any details. I just want to know what's the main thing or main things that happened in that chapter. If you have three it's probably too much because these chapters are pretty short. [...] So at this time, we're not re-reading. You already read everything so we're looking on page 53. I'm looking. Okay, I can see it starts with Petra. I'm looking at the picture to help me remember what was happening. Now I've already remembered so I'm just skimming through. Then she runs into Calder. I know what happens there. Okay, keep browsing to try to get a feel for what is the main idea. Oh right, that's when they were outside of the house. Something significant kept happening outside the house. Then on page 58 we kind of move on to a new character. If we're moving to a main character that might tell us that there would be two main ideas because we're dealing with two groups of characters. (O-1)

Then, after leading a discussion about the main events from all three of the chapters, she modeled on the overhead projector how to produce a written summary:

When you do your summary you can come up with a fun topic sentence or just an interesting topic sentence. The main thing is that I want you to state the section that you've read. If you want to use mine today, that'd be fine. Hmm, in chapters 7-9, what would be the emotion that I felt most often when I read those chapters? I guess there was a lot of suspense. I might even say in chapters 7-9 I had a hard time setting the book down due to all of the suspense. Now I'm just going to go through and list my main events. So I'm going to go right into listing. I could write it exactly how I have it in my bullets. I'll start with my first bullet about Petra and Calder and then I'll go into explaining the rest of my main events. The last thing, your last sentence, is not going to be a concluding sentence. For our summary, your last sentence is going to be a prediction. A prediction about what's going to happen next. This is just like something you would do in social studies or science. What's the main idea, what's the main thing that happened? We do this with non-fiction reading and we're going to do it with fiction. (O-1)

From this point forward, Tracy's students wrote their daily summaries as part of their transition into language arts class. Students arrived in Tracy's classroom and began writing the summary, then met together for morning meeting and read aloud. This practice continued throughout the remainder of the novel study unit and beyond as Tracy had students create written summaries of anthology reading selections from notes they had taken in various graphic organizer formats.

Each novel study summary was also accompanied by a response question that Tracy had written out on the overhead projector for students to consider. She developed

response questions on the basis of what she wanted to highlight during discussion that day. She used this as an opportunity to address elements of the text that were non-skill oriented, but represented important social themes or messages about friendship or problem solving. On one day she asked students to respond to a quote from the book.

“Art should have secrets. This house doz.” – Tommy, pg. 91.

Do you think it took courage for Tommy to write this on the board?

She shared her frustration with having limited opportunities to discuss this type of content in the midst of all of the skill instruction she was expected to be doing.

This is never how I would normally do a novel study because we have to introduce all of these huge terms and these big things that are really not applicable. Maybe they are, maybe I just have a bad attitude, but I struggle with that sometimes. We’re doing the best that we can in teaching these big things when at this age I would love to just talk about understanding the book. I would love to talk about the message that’s really there, the friendship message. (I-1)

Tracy’s response question routine was intended to be a way to maintain a portion of students’ focus on text content that she found to be compelling, important, or interesting for her students to consider on a personal level. It was also an avenue through which she hoped to maintain personal engagement with the text, the kind of engagement that would involve students to the degree that would be necessary to teach skill content.

In order to address and practice skill content, she assigned a skill focus and expected students to highlight examples of that skill in their reading using a highlighter, post-it notes, or highlighter tape. Some of the things that Tracy asked students to look for

during their novel study unit included examples of figurative language, external and internal conflict, mood and tone, irony, and imagery.

During weeks when the class was reading a selection out of the core reading program anthology, Tracy asked students to record text-based examples of the weekly comprehension skill associated with the selection using some form of a graphic organizer, typically drawn out on a loose-leaf sheet of paper. When students read an anthology selection about a blind man who became a mountain climber, Tracy asked her students to record examples of how the author tried to inform, entertain, and persuade readers using a T-chart. She gave the following directions,

Tonight you are going to be reading this very awesome story and there is a very clear purpose for the author to write this story and I am going to give you that purpose and you are going to record clues that tell you that that is the purpose. Grab a piece of paper from your blue writing binder. A loose-leaf piece of paper will do. [...] Over here on this side where it says clues you are going to look for examples of how the author really did try to entertain us. Also give examples of persuasion. The author's main purpose was to inform so you are going to give us several examples of how the author choose to inform us about Erik's life. (O-12)

Tracy also created extended student practice opportunities with an individual text, genre, or topic. On several occasions she took a non-fiction selection from the core reading program and created a topic study around that selection. She would spend additional time with the selection and she and her students would research the topic in more depth. She conducted topic studies around anthology selections on Chinese Terra

Cotta Warriors and the Iditarod. At the end of the school year, Tracy identified these topic studies as having particular importance to her and her students.

Definitely one thing that I would continue to do and even more so is that there's a lot of really, really great non-fiction reading. Probably only about five or six times did we study that topic in depth instead of just continuing to move on with the next story or next lesson. [...] But I see now that we could have taken a little bit more time and really get to know those topics in depth, like with the selection about the Terra Cotta Warriors. We had a ton of fun with that. It was just a short story in the book, actually really short, and we spent a couple of weeks on that. We just studied them in detail and studied how they came about and the person who discovered them. That was really neat for them and actually since several students have mentioned that someone had a replica or just saw pictures of the warriors around. Now they can make that connection and I feel good about that as opposed to feeling like I have to rush through that we can really get to know the great information. (I-4)

Opportunities to practice with the central content of a text or the process of using an instructional skill created the organizational structure around which Tracy planned and executed instructional routines. This practice then frequently extended into opportunities to share those practice experiences with others through discussion and presentations.

Core reading program routines. Tracy utilized her core reading program for two purposes in her reading comprehension teaching: as a text source and a skill source. She used the student anthologies as the primary text from which to organize reading

comprehension instruction. She used the weekly reading comprehension skill as the primary focus for her instruction. However, while Tracy drew from the core reading program for the text and the skill for the week, she and Carol decided independently on the form in which that skill would be taught and practiced. She explained her rationale for utilizing the core reading program in this way,

I think maybe right away I tried using it as it should have been or intended to be but it was just too much for me. With the fast pace that they're in and out of here and we see them and then they're off it just didn't work for me. Some of it was relevant and some of it was not. There were bits and pieces that I could use, maybe a couple of lessons and I would always use the main skill that they had intended that story to be used for. So I would use that skill but do it my own way or read the story and kind of do what works for me and do what works for this class within the time that we have them. Maybe right away I thought with it being new that there might be something new and great but it's kind of how all the other ones have been. Maybe it's just me but I don't know how you can do the five day plan according to what they intended. It's just too much information and not enough of it is relevant or interesting in my opinion. (I-4)

This description aligned with Tracy's practice with the core reading program in her classroom. She emphasized the content of the anthology selections and the focal skills that were designed to accompany those selections.

Tracy regularly utilized a small set of instructional routines to engage students in working with text in a deliberate, goal-oriented manner. Each encounter a student had

with a text had a purpose that Tracy had pre-determined to align with the reading comprehension skill content that she was both required to teach and felt compelled to teach to help students to develop as readers.

Reading comprehension content. Tracy taught her students four types of skills and strategies: core reading program skills, DesCartes skills, reading strategies, and engagement strategies. The first two categories, core reading program skills and DesCartes skills, are those skills that appear in the curriculum materials that Tracy was expected by her district to be using with students. The second two categories, reading strategies and engagement strategies, are strategies that Tracy taught to students of her own volition because they are important according to Tracy's belief systems about reading and reading comprehension. There was no lack of strategies and skills which Tracy could be teaching students, was advised to be teaching students, or believed that she should be teaching students. Instead, Tracy communicated an ongoing sense of frustration with the amount of skill instruction that she was expected to be doing.

Core reading program skills. Tracy consistently taught students the main skill presented for instruction with each core reading program anthology selection. That said, she rarely taught the skill in the manner prescribed by the core reading program. Her teaching cycle for weekly skill instruction started with Tracy modeling how to use the skill or how to find examples of it in an outside text, most often a picture book. Students would read the anthology selection and look for and record examples of the skill. Then Tracy and her students would discuss the anthology selection itself and their skill examples. She affirmed that she is intentionally text-based in her skill instruction,

commenting, “I think that as far as teaching reading goes, the best tool to use is always a book” (I-2). She found the skills presented in the core reading program to be “very appropriate skills to teach” (I-4), but that the recommendations for how to teach those skills “just didn’t work for me” (I-4). Tracy read what the core reading program offered in her teacher’s manuals in terms of giving information about the skill, explaining, “Sometimes it’s interesting to see their little input or their definition of whatever the skill may be. So sometimes this is a good guide” (I-4), but she then went on to integrate that information with her own perspectives on the skill to make decisions about teaching it.

DesCartes skills. Tracy attempted to integrate DesCartes skill instruction into her reading comprehension teaching. She found this integration to be a difficult process. When asked what was intended to be the primary curricular framework for her language arts teaching, Tracy’s response highlighted the challenge that DesCartes presented:

Okay, so we have the basal and the skills from the basal don’t have anything to do with DesCartes. So I guess as far as a curriculum guide, that’s a little confusing because we have both and we hear a lot about both. I would say that’s a really good question and I don’t really know. In the end it’s a combination of both. (I-1)

Tracy taught DesCartes skills in several target units throughout the school year, including as the primary skills in her novel study and poetry units. Outside of these targeted units of DesCartes instruction Tracy’s approach was to integrate DesCartes vocabulary and instruction at moments when it made sense to do so. She actively looked for opportunities when she could make DesCartes teaching fit, as she explained,

Sometimes it is a struggle because we have to make these things work. Whether it does or not we have to make it work. I think for this class it's okay and most of them can understand most of it. What I refuse to do as a teacher, what I refuse to do is put up a huge list of these very sophisticated words and say memorize this, memorize this, memorize this. I just don't think that's an effective way of teaching so I won't do that, I don't do that. I have to make it apply to the novel study and then continue to try to apply it over and over again where I can. (I-1)

Reading strategies. Tracy taught students to utilize a small repertoire of reading strategies, those ways of thinking that had been identified as components of a coordinated system of strategy use that proficient readers apply. Tracy encouraged students to summarize text by identifying main events or main ideas, to use a range of reading paces including skimming and re-reading, and to access their background knowledge by making predictions and connections. In addition, there were two types of text processing strategies that Tracy most heavily emphasized. First, Tracy wanted students to gain experience in visualizing text through the development of "mind pictures". During class discussion, Tracy frequently thought aloud for students about the types of imagery that stood out to her during her reading of a text. During this discussion, she commented,

I love this image. I'm using that word a lot today. I love the image that that description puts into my head. Can you picture how they're standing there in an equilateral triangle? We can picture very well how they're standing there. (O-1)

Second, Tracy wanted to students to become more skilled at making text-based inferences about the characters, authors, main events, or main ideas of a given text. She

focused most on interpreting the actions, perspectives, thoughts, and feelings of people associated with a text, whether it was the characters of a fiction text or the author of a non-fiction text. Tracy was concerned with students noticing the clues in text from which they could draw conclusions about the people around which the text was oriented. This was in part because she felt that the students in her class were a somewhat socially immature group of people, in part because a focus on people aligned with her concern that readers be fully engaged in the act, and in part because she believed that the main ideas or main events of a text were often linked to the actions of characters or thoughts of an author. Tracy led students to such a character-based inference in the following class discussion:

I wanted to show you an example of how I think you really can tell that Calder and Petra have an awesome, awesome friendship. [...] Can you open to the first page of Chapter 7? It's page 54. Remember that's when Petra walks up to Calder and he's playing with his pentominoes and he's trying to design the house and he says he can tell she's thinking about something because she's twisting her hair. That really shows that he knows her well to know some of those small things that other people wouldn't recognize. (O-1)

Tracy appreciated the value of these strategies for what they allow students to be able to do in text and incorporated them with the reading comprehension curriculum that she was expected to teach.

Engagement strategies. Tracy taught students to improve the quality of their mental engagement with text by asking students to use techniques such as previewing

text prior to reading, marking text, and recording thinking on graphic organizers. She shared that this was a main emphasis of the early portion of her reading instruction in the school year and that she scaffolded students to engage with text before moving into other skill development. Tracy explained,

I think at the beginning of the year teaching how to think about text is a big emphasis and then we sort of fall away from it. Like right now we are focusing on these big things that we have to focus on. At the beginning of the year that's a big thing. We start with lots of modeling from the story. Then we would always read them together and pause at different parts and think aloud for them and let them what I'm thinking or the connections that I'm making and allowing them to do the same. Then we would do various things where we would stop at certain points and record their thinking and record any connections that they were making and then continue slowly comprehending together. (I-3)

Tracy's reading comprehension content can be categorized into skills from the core reading program and DesCartes framework that Tracy felt she had to directly teach and reading and engagement strategies that Tracy required students to use because she believed them to be of benefit to students as authentic readers and processors of text. Tracy mirrored this dichotomy in her observation, "It's interesting because I think probably 80% of the specific skills that we do we're just expected to do, and it isn't as applicable to being a real life reader" (I-2).

Decision-making factors. Tracy's decision-making about reading comprehension instruction is oriented around balancing what she is expected to be doing with her

personal knowledge and conviction about what is the right thing to be doing. She was constantly weighing external expectations against her internal belief system, which had been developed and solidified through past teaching and learning experiences. This balancing act can be organized into two guiding principles. The first was to meet all of her professional responsibilities as a member of a larger instructional community in a way in which she could justify to herself. The second was to meet the needs of her students as evidenced by what she saw and heard from them during the course of instruction and as aligned with what she believed about reading comprehension and its development.

Meet professional responsibilities. Tracy took her responsibility as a teaching professional seriously. She valued the opportunity to work closely with her colleagues and her building administrators. She wanted to ensure that she carried out her instructional work in such a way as to meet all of her larger professional responsibilities. When asked to reflect upon the state standards as a source of information for her teaching, she shared,

First and foremost that's what I should be held accountable to because it's from the state and I am working for the state. I like having that guidance and that direction. I kind of like that we can be not so specific about it because then we can kind of choose how we want things to fit. But it's nice having the direction because I'm the type of person that wants to be able to check things off. (I-3)

That said, Tracy also wanted the flexibility to meet her professional obligations to the state, to her administrators, and to her teaching colleagues using her own knowledge

and skill in such a way that aligned with her personal convictions about the nature of teaching and learning broadly and about the nature of reading comprehension development specifically. Cognizant of the fact that there were an abundance of instructional intents reflected within and across the formal elements of her reading comprehension curriculum, Tracy attempted to choose instructional goals and approaches that would offer the most productive return on her time and effort and that of her students. She explained how she enacted this decision making in her planning over the course of the year:

We have this new series this year so that was big at the beginning of the year. There was a lot of emphasis on making sure that you were following it and for the first half of the year we didn't stray from that. Then towards the end of the second quarter we met with the differentiated instruction coordinator and we started looking at the Descartes and we planned the novel study. It's been a balance in using the literature and using novels to teach the things we're supposed to be teaching but having fun with it and doing our own thing so it's not tedious. It hasn't been consistent. The most important thing is covering the standards and trying to do it with a combination of the basal suggestions and the Descartes suggestions. (I-3)

Tracy wanted to meet her professional responsibilities while maintaining a sense of autonomy in her work. She valued autonomy because she had a strong sense of conviction about what worked best for students and she wanted to have the opportunity to meet the needs of her students.

Meet student needs. Tracy was invested in her students as growing people. She wanted to ensure that she paid attention to holistically meeting the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of a range of students while ensuring that students were fully engaged in the process of learning the required skill content and developing effective strategies for experiencing comprehension success in reading tasks. Closely tied to making decisions in the best interest of her students broadly was making specific decisions related to choosing texts for use in the classroom that were appropriately leveled, had appealing and important content, and lent themselves to skill and strategy instruction and practice. In addition, Tracy had a particular interest in the ways in which students selected independent reading books for themselves, making this a regular component of her classroom dialogue with students. During one interview, Tracy expressed a concern about the book selection of a particular student that exemplifies this interest:

I'm thinking of one student in particular as I'm answering your questions. She's reading this book that the girls are crazy about and it's interesting to talk with her about it because she's totally missing the whole meaning of the story. She's fixated on this one little part that has no meaning to the whole story. It's really interesting to talk with her about that because it's like, "Wow, this is how she's comprehending this fantastic story". It's just not right for her but she's wanting to keep up with her friends so she wants to read this and she's probably going to struggle through it. It's already been a pattern. She's always going to gravitate to reading these books that her friends are reading and they're not right for her and so she's struggling and it's making her turn away from reading because it's not

making any sense. I wish I could say to her, “This is not a just right book for you. This is not at all what you’re interested in. Please, please don’t read it. Please don’t pursue it”. I want more than anything for her to stop reading this book. She’s not getting it and she’s scared over that. (I-3)

Tracy wanted to provide students with reading comprehension instruction that would be a vehicle towards meeting their cognitive, social, and emotional needs as growing people. She integrated this principle into her instruction through the informal talk she engaged in with students alongside the talk surrounding her formal reading comprehension content.

Learning about reading comprehension instruction.

Sources of information. For Tracy, two different types of sources of information emerged as significant to her development as a reading comprehension teacher: texts and guidance materials.

Texts refer to any mass-marketed, bound document that was intended for a specific audience outside of instruction. Tracy relied heavily upon both young adult and children’s text, including young adult trade books and children’s picture books, when possible. Her tendency to turn to authentic texts created for and marketed to her young student audience was decidedly motivated by her personal belief systems about the nature of reading development, as she commented, “I think if you’re trying to teach students to become readers and writers then I think you have to be using real books and real novels” (I-1).

Tracy felt that she had to learn about children's texts so that she could be well versed for the purpose of supporting her students in making appropriate independent reading selections. In addition, as mentioned above, she worked hard to integrate as many authentic texts into her instructional experiences as a reflection of her belief that authentic readers and writers are grown out of authentic experiences. In order to do so, she studied these texts carefully and looked for ways in which they would support her given instructional goals, explaining,

How I've always done it is I'll read a section and whatever skill really stands out, like if there's a really great example of foreshadowing or a really great chapter that would easily teach making an inference, that's how I would do it. So I try to let the book speak for itself. (I-1)

However, this careful and intentional utilization of authentic text in the service of reading comprehension instruction has not simply been cultivated in Tracy out of a personal conviction. Instead, Tracy repeatedly referenced the professional text *Strategies that Work* as a key source of information, in fact, as the source of information that allowed Tracy to take a personal teaching philosophy that was beginning to emerge from her earliest teaching experiences and mold it into a workable instructional approach. When asked to talk about resources that have been important to her throughout her teaching career, she shared,

First of all, from the beginning it's been *Strategies that Work*. I'm a huge fan of that book. A huge, huge, huge fan of it. That would be the one that I would go to most of the time. Now I don't find that I have to go to it as often because I kind

of feel like, in my opinion, like if we're teaching inferencing, I've done that research on the best way to teach inferencing. I mean I'm always open to other ideas. I kind of make it sound like I know it all and I don't. That's not the case. But I feel like I know what works really well. And so my biggest resource would just be that and a book. (I-1)

While *Strategies that Work* represented a central text in her development as a teacher, work with colleagues around the book represented a critical experience in her professional learning trajectory. Critical professional experiences are the second avenue through which Tracy had identified that she had learned about reading comprehension instruction.

Critical experiences. Tracy identified three critical experiences that had an impact on her as reading comprehension teacher: pre-service observation and student teaching, in-service mentoring during her first year of teaching, and in-service experience working with her partner teacher.

Tracy's pre-service teacher preparation experiences afforded her an opportunity to see both teaching that she wanted to emulate and teaching that she wanted to avoid. These initial impressions established the interest out of which she explored reading comprehension teaching practice in her first year of teaching. She explained,

In college I had really, really awesome mentoring experiences and observation hours and just various other things in and out of the classroom. I also had really negative ones too. I think the really negative ones more so inspired me to want to become a teacher because I was able to see this is how this teacher is doing it and

it could be like that. In student teaching I think that that is where you learn everything about who you are as teacher and who you are going to be. I had great professors too but in student teaching I had an awesome teacher and that was everything. She really formed me into the teacher that I wanted to be. (I-2)

Tracy spent several years working as a substitute teacher before securing her first full-time teaching position. It was this first year of teaching that gave Tracy the opportunity to take the early inspirations of her pre-service preparation program and translate them into practice. She had the good fortune to find several informal teacher mentors in her new school building through which she received extensive guidance and support during that first year. She identified those relationships as invaluable to her survival as a first year teacher, to her motivation to commit to a long-term self-improvement process as a teaching professional, and to forming her personal knowledge and convictions about reading comprehension instruction. She elaborated on those relationships and shared,

I did student teaching and I thought I wanted to do second grade but I got a fourth and fifth multi-age classroom. I was down here (in the building) with two male teachers and there were two female teachers in these two rooms. They were amazing. They're the biggest reason why I want to be this great teacher. They just had amazing things going on all the time and their relationships with their students were fantastic. They took so much of their time with me. It was so overwhelming, especially combining two curriculums. I made a list of questions throughout the week and then every Monday they would sit down with me for an

hour or two hours or three hours or however long it took and they would go through and answer all of my questions. Those two teachers are the main reasons why I want to be successful because of them and the time that they put into other teachers and how important that was to them. (I-2)

Tracy developed a particularly close relationship with one of these two mentors, gaining from her an appreciation of reading strategies and an understanding of how to promote their use in the classroom:

One of my mentors my first year of teaching had worked with Stephanie Harvey and she was awesome and she had so many great ideas. She and I would get together every day after school, actually we would run together, and during that time we would just talk about all of this and she would teach me different things and I would ask her questions and she would recommend specific lessons in the book (*Strategies that Work*). (I-2)

Now that both of those mentor teachers had moved out of the school building, Tracy relied on her relationship with her partner teacher, Carol, to continue to gain what she deemed to be knowledge and support critical to her professional learning. In fact, she was so committed to having a partner teacher with whom to plan and organize language arts instruction that she had sought Carol out the previous year and proposed the idea of working together first to Carol and then to her building administrator. Tracy self-selected that arrangement to ensure regular access to a professional colleague. She explained her rationale for doing so as follows,

Carol used to be a junior high language arts teacher and she's amazing at it. I requested to be with her because I wanted to learn and I wanted to learn from her. I wanted to try to take on the challenge of teaching this class. I love teaching language arts and I kind of wanted to make sure that I was on the mark and that I was doing alright. It's awesome having someone who can support you and who you can just go to quickly for a suggestion of how to do this better or just to brainstorm our ideas and come up with fun things to plan and ways of making what we're doing fun for them. (I-1)

The value of collegial, supportive relationships in the professional learning process was instilled early in Tracy's preparation experiences and reinforced in her first year of teaching, such that she actively continued to seek them out for herself. Every experience or element that Tracy identified as significant in her learning about reading comprehension instruction was borne out of a relationship with another teaching professional, whether it be a book recommended by a mentor teacher, an idea developed in a planning session in Carol, or a technique noticed during a classroom observation. For Tracy, professional learning was synonymous with professional relationships.

Concerns. Tracy's concerns about reading comprehension instruction revolved around balancing three sets of perceived conflicts in her reading comprehension teaching. Each set of concerns represents a perceived conflict because Tracy viewed each as a point in which two or more aims competed for her time, attention, or expertise in providing the best possible instruction for her students. First, Tracy worried about meeting the student

growth expectations of administrators and parents, particularly on such a narrow assessment measure as the one used to evaluate students:

There's a lot of pressure with the expectations for your classes and students. Each student has an estimated number of points that they are to grow. It's usually not very much but parents want to see a huge jump. Well perhaps the student had a really lucky day or just happened to have good guessing. It's a multiple choice test so that happens. So that student is at whatever it is, maybe 215, and maybe just from pure guessing or maybe not but I'm still being held accountable for making them grow from that number. Then if the student doesn't grow a significant number of points, people think that it was a waste of year, which is a real shame. They say you wasted this year for this child. (I-3)

Tracy was bothered by the narrow way in which success was being conceptualized. She was bothered because she had concerns about whether the assessment itself was a valid measure of student literacy development. She also wanted to believe that there should be a much richer sense of what language arts learning is about that just what could possibly be captured by a single multiple-choice assessment measure.

Second, Tracy worried about creating an instructional climate in which students could appreciate themselves and others and could develop confidence, interest, and skill as readers. This worry did not seem to be borne out of a lack of confidence in herself as a reading comprehension teacher as much as out of an orientation towards constant self-improvement in her teaching practice. In addition, Tracy worried extensively about doing the right kinds of things for the students who exhibited the most difficulty with

reading comprehension. She shared a sense of exasperation at times with having the tools, disposition, and know-how to make a difference for such students, sharing,

There are a few students who really do struggle. For me, the most difficult thing is after we've had a discussion and so we've talked about everything, every main point that I want to get across. Then I meet with them and I ask them the same questions and they just don't quite get it. I struggle with that because in my mind I'm thinking, "We just talked about this. I don't understand how you don't get it". I really struggle with that and having the patience to look at what's happening and to know how to piece things together so that they can understand. (I-2)

Tracy wanted all of her students to thrive in her classroom, but she was concerned that she had not yet fully created or completely managed a classroom in which such was occurring, especially for those students who evidenced the most difficulty in making sense of what they read.

Third, Tracy worried about providing instructional experiences that both engaged students and made effective use of her curricular resources. She felt particularly uncomfortable with the weekly instructional structure of the core reading program, commenting, "The week to week something new, forget about it, move on, on Monday drop it, I struggle with that" (I-1) and with the increasingly intense demands on students, sharing, "They're elementary students and I think it's so important to have the feel good aspects of reading there too" (I-4).

On the whole, Tracy's concerns were about making sure that all of the relevant stakeholders, including district officials, building administrators, parents, students, and

herself, were satisfied with the kinds of experiences being provided in her classroom and the kinds of outcomes being achieved by the learners in her classroom.

Case study conclusion. Tracy's perspectives on reading comprehension were both multi-dimensional and focused. She believed that a variety of factors influenced a reader's comprehension, however all of those factors contributed to engaging the reader in the reading process. Even more importantly, almost all of the factors Tracy identified as things she felt were important to engage readers in the reading process and give them the best opportunity to make the greatest sense of a text were factors that she as a teacher had at least some degree of control over in her classroom. There were very few components to Tracy's vision of reading comprehension that were out of her locus of control with her students. This belief system gave Tracy a great deal of efficacy in feeling that she could support most students and help them grow.

As Tracy made attributions for student success and failure at reading comprehension, she consistently framed them as attributions for success. She frequently talked to her students about the things that they could do and the ways they could feel that would allow them to be great readers. Rarely, and only in private discussion about specific students, did she reference attributions for failure. Those attributions, however, seemed to be made in the process of determining solutions for helping those students improve. If Tracy made attributions about failure, they were done so as part of a larger problem solving process.

Tracy's reading comprehension instruction involved using a small, consistent set of routines for sharing and practicing with text in the service of learning the required

skills of the core reading program and the DesCartes framework and using effective reading and engagement strategies. Tracy considered her formal curricular resources, the holistic needs of her students, the features and functions of individual texts, and the supports and expectations of an extended professional community when choosing these routines and reading comprehension content. She attempted to make the best decisions possible, as reflected by her personal knowledge and conviction about reading instruction.

On the whole, Tracy felt comfortable with reading comprehension instruction. She felt confident that she had an awareness of the reading process and had had success with helping students to develop within it. Tracy identified children's literature, professional texts, and relationships with teaching colleagues as the elements that she believed had most supported her learning about reading comprehension instruction. Tracy felt uncomfortable with some of the larger structural elements of her teaching world and with how those structural elements impacted her capacity to use her background knowledge and teaching expertise to the best of her ability. She believed that many of her past learning experiences had cumulatively resulted in the development of this background knowledge and teaching expertise. Her most immediate concerns about her reading comprehension instruction included concerns about the way in which reading growth was measured, about how to help her most struggling students, and about how to engage students in instruction with her available curriculum materials

Case Study Narrative #2: Carol

Definitions of reading comprehension.

Key components of reading comprehension. For Carol, reading comprehension was an act that revolved around personal relationships (see Appendix I). Successful reading comprehension is the result of a student valuing him or herself as a reader and valuing the people associated with a given text. Such value is established through many positive reading opportunities over time and enhanced through exercising reading strategies and textual analysis skills in the service of appreciating a text. Carol evidenced this perspective when she explained what she believed to be most important for student comprehension development. She shared,

What's important in my classroom is a personal connection to comprehension. I think it is so hard to read something that the students feel that they have no connection with whatsoever. They come alive when you can say, "Have you ever felt that way?" "Have you ever been there?" "Have you ever done that?" That's when they really come alive. [...] That's a huge part of comprehension. You don't want to comprehend anything you can't relate to in any way. So I spend a lot of time talking about that, about trying to find that in some way because when you love a book is when you can relate to something in the book. (I-3)

Reading comprehension positioned as the result of a relational encounter between reader and text, with a rich experience for the reader the most critical element of the encounter, was an all-encompassing tone in Carol's classroom. It was most notably revealed in the ways in which Carol talked with and responded to her students in conversation around text, which she did often, particularly during read aloud sessions and text-based discussion. In all of these contexts, Carol positioned herself as a fellow reader

and thinker first and a classroom manager and instructional leader second. In the following exchange, Carol was discussing a peer read aloud selection that a student had just shared:

Carol: Are you finished with the book and this is a favorite part that you went back to or are you in the process of reading it?

Student: In the process of reading it.

Carol: I remember that part of the book so well. I was so nervous for her. What part did you like that made you want to read that?

Student: I don't know. I just like it.

Carol: Did you try to imagine yourself in that position? Were you imagining yourself in her place at that part? (The student nods her head to indicate yes) I was too. What would I do? What would I do? Thank you very much. (O-2)

Carol viewed her primary responsibility as a reading comprehension teacher to be a fellow reader, one who can share texts, reading experiences, and ways of thinking with her students as comfortably as a familiar group of friends meeting in a book club or at a coffee shop. Reading was a way to build, maintain, and extend relationships. Reading comprehension was both the avenue through which one accomplished relationship building and one enhanced the relationship building process.

Carol positioned each instructional activity, routine, or objective as a learning opportunity that would allow students to enhance their relationship with, and, as a result, to more deeply enjoy their interaction with, a given text. The end goal of understanding and analyzing any text was a deeper appreciation and more long-lasting enjoyment of the

experience. Acquiring the skills, strategies, and dispositions for reading well was considered fun because reading is fun – a refreshing sense of fulfillment that comes when one is able to experience the privilege of improving at an important task. She embraced the perspective that the nature and volume of opportunities one has with texts was important. Carol valued students listening to reading, discussing reading, and sharing reading experiences with others. Carol’s classroom had been adjoined to a vacant room, and she described how she used it as a resource:

When we read together as a class, I really try to have us come together. Last year that room was a spare room next door so whenever we read our stories we would all huddle together on the floor so it felt more like a family or how you’d read at home. Then the kids when you do that feel so much more free to just say things or their thoughts about the story or about experiences that they’ve had. (I-1)

Even more than opportunities that expanded the volume and nature of students’ experiences with text, Carol believed in opportunities that provided students the chance to create with text, particularly via writing. She wanted her students to write about and in response to text frequently and to work both individually and in small groups to utilize text in the service of making a range of products. The opportunity to create with text, whether through writing or another type of product, was motivated out of two underlying beliefs about reading comprehension. First was the belief that the opportunity to create, when structured appropriately, would challenge readers to a greater sense of accountability for the text that in turn would enhance their appreciation for the efforts of the author who developed it. Second was the belief that the opportunity to create was a

motivational lever through which students would be more compelled to acquire the skills and strategies associated with reading proficiency. Carol explained,

I am definitely more of the novel study type teacher than the teaching out of the basal. I can see the benefits of it but I like to step out of that box. Even if I am in a story with the basal, I try to bring another story into it or we do art activities related to it. We did this thing at the beginning of the year with mud cloths because we were learning about an African artist and writer who had written a story. [...] I'm very big on just bringing in the creative side of language arts. That's what makes it fun for the kids. It makes them want to work better on everything else. (I-1)

This is not to suggest that Carol did not value the role of a small set of skills and strategies that foster reading comprehension. It is only to suggest that for Carol, those skills and strategies were most likely to be applied in the most productive ways when the act of understanding a text was situated within a relational context and was coupled with opportunities to return to the text and engage with it more deeply in a responsive way. Carol recognized and emphasized with students that reading comprehension is achieved through the employment of both reading strategies and text analysis skills. As strategy users, Carol wanted students to predict, summarize, use prior knowledge, make mental images, ask questions and monitor their understanding of a given text, re-reading when necessary. She particularly stressed the value of re-reading. During a discussion of a core reading program anthology selection, Carol highlighted this strategy use with students, commenting, "This is when you might want to re-read or you might have to

look back. [...] That's what good readers do. I've had to do that a lot in *Warriors*" (O-12). And, once again, in talking with a student who had shared a book that she was re-reading as a peer read aloud, Carol reminded students, "What do I say about re-reading? (The student gives a thumb-ups sign) Definitely. Definitely. I think if you re-read that book you are going to find a lot more in it" (O-9).

Carol situated all of these reading strategies as ways of thinking that good readers use and as ways of thinking that contribute to text analysis. She encouraged her students to notice clues and patterns in texts, such as symbolism, as vehicles for better understanding and appreciating the perspectives of the characters in fictional text and the authors and their ideas in informational text. Her emphasis was steadfast on the people associated with texts because of the way in which such an emphasis promoted reading comprehension development as a relational process.

Attributions for student success and failure. As an extension of her definitions about reading comprehension, Carol consistently made three types of attributions for the success and failure students had with reading comprehension. First, Carol attributed success and failure with reading comprehension to the types of experiences students had with text and how well students used the opportunities provided them. In addition, Carol recognized the interaction between students, their literacy experiences outside of her classroom, and the types of instructional experiences they were offered. She explained,

When I taught fourth grade reading that really stood out in my class because I sent home a questionnaire at the beginning of the year and when I went back and looked several of those struggling students were the ones who weren't reading at

home and it wasn't required. I feel like you lose so much and that's a big factor. And then many of those students would do so much better if they could have small group or one-on-one reading instruction. I guess it goes back to the same thing but there are so many things that you could point out and help them with that you can't as a whole class. I would try especially with our novel study. I had three different novels going at once in my class just trying to meet their needs. That worked out really well. It was wild but it worked out really well. The kids in the small group got something out of it. (I-3)

Second, Carol attributed reading comprehension success and difficulty to the affective differences of individual students as thinkers and readers. She acknowledged the degree to which a student felt comfortable and confident and aware of their preferences as a reader, had an interest in the act of reading and a willingness to try new texts and genres as affective factors that played a role in the degree of success a student had with reading comprehension. Carol tried to foster the development of positive affective factors in her students through her informal talk. She commented,

I don't want to say, "Oh, don't feel like you're not a good student". I just want to make it a positive remark. "You're a good reader if you do that". I think to bring it across too as just a reminder. You know, it's just, this is not what you have to do this is just a reminder. When you say something like that and it's said more in a positive connotation then they're like, "Oh yeah, that's right. That's what I'm supposed to be doing". (I-3)

For example, when a student shared a book selection during a peer read aloud that was atypical of the genre of book that she would normally be reading, Carol took the opportunity to make an observation about that, “One thing I’ve noticed here. It is very unusual for you to be reading a fantasy book. So (Student name) is spreading her wings and going out into different genres. That’s a great thing” (O-1). Carol valued students embracing flexibility within their literacy practices, especially when that flexibility enhanced a student’s experience with the reading process and contributed to the development of the long-term affective dispositions that would benefit them as a reader.

Third, Carol recognized prerequisite skills, such as fluency and vocabulary development, as key elements that had an impact on a reader. In reflecting upon students that she had encountered that had seemed to have difficulty with these skills, she noticed, “I think the kids that fall into that group are the kids with the learning disabilities” (I-3). Carol did not suggest a direction for the relationship, neither implying that the learning disability was a classification that reflected their reading difficulty nor that their reading difficulty was the direct extension of a learning disability, simply that such a pattern seemed to exist. Student issues with fluency were particularly concerning to Carol because of the ways in which dysfluent reading impeded a student’s progress in having positive, relational experiences with text.

Carol’s attributions for student success and failure in reading comprehension were informed by a keen awareness of students as individuals that had been fostered by close observation and listening over time, sharing, “When it comes to reading, you have to know your students and then you have to be flexible with them too” (I-2). Carol had

learned to develop an orientation towards flexibility in her reading instruction through past teaching situations out of which she saw the kinds of success students could experience when provided such an individualized approach. These moments reinforced to her that often student success and failure with reading comprehension could be influenced by what a teacher says and does with them in the context of the classroom.

Carol believed that student success or failure with reading comprehension could be attributed to student experiences with text, affective differences amongst students, and cognitive differences amongst students. She acknowledged that all of these dimensions could be affected, at least to some degree, by the classroom climate and reading instruction that she provided to students. It was within her capacity as a teacher to alter the degree of success a student was having or could have with reading comprehension by impacting any or all of these dimensions.

Classroom reading comprehension instruction. Carol's fifth grade language arts classroom was located around the back of the Hilltop Elementary building. It sat to the right of Tracy's classroom off of the fourth and fifth grade pod area, and the two classrooms shared an adjoining wall and door, which they kept closed but accessible. Carol and Tracy worked as partner language arts teachers and shared a common block of weekly language arts planning time. They planned for language arts together, but they carried out their language arts instruction separately with their individual classes. They utilized many of the same instructional routines and activities, which they had frequently developed together or shared with one another, and they covered much of the same text and skill content from out of their curriculum materials. That said, the instruction that

took place looked and felt decidedly different. This was because Carol and Tracy each carried out those same routines and talked around that same content through their own lens on reading comprehension, that, while similar, did not have the same core emphasis. Tracy emphasized students engaging well and directly with the content of a text. Carol emphasized students having rich, fulfilling reading experiences. More will be shared about Carol and Tracy's partnership later in the case study narrative.

The entrance to Carol's classroom was in the front left corner of the room. To the right of the door along the remainder of the front wall of the classroom was the whiteboard, sandwiched by a bulletin board on either end. Carol's desk and computer station was situated in the back right corner of room. In the back left corner of the room sat a small group table and chairs and in the front right corner of the room, underneath a television mounted on the corner of the wall, sat her classroom library and rocking chair. Eight student tables were situated into four groups across the middle and back of the room. Each group accommodated eight to ten students, depending on the arrangement of the two tables together, and students were assigned to seats at tables in single gender groups. An overhead projector sat on a cart in front of the student tables and projected onto a slanted ceiling above the whiteboard. There was open space between the student tables and the whiteboard, and Carol held whole-class meetings and discussions with students in this space. She sat in the rocking chair on the right side of the front of the classroom, and she kept an easel with large, wall-size Post-It paper next to her chair.

Carol had 31 students in her language arts class, composed of half of the students who scored in the top half of the fifth grade class on their MAP[®] assessment. Carol and

Tracy split the students in the top half to create their two language arts classes on the basis of balancing individual personalities, the recommendations of prior teachers, gender, and numbers.

Each day Carol's students came to her language arts class from their assigned homeroom classroom. Each student had an open cubby space in the fourth and fifth grade pod area where he or she stored all of their supplies for all of their classes. Students carried with them only the supplies they needed for language arts class. Carol had a small whiteboard easel positioned outside the door of her classroom on which she wrote a list of the supplies that would be needed on any given day. Students would hand carry their supplies into the classroom and set them at their assigned table space. Her language arts class met for a 3-hour block three days a week, and a shorter block that ranged from 1 to 2 ¼ hours on the other days of the week, creating time during which students visited the Instructional Media Center and had instruction in specials such as music, art, and physical education. Carol posted the agenda for each day of class, via her teacher computer station, on the classroom television screen that was mounted above the classroom library. The agenda contained many consistent items, but varied depending on the day of the week and the unit of study in which the class was engaged.

Classroom routines. Carol utilized routines for sharing text and reading experiences with others, routines for gaining opportunities to read and to practice using skills and strategies while reading, and routines to utilize the core reading program as an instructional resource. Within these routines, Carol embedded herself as a fellow reader and thinker, and encouraged students to appreciate and enjoy the literacy practice that

they were pursuing, while she paid particular attention to fostering individual student growth based on what she knew about her students as people.

Sharing routines. Carol, like Tracy, utilized a range of routines in order to provide her students the opportunity to share their literacy practice with one another. Most notably, her classroom featured teacher and peer read aloud sessions, quarterly independent reading projects, text-based discussions, monthly reading recognitions, and second grade reading buddy sessions.

Each instructional day, Carol integrated peer read aloud sessions into the day, and most instructional days, Carol offered a teacher read aloud session as well. Carol shared how the peer read aloud routine came into being in her and Tracy's classrooms:

I've always done read alouds. That's how we start our days. I read a book for about ten minutes and they just sit and listen and we don't talk a lot about it. It is just for them to sit and listen to a book without having to worry about what questions are going to be asked or what they have to look for. It kind of stemmed from that. When I started pointing out some things in the book we were reading, and I don't even think they loved the book that much, the kids started saying, "I read something like that". Actually it was (Student name), she'd say, "In this book that I'm reading my character said this", and then she started writing things down and bringing them in. (Student name) was another one who was doing it too. I was telling Tracy about it and she said, "Why don't we just have them read little parts of a book they've reading". We were going to do it just for a week and

then it just kept going. They want to do it. I mean they scramble to try and get their read aloud on the list for the next week. (I-1)

It had arisen as a spontaneous extension of Carol sharing her own literacy practice with students. Regardless of how the routine originated, Carol elevated the peer read aloud to a core element of her language arts day:

I've been doing two a day and I need to get back to doing just one a day and I'm like, "Oh, should I take the time to do this?" and I was like, "No, I have to take the time to do this. I have to." And maybe I won't spend all the time I want to spend on spelling or something like that but this is every bit as important. (I-1)

Carol made an intentional effort not to belabor the read aloud experiences. She worked to limit talk surrounding read alouds to ten minutes and she controlled the questioning. Carol aimed for depth in her questioning, looking to make a focused observation or raise a key question about the content of the text itself, her own reaction to the content of the text, or the experience of the reader who is sharing the text. In reflecting upon how she generated a response following a read aloud, Carol concluded,

I don't really ask all the same questions. It is just whatever pops into my head. I always try to keep it positive. Sometimes it's just, "Oh, thank you", and other times I feel like there's more to point out. I know we all work hard at picking out what we think would be good to read. (I-1)

For example, the following is a typical discussion surrounding a teacher read aloud, this one from a book in the *Warriors* series by Erin Hunter:

Carol: Let's find out what the old cats are up to. Oh, who have we become suspicious of?

Student 1: One of the leaders said there is a loose cat running around. They think it's Yellowfang.

Carol: Yes. Who is turning out to be a scurvy character?

Student 2: Tigerclaw.

Carol: So Tigerclaw may not be the warrior we first thought.

(Carol reads for approximately 10 minutes.)

Carol: At the gathering, I'm a little confused. Please help me out. Was Brokenstar talking about Yellowfang when she said there's a rogue among us and we have to be careful?

Student 3: Well, at first I was thinking that, and then I thought it could be Smudge because she was going back to her house.

Carol: Oh, okay, that's interesting. So you think the enemy might be talking about Smudge?

Student 4: I don't know. I don't really think that Yellowfang would bother. It just seems like she's hurt too much.

Carol: I know. I understand. It's like she just doesn't have the energy, but is she faking that?

[...]

Student 5: I have something. I have no idea why but this reminds me of capture the flag.

Carol: Oh, say what you're thinking.

Student 5: Because of the territory and stuff.

Carol: Oh, when we were playing capture the flag at camp I thought about that – when we were crouching in the woods. Oh my goodness, I was thinking the exact same thing. I was thinking this is like the Warrior book. That's so funny. (O-12)

Carol's sharing routines focused on the experiences of readers and on how the content of those books and the context surrounding their reading shapes those experiences.

Each quarter Carol required her students to complete and share a project about a book that students were reading independently. For example, one quarter students were to create a life-size model of a character or person from their independent reading book, another quarter students had to read a book with an adult outside of school and present the book to the class with that adult, and another quarter students had to write a news article and complete an oral book talk about an independent reading book. Carol described her first quarter book project as follows,

At the beginning of the year they had to read an independent reading book and we also talked about their books in class. They had to create a life-sized character out of their book. It could be any character that they got to know well and we had these life-sized characters all over the school. It was the neatest thing. They had to write on their sleeves emotions and changes that characters had, by the character's heart they had to write feelings that they had, by their eyes it was ideas. They had to put two different facial expressions. There were a whole bunch of parameters they had to use but it was amazing. They really had to think

while they made it. They even had to think about what the character looked like and that got pretty precise too. It was a lot of fun. I try to think of anything other than just sending home worksheets. (I-1)

This particular book project was predicated upon getting to know a character well enough to represent them with the same degree of depth that one might be able to represent a close friend or family member. It contributed to setting the tone that reading is about relating, both in and beyond independent reading books. This tone was maintained and extended in the three books projects that followed as well.

Carol regularly engaged students in text-based discussions. During twelve days of observation in her classroom, Carol held six text-based discussion sessions outside of discussion taking place during read aloud sessions. Carol consistently oriented the content of the conversation around three dimensions: discussing the main ideas or events of the text, discussing the use of or examples of skills or strategies in the reading of the text, and discussing the experiences of the characters or the perspective of the author. While Carol was intentional about ensuring that her discussions covered the main content of the text and their focal skills and strategies, it was clear that she thrived on having time to explore characters and authors. In the following discussion, Carol led students in analyzing an event in the text where thieves break into one of the character's houses:

Carol: So let's talk about mainly the break-in, the feelings that go along with that. I put a huge underline on what his mom said. Go ahead (Student name), what did she say?

Student 1: His mom said nothing of value was stolen.

Carol: Nothing of value was stolen. How do you think Tommy felt when she said that, and of course he has to keep his mouth closed? (Student name)?

Student 2: A painful twinge.

Carol: Yes, very painful. [...] She's grateful that Tommy is okay. None of this matters. Does anyone see any irony in what we're talking about?

Student 3: The first time they didn't take anything and the second time they actually took the jade fish. It was kind of obvious that they were gonna break in again and steal something else.

Carol: Do you think that's ironic or just the set of circumstances? It is something to be thinking about that each break-in is worse and worse. Okay.

Student 4: I found it funny that when Tommy found the jade fish he went to the Robie House and he kind of in a way broke in because he was on their property and wasn't supposed to be there. When the other person stole the fish from Tommy they broke in to his house so they both got the fish by breaking in.

Carol: Oh, the fish was stolen both times. Yes, that's good. (Student name)?

Student 5: If Tommy ever does tell his mom it would be pretty ironic because she wasn't expecting anything to be stolen but something of value was stolen.

Carol: Something of value was stolen. To Tommy it's what he considers his treasure, his most valuable thing. He's dying inside so pretty ironic that she would say that none of this matters when he's feeling like he lost the greatest thing in the world.

Student 6: He's kind of like, "Well, that figures. I should have told mom about the first time it happened," but he just figured it's just a coincidence and nothing would happen again.

Student 7: He should tell his mom.

Carol: Oh, I know. Everything he didn't think was going to happen has happened. He is in chaos. You get the feeling that this poor little guy is dying inside and he should tell his mom. (O-2)

Carol's sharing routines were ones in which her students participated well because they were inherently non-threatening. Carol invited students to spend time getting to know the people related to texts well and then to share that knowledge with others. As a result, students were comfortable with sharing thinking and reading with one another. Within this comfort, students were willing to invest time and effort to learn and practice the skill and strategy content that Carol is compelled or required to teach.

Practice routines. Carol used practice routines to give students the opportunity to experience a range of texts and to practice using reading strategies and literary analysis skills during those experiences. She required students to do 20 minutes of nightly independent reading, with many of the students in her classroom meeting and also exceeding those expectations. She occasionally required students to read class texts at night, particularly during their novel study. She taught students to record their thinking about text both inside and outside of the text, to identify the main points of a text and represent them in a summary, to communicate personal responses to text in writing and discussion, and to create artifacts that extend and expand ones' experience with the text.

Carol drew a clear distinction between the types of practice that she felt were beneficial to developing upper elementary readers and those that she did not embrace. Specifically, Carol distinguished between fostering an awareness of ones' own thinking while reading a text and compelling students to complete assignments that were oriented around the questions of another. Carol explained,

One way I teach comprehension is to write things down when you have a thought. Whenever we read a book we have a folder that they just write anything in. I don't even care if it's not organized. It just has to be something that they can write their thoughts down in. The other thing that comes up, answering questions, I'm not big on that at all. Like sending home worksheets I hardly ever do. I know parents ask me about that all the time, like, "Where are their worksheets?" I just still don't do that. I think at this age especially for so many kids that's so tedious. I know those types of questions are important, you know, "What color was the wagon?" or "Where did he buy this?" I know those are important questions and I think it's okay to ask once in a while but I don't feel like you need it all the time. Sometimes we'll come across worksheets in our practice book that we think are good and we'll go ahead and use those, but they always involve writing and answering questions in short answers. (I-1)

Personal thinking, even in the service of utilizing reading strategies or applying literary analysis skills, was paramount to Carol and evident in the talk generated by her students around the texts that they read. Carol directly taught and practiced with students

approaches to organizing thinking and to attending to main ideas in text in order to be able to share those with others.

One of the practice routines that Carol felt was most important to student reading comprehension development was teaching students to mark text. This text marking took two forms in her classroom. The first was having students directly mark on the text that they were reading. While this was frequently not possible to do with their instructional texts, particularly with their core reading program anthology selections, Carol was able to have students mark their novel study texts. She reflected on that opportunity, sharing,

That's the best thing Tracy and I thought of all year was for *The Wright 3* (the novel study book) to have them own it so they can write in it and put Post-its and highlight. I think that taught them a lot about reading. It is just the best thing when you can mark up a book. It's really neat now when I see them carrying that over to just a book they're reading on their own. That's so cool. It tells me they're thinking about something as they read. (I-3)

Carol did not simply require students to mark their novel study text out of a blind sense of compliance to her authority as the most expert reader in the room. Instead, Carol worked to build a compelling rationale for why the time and extra work was worthwhile. On this day of instruction, Carol prepared to discuss the previous night's section of the book after having students complete a daily summary and response. Prior to initiating the discussion, she shared this anecdote:

I have a little something to share with you. My oldest daughter is applying to law school in June so she's taking a class in college that helps to prepare her for

taking the test to get into law school called an LSAT. She said that one of the main points that the professor who is teaching this class has taught them is about improving their reading comprehension. I asked her to tell me about some of the strategies her professor has taught her. She said, “Well, he taught us this one thing and it really helps me. After each paragraph we write a little tiny summary like a little bullet of what the paragraph is about and if it’s a longer one we put bullets at the end”. It’s all about writing little summaries to each part of the question. I thought, “Wow, my fifth graders are going to be so smart because they already know that and they’re already doing that.” Here she is, she’s in her last year of college and she has never done that before. She said, “I always just kind of kept it in my head. A teacher has never told me to summarize by keeping little bullets as you read. They’re always said to think about what you read but never to really write it down.” She said that has helped her so much, especially on the questions that are really complex or really hard to understand. So just think about that. You guys are all ready to take your law school exams and you’re only in fifth grade. (Student name) we have your career all carved out for you. You don’t even have to worry about it. (O-3)

Carol’s instructional routines were full of anecdotes such as this one from her own personal experience, that of her college-aged daughters, or of other friends and colleagues. When it was not possible to mark directly in the instructional text, Carol had students keep track of their thoughts or the content of the text in a graphic organizer. For example, during the following excerpt students were listening to a core reading program

anthology selection, the short story “Ta-Na-E-Ka” by Mary Whitebird, on audio CD and Carol was stopping throughout to have students take notes on a Venn diagram, comparing and contrasting the perspectives of characters in the story. In the story, two characters, Mary and Roger, are experiencing a Native American rite-of-passage ceremony during the mid-20th century:

Carol: Alright Mary, you sneaky little thing. So what’s the difference between how Mary is handling this situation and how her cousin is probably handling his situation? What’s another comparison we can make?

Student 1: Uh, she’s cheating kind of.

(Carol writes on one side of the Venn diagram – Mary: cheater)

Carol: Yes, Mary is a little cheater. Okay, she’s finding a way around Ta-Na-E-Ka. Keep that in mind and see if by the end of the story if you really would still call her a cheater. What’s Roger doing?

Student 2: Well, he’s just doing it the way they normally would do it.

Carol: We assume. Okay, yeah, that he’s actually following the tradition.

(Carol writes on the other side of the Venn diagram – Roger: following tradition)

Carol: [...] Think about this. What do you think they’re going to notice about Mary when she gets back?

(Carol re-starts the CD.) (O-12)

Carol’s in-class reading experiences were consistently punctuated with frequent stops during the text to discuss text content, particularly analyzing the perspectives of characters and the intentions of authors, and, more specifically, to record that analysis of

text content in some kind of organized fashion. Marking within text itself, or recording about text, was a regular practice habit in Carol's classroom.

This was so much so that Carol introduced the text marking approach for the week at the same time that she introduced the reading selection for the week. Each week she used what she called a reading web to prepare students for the week. Students wrote their web down on a loose-leaf sheet of paper and stored it as the front page of their reading binder for that week. The following illustrates how Carol introduced the Ta-Na-E-Ka story selection to her students the day before reading it:

Carol: I thought we'd just do a little bit of a web today so you can get ready for the story and we can get right into the story tomorrow. [...] We'll just do a real brief one with four circles. The name of the story is Ta-Na-E-Ka. (Carol writes the title of the story in the middle of the overhead and draws four circles extending to opposite corners of the overhead from the title.)

Student 1: Is this another story that was from back in history?

Carol: No. It sounds like it would. (Student name) is already making a prediction from the name of the story. You'll be surprised. The setting is present day.

Okay, the genre is realistic fiction and (Student name) that's one of my favorite things about this story is that it was surprising to me when I read it. (Carol writes realistic fiction in one of the four circles extending out from the story title.)

Student 2: It sounds like an old Chinese story.

Carol: It's not that either. You have lots of surprises in store for you tomorrow.

Okay, the skill that we'll be talking about for this story is compare and contrast.

I'm going to give you the author's name, it's a beautiful name, and this will give you a clue as to the characters in the story and their background. It is Mary Whitebird. (Carol writes compare and contrast in one of the circles and Mary Whitebird in another circle on the web.)

Student 3: Native American.

Carol: Sounds like it could be Native American, right. Okay, and just to get you completely ready, I'm going to have you write down the type of graphic organizer we'll be using to organize our thoughts as we go through the story. We'll be using a Venn diagram, which you're very familiar with. Usually when you see compare and contrast that's what pops into your head is a Venn diagram.

Compare and contrast could be other things too, it could be a T-chart, but usually what we use is a Venn diagram. (Carol writes Venn diagram in the final circle on the web.) (O-11)

The reading web routine served not only as a vehicle through which Carol introduced students to the approaches through which they would be interacting with the text that week, but also as form of practicing the types of thinking effective readers do as they prepare to read a text. Her discussion around the reading web focused on making predictions based on the title and author of text, and on the genre and structure of a text. It prepared students to learn about processing text and to read text, and, in particular, to utilize effective thinking strategies while reading it.

Carol's students completed many text-based projects, presentations, and writing assignments in order to extend and enhance their experiences with their reading. When

her class had finished their reading of the novel study text, students began two projects based on the book. In the first project, students had to create and present a PowerPoint in which they researched some element of the book in more detail. For example, the book featured both Frank Lloyd Wright and a Frank Lloyd Wright home. Many students choose to create PowerPoint presentations about the life of Frank Lloyd Wright, one of his other homes, or the architectural features of the home featured in the book. Other students created PowerPoint presentations about the Fibonacci sequence, which was an element of the mystery in the story, and Chicago, the setting of the story. In the second project, students had to create a written extension of the novel. In these two cases, students worked independently, however, frequently such text-based projects involved students working in small groups.

Carol's practice routines allowed students to encounter the reading strategies that expert readers embrace and to experience the use of the literary analysis skills that were expected of them. They were carried out in such a way that the use of these strategies and skills, while important, were secondary to the experience of appreciating and enjoying text itself.

Core reading program routines. Carol drew from the core reading program in her reading comprehension instruction as a text source, a skill source, and a question source. The core reading program provided Carol the text from which she gave students reading practice opportunities, the skills from which she planned her skill instruction to embed within those practice opportunities, and, occasionally, the questions out of which Carol generated discussion throughout sharing opportunities. Carol was a selective user of the

core reading program. She choose the texts that seemed most compelling for students to read, she faithfully taught the primary skills intended to accompany those selected texts in whatever way she felt was going to be most effective, and she used the questions provided in the teachers' manual as fodder from which to create her own.

Carol appreciated what the core reading program offered to her as a decision-maker. When asked what she appreciated most about it, Carol immediately commented on the nature of the texts provided for her use in the classroom:

I've been really happy with the stories. For example, I think there was a lot of character in today's story. Some of the other stories I have felt are really dry as far as the characters go but then you come upon the ones that are very good and we pick and choose between them. The other thing is that the leveled readers are excellent. I try to pull those in definitely. They are interesting and they are well written and that was a really nice surprise for us that they were as good as they are. I also love all of the non-fiction. That brought in a whole other genre that you don't normally see much of in a basal so I've appreciated that. (I-3)

Since Carol's orientation to reading comprehension privileged the experience of the reader, it was important to her to have access to texts that would provide such a rich experience to her student readers.

Carol shaped student discussion of those reading experiences through her questioning and appreciated access to questions that she deemed to be worthwhile and important within the teachers' manual. She commented,

The other thing I have found helpful in this program is the comprehension questions within the story. They seem to hit on those higher-level questions and make that connection of text to self. It seems like they really concentrated on that so I've been using the comprehension questions a lot this year whereas before I didn't because I thought that I could come up with all much better questions. We did a lesson on levels of questioning so the kids could recognize and learn what a good question is so I want to be sure I use good questions with them. (I-3)

The core reading program represented a source from which to plan and generate Carol's instruction, with Carol's knowledge, expertise, and instructional convictions taking precedence over its faithful implementation.

Reading comprehension content. Carol's reading comprehension curriculum was comprised of three types of reading skills and strategies: core reading program skills, DesCartes skills, and reading strategies.

Core reading program skills. Carol taught students the main comprehension skills that accompanied the text selections that she chose to use based on the degree to which they could provide students a fulfilling, relevant, and rich reading experience. Carol recognized that the skills provided for instruction in the core reading program were ones that had a tendency to repeat themselves throughout the course of the year and the course of multiple years of elementary reading instruction. She had concluded that what varied were not the skills themselves, but the complexity of the presentation of the skills and of the text within which the skill would be applied and practiced. Carol shared her perspective on the core reading program skills, commenting,

Tracy and I usually have the same feelings about this. We'll look at what's coming up and be like, "Oh, sequence of events, again". You see the same skills year after year and it's just how you go about teaching them and the depth you want to go into. I think that makes the difference in grade level. You can make a skill like sequence of events difficult if there are flashbacks and things so that's what I try to do if I feel like we've done a skill to death then I'll try to pick a short story or a selection from the anthology that makes it more difficult, that's a little harder to figure out. [...] It all depends what you attach it to. (I-2)

Her interest in teaching the skills that appeared in the core reading program was less about following the sequence of skills and anthology selections provided and more about finding the appropriate level of skill and text complexity for her students.

DesCartes skills. Carol taught the text analysis skills recommended on the DesCartes Continuum of Learning for the RIT score levels that students in her classroom had achieved. She and Tracy had planned their six-week novel study unit and four-week poetry unit with a specific orientation towards covering those skills. The skills included identifying literary devices, figurative language, point of view, mood and tone, internal and external conflict, irony, and propaganda in text. Outside of those units that they had designated for DesCartes skill instruction, they choose to be mindful of opportunities to capitalize on any points of integration between the skills in the core reading program and the DesCartes skills. Carol explained,

We just stick them in whenever we can is what we do. We have this list, Tracy and I are both list people, and it's this goes, this stays, and you just have to weed

things out. You have to fit in DesCartes where you can because it doesn't align.

It's very interesting how different people do it very differently. (I-1)

DesCartes, like the core reading program, was treated as an instructional resource from which to initiate decision-making surrounding reading comprehension instruction.

Reading strategies. Carol emphasized, encouraged, and, at times, required students to use a small set of effective reader strategies throughout her language arts instruction. During the course of my observations, she directly taught and focused on two strategies in particular: self-questioning and visualizing.

Carol introduced questioning as a component of her fourth quarter book projects, which she structured as oral book talks. When she was preparing students to share their book talks with one another, she distributed to students a handout that she had developed that outlined question starters based on Bloom's taxonomy. During the course of the presentations, she emphasized students asking effective questions of one another about the books that they had chosen to share. At the conclusion of the book talks, Carol spent time helping students transition from questioning one another to applying those same question starters as part of their own thought processes while they read. She explained,

Our book talks were to practice writing a news article and to gain knowledge on what everybody's reading. My main goal was really the level of questioning we use with the books we read. [...] As you go forward think about what kinds of questions you ask and that you think about as you're reading a book. We love books because we make a personal connection to a book. If you can ask yourself questions when you're reading, you are going to fall in love with your book. It's

going to make reading a book much more interesting. Ask yourself a question from each of those levels of questioning and you will find that you understand your book a lot better and it will be a lot more interesting for you. (O-11)

Carol introduced and emphasized visualization throughout the course of the class novel study unit, particularly because processing visual imagery complemented her plan to teach DesCartes literary analysis skills, such as recognizing figurative language and literary devices in narrative text. In the following instructional exchange, Carol is leading a discussion about visual imagery in *The Wright 3*. Carol begins by explaining how much more enjoyable reading and writing is when you can create word pictures in your mind while you are doing it. She then asked students to share parts of book that had evoked a strong sense of imagery for them:

Carol: What senses do those paragraphs connect with for you? What sense is the author really trying to bring out for the reading?

Student 1: Sight

Carol: Swirling, drifting. You can just picture that fog coming in and curling around that house.

Student 2: Sound.

Carol: That fog horn.

Carol then showed students several images on the television screen of the Robie House in Chicago, Illinois, a house that plays a central role in the novel study text. She asked students to write down and then share words that could describe the house if you couldn't see the picture:

Student 3: Loud.

Carol: How? Why? Tell us.

Student 3: Like the way it expresses itself.

Carol: I love that word you chose. Meaning in your face because it's kind of out there. It's not typical of what you would see.

Student 4: I think it looks welcoming.

Carol: You do? How so?

Student 4: Like in that picture how much shape there is in the windows.

Carol: You know it'd be light inside and sunny. You'd get a warm feeling. (O-9)

Carol both incorporated the prompting and sharing of the use of reading strategies into her larger text-based discussion with students and directly addressed those reading strategies in her instruction.

Decision-making factors. Carol's decision-making about reading comprehension instruction was strongly influenced by her interest in ensuring that her students had fulfilling experiences with text in which they recognized and built relationships amongst themselves, characters, and authors. This lens out of which to proceed with instructional planning and execution was motivated out of and informed by a keen awareness of her own literacy practices. It was evidenced in the ways in which Carol embedded and drew off of her own literacy practice and the ways in which Carol responded to the shared experiences of students during the course of reading comprehension instruction. Her decision-making was intended to accomplish two fundamental aims. The first was to ensure that each student recognized their language arts classroom as a collective group of

individual literacy users, including Carol. The second was to ensure that each student engaged in authentic experiences that would enrich their own capacity as literacy users.

View all as literacy users. Carol wanted her classroom to be a place where a group of individual literacy users shared and improved their practice together. She wanted the instruction that she provided to be a natural extension of this kind of community. Carol recognized that such an effort would begin with students perceiving her as a fellow literacy user. She shared,

I try to do a great deal of reading outside of school just so I can pull things in. [...] I share my writing with them when they write in their writing journal. I try to do those things so that they know that I feel that it's important for me also. It's not just important for them. (I-1)

As a result of this intentionality with which Carol shared her reading and writing and her thinking around what she reads and writes, she was able to integrate a variety of elements within her instruction that keep students cognizant of this aim. For example, Carol dedicated a portion of her whiteboard space to what she called “jump out phrases”. She marked off the right third of the whiteboard with blue painters tape. In this space, Carol jotted excerpts from text and quotes from her students and herself. She explained,

That's how I started the whole jump out phrase thing. It was in middle school and I was reading *The Kite Runner*. There were some sentences that I thought were just beautiful in that book and some lines that really jumped out to me, so I just started writing them on my whiteboard. It was just as an example of figurative language or how it affected me personally. At the beginning of class I just read

the sentence and would talk about how I felt about it when I read it or what it made me think of. Before I knew it kids started coming in and around my sentence they would start writing sentences that jumped out to them and then they have like a minute at the beginning of class to talk about it. [...] If I find something that connects with me then I pass it on to them but otherwise if I didn't read, that wouldn't happen. (I-1)

For Carol, being a fellow reader and writer was just as important, if not more so, than being a planner and manager of instruction. This was how Carol compelled students to engage in ongoing, informal conversation about reading with her and how she made her day-to-day talk with students as powerful as it seemed to be. Her students took her seriously and they took her conversation around reading seriously as a result.

Authentic experiences. Carol believed in the power of authenticity. For her, authenticity frequently meant create and share. She wanted students to create out of their reading and writing experiences and to share their creations with one another. She was mindful of this perspective when planning instruction, particularly skill instruction. For example, Carol linked the reading of the novel study book, *The Wright 3*, with an extended writing assignment in which students had to write an extension of the text utilizing dialogue. They were required to do three things: use dialogue, integrate themselves as characters, and use the existing characters from the story. The intention of the assignment was two-fold. First, it was intended to teach students about processing dialogue in the texts that they read and about using conventions of dialogue properly in their own writing. Second, it was an opportunity for students to evidence their

understanding of the individual characters in the text and to use that understanding in the service of their own creativity. Carol commented,

One thing I really try to do is to attach writing to what we're reading and then what we're learning in writing to see if we can find that in our reading and find exemplars of that. I think it's important to have the connection, not to teach things in isolation. [...] In reading that's one big strategy is just getting them to create something out of what they've read and being able to talk about what they've read and what they've created and being ready to answer questions because the kids will ask a lot of questions. (I-1)

Carol found that not only did these types of assignments create a great deal of enthusiasm amongst individual students about their work but also generated a lot of interest across students about the work of other. Thus, her brand of text-based authenticity, and the way in which she organized instructional experiences around it, enhanced student motivation to learn and contributed to building community.

Learning about reading comprehension instruction. Carol learned about reading comprehension instruction from texts, from herself, and from the experiences of other people. Carol learned from herself as a literacy user, parent, and professional, from her own children and former students, and from her professional colleagues.

Sources of information. Carol identified adult and young adult books and her former students as the primary sources of information from which she generated knowledge about reading comprehension instruction.

As mentioned previously, Carol was an avid reader and writer. She read for her own enjoyment and for her students, as she expressed a strong desire to remain updated and current with trends and interests in young adult literature. She felt that her knowledge of books that students were reading or would want to be reading was the best source of information she could have in teaching students to understand what they read in more sophisticated ways. Since Carol relied on her own literacy practices to make decisions about instruction in her classroom, it was important that she knew about books and selected books that would allow her to share her own authentic practice with students. This was particularly important in informing Carol's book selection for her teacher read alouds. She reflected upon the process she undertook to make her most recent read aloud book selection:

At first I didn't want to read about cats. The kids wrote down five top books they'd like to hear and so many of the books I felt like have been done and done and done, like *Holes*, and I felt like I couldn't muster up the enthusiasm for them. But *Warriors* came out as the second book that was requested and I really hesitated because it's a long book so I took it home and I read it over a weekend. I thought even though there's the cat thing there were a lot of social messages in the book about gangs and exclusion and seeing people for their worst and not their best. I thought there was a lot to think about so I did go ahead with it. (I-3)

Carol ultimately decided on the book that she had because the themes that the authors highlighted through the conflicts that emerged amongst the characters resonated with her during her own experience with reading it. She chose to shy away from other

alternate options because she didn't wanted to use a book in her classroom about which she couldn't communicate a genuine energy. Once Carol had decided on this particular book for read aloud, she committed herself to learning about the series of which it was a part and the authors who created it. Carol explained what she had learned in one of our interviews, commenting,

It's a huge series and they just came out with the seventh book. The cool thing about the author is that she's called Erin Hunter, but it's not a person named Erin Hunter. It's three authors, three women, who have never met each other but the publishing company put them together. One will write one part and then send it on. One is a super cat lover so she puts in all the details about the cats. The other one likes adventure and likes the woods so she puts in all of those details. So I thought that was really interesting. (I-3)

Carol was regularly sharing similar tidbits of knowledge about books and authors with students. If she was unfamiliar with a particular book or author or series, she took it upon herself to read that work and to learn about it. She felt strongly convicted that knowledge of books was the best source of information from which she could learn what she needed to best help her students in their reading comprehension development.

In addition to book knowledge, Carol relied on feedback from her former students to inform her reading comprehension instruction. She maintained contact with many former students, especially students that she had taught at the middle school level, and she looked to learn from them about her teaching by capturing their feedback about their

experiences in her classroom and in the language arts classrooms they were in after hers. She shared one such contact that she had recently had with a former student:

I saw him about four months ago and he had said to me in sixth grade, “This is the first time I’ve ever read a book from cover to cover”. He was a bright student, he wasn’t a struggling student at all but just did not have the interest in reading. I saw him a couple of months ago and he said, “I’ve read more books, I’ve read more books”. That was about book choice. He read the book cover to cover because he choose something that he was interesting in. No one was telling him what to read. Definitely I’ve learned that especially at the middle school. (I-3)

Carol used these points of contact with her former students, particularly former middle school students who were then in the same high school that her own daughters were also attending at the time, as moments to re-affirm and re-focus her language arts teaching efforts around those routines and principles that seemed to make a lasting difference for students.

In line with her belief that reading was most powerfully conceptualized as a relational act, carried out within a community of readers and focused on relationships with characters and authors, she identified sources of information, books and former students, that informed her effort to bring across her relational perspective in her reading comprehension teaching.

Critical experiences. The experiences from which Carol believed that she had learned the most about reading comprehension instruction were primarily those that she had as a reading comprehension teacher and a member of a professional teaching

community. Carol identified her own teaching experiences as the primary mechanism through which she had been able to learn how to improve her reading comprehension instruction. She reflected upon several instances in which her instructional approach and the reactions of her students to it provided the fodder out of which she re-evaluated, improved, or adapted her teaching practice. First, Carol identified her novel study units in her first year at the upper elementary level as particularly instructive. The ways in which her class as a whole and individual students as growing readers and writers responded to the structure of the novel study units motivated Carol to find a different way to integrate her instructional aims with authentic reading experience:

I learned that last year when I did a novel study and they had a booklet that I passed out that they put in their folder. That was more of a question and answer format and finding unknown words and it was kind of very scripted. It was the first year I came here and it was kind of the first thing I did with the teacher that used to be over there. I had a not great feeling about it but I felt like I needed to do it just to get by. I felt so horrible and I didn't enjoy the novel study. I don't think the kids did either although they did like the book but they did not like the work that went with it. I really learned my lesson that I would never do that again. I had kids crying because it was so much work and it was terrible. Most kids really loved that book and that's why I was mad at myself. There were so many great things I could have done and I just missed the boat on it. (I-1)

The next novel study unit of the year brought both additional learning about how to focus work around texts. Carol commented,

Birchbark House is another one we did, which is a beautiful book. It's long though. I think they were a little overwhelmed because they were just fourth graders but we got through it. Once I tried to point out the figurative language of the author and what was going through the minds of the characters, they became more attached to it. (I-1)

During this same novel study unit, Carol learned how to exercise flexibility to meet the needs of individual students, explaining,

Last year I had a student, it was novel study, and when it came time to writing his summary he would just put his head down. He hated it because he felt like the book was so overwhelming for him and he just couldn't get into it. He's an okay student but at one point he had his hair like this. (Demonstrates by pulling up on hair.) He didn't know what to write and he didn't know what he had read and I just stopped the book for him. I said, "I want you to put that book away". I asked him if he was reading a book at home and he said yeah that it was something crazy like *The Day my Butt went Psycho*. I had looked at the book before and it was just silly – it wasn't disgusting or anything. I asked him how he liked it and he said he loved it because he does like to read. I told him that's your novel study right now and you will use that book and do your novel study based on that book. I had to read the book and write questions for him and things like that but I could not drag him through that novel study. I just kept thinking, "That's going to ruin him. It's going to make him hate reading". Well, it was great. He did a fantastic job on his novel study and for his projects he'd do cartoons of the main events of

the book. It turned out fantastic but I told him this will be the only time this year I will let you do this. This is it. (I-1)

Alongside these specific learning moments, Carol identified ideas that have transformed her teaching over the course of time. One such idea was related to writing about one's reading, particularly prior to discussing text. Carol noted,

When I started teaching I really thought that just having these open wonderful discussions was good enough. But then you get many of the kids who would just sit and rather listen or not listen. When we do written responses to a story it's a much better discussion because they had to think before it. I didn't used to put as much emphasis on that but it's really changed. In so many ways I'm such a different teacher than I was in my first year. (I-3)

Carol's evolution as a reading comprehension teacher was predicated on learning from the instructional experiences that she had chosen to carry out in the past. In addition, Carol had prior experience partnering with a team of teachers at the middle school level. Both of these allowed Carol to embrace the opportunity to partner with Tracy. Carol elaborated on how she knew that a partnership with Tracy would be mutually beneficial,

Last year she (Tracy) was way down at the other end (of the building). I really didn't even know her that well but when I'd walk by her room the things that I saw that she was doing I felt like we would be great together. When they were reading *Hatchet* she had in her room the little cave that he hid in. It was made out of all this foil and she had Christmas lights that were the lights like the campfire

out in front. It was just one of those hands-on things that sometimes we get away from just because we feel like we don't have the time for it. Then a big hint was when I had gone down to her room because the teacher who I took the place of had given some things to Tracy. When I went and asked for them I said, "I know we need to teach from the book but I'm trying to just take a step away from that and bring in some different things". Tracy was like, "I am so glad to hear you say that you step away from the book. That's so important and I just never hear that that much". When she came to me at the end of the year and asked if I would ever want to teach with her I was like, "Yes, absolutely". I just knew it would work. (I-1)

Carol, like Tracy, believed that their partnership with one another was a critically important element to explaining why that school year had been going so well for both of them and why she felt like she was continually learning throughout it.

Carol felt that the most powerful experiences to have informed her reading comprehension instruction were those involving her own teaching. She believed that she had learned the most about improving her reading comprehension instruction from what she had done in the past and how students had reacted to it. She valued the opportunities that had come her way to work collaboratively with others around planning and carrying out reading comprehension instruction, with a particular sense of appreciation for her current partnership with Tracy. The moments that she identified as most critical in her learning were also those most closely linked with her own instruction.

Concerns. Carol identified concerns about her own instruction, concerns about student learning and assessment, and concerns about school and district structures that impacted her day-to-day teaching as those elements that were most pressing to her.

When thinking about her instruction, Carol was most concerned with how she chose to allocate time, materials, and experiences in her classroom. These concerns were borne out of a larger concern that she was performing as effectively as a language arts teacher as she possibly could in the context in which she operated. She explained this concern, and the sense of challenge that she felt in relation to it, as such, “You hope you are picking the right things that are important. Every day I walk out and I hope that somebody learned something that will help them” (I-2).

Carol was particularly concerned about the allocation of time in her teaching because she recognized that it takes time to help students process texts well. She commented about this pressure associated with time, sharing, “It’s so rushed all the time and I don’t like that because I know the kids feel it too. I need more time to just talk about things and discuss how they arrive at understanding” (I-1). She also lamented her concerns about time, particularly time for discussion, with students, commenting at the end of a discussion, “I feel like I need about five hours with you guys to get caught up on all we have to talk about” (O-2).

When thinking about her students and their reading comprehension learning, Carol was most concerned with meeting the needs of a range of students, particularly boys and students who struggled with reading comprehension. Carol had attended

several in-service day sessions provided by the district that had piqued her interest in the differential learning needs of boy and girl students. She reflected,

I've done two in-service days on how boys and girls learn differently and reading is a big thing. I think teachers tend to focus towards the girls with reading and not really look at strategies or reading material that interests boys. I think that maybe I've been guilty of that too. I've tried to be really cognizant of that in middle school but in elementary school I haven't thought about it as much. For them to get a book that doesn't have any pictures and is thick and has small print is overwhelming for most boys. And, yes, they do like action and they do like sword fights and it's okay to let them read that. (I-1)

While Carol felt partially prepared to pay closer attention to the reading interests and literacy learning needs of her boy students, she felt much less well prepared to address the needs of her most struggling readers, whether they were girl or boy students. She evidenced this concern in her evaluation of the supplementary materials offered in the core reading program, commenting, "They have a lot of information about struggling readers and I think that's good because a lot of teachers don't know or don't learn exactly what to do with those students. I struggle with that" (I-2).

Carol had two specific concerns about the larger context in which her teaching was embedded. Her first concern was whether or not she would be afforded the opportunity to continue to work as part of a collaborative partnership or team. Specifically, she worried about what she might do if she ended up in a circumstances in which she either did not have access to opportunities to work in a collaborative fashion

with colleagues or she had access to working with colleagues that did not share her own philosophies and principles on instruction as closely as her former middle school team had or Tracy seemed to.

Carol's second concern was about the manner in which students were assessed and grouped into language arts classrooms. This concern was two-fold. First, Carol had some skepticism about whether the district assessment measure was valid enough to be drawing such high-stakes conclusions about students and appropriate classroom placements for them. Her take on the using the assessment and its scores was that "it does give valuable information if you look at it as a trend over years" (I-1) but that she did not trust any single score because "you get those times where it was a good testing day for that child or they just don't have the patience for it and that's when it gets challenging – when it doesn't really represent who they are" (I-1). Second, Carol had strong reservations about grouping students with similarly low or high assessment scores into language arts classrooms. She felt that this was a disservice to teacher, students, and parents and did not want to see the practice continued in future school years.

In summary, Carol's concerns were primary focused on how to improve her instructional efficacy to better serve her students. She wanted to see several structural changes be made that could contribute to this improvement as well.

Case study conclusion. Carol's perspectives on reading and reading comprehension reflected the great care and passion that she had for both literary experiences and for her students as growing people. She had a sense of awareness about how she used reading and writing practices in her own life and what contributed to her

success, and she translated that understanding into a set of classroom routines and practices that would allow her students to have the same kinds of experiences. Carol recognized that the most enjoyable reading experiences, the ones in which a reader feels compelled to make sense of the text, the characters, and the author in a deep and meaningful way, were the result and extension of a relational encounter with the text.

Carol's reading comprehension instruction utilized sharing routines, practice routines, and core reading program routines to teach core reading program skills, DesCartes skills, and reading strategies. She worked to ensure that instruction was organized and carried out in such a way that students view everyone in the classroom, herself included, as authentic users of literacy practices and that students had extended opportunities to create products in response and in relation to the texts that they read.

Carol was concerned about providing all students, particularly boys and struggling readers, with the instructional experiences that resulted in maximum reading comprehension development and language arts learning. She wanted to conduct her work within a context in which she had every opportunity to do so, particularly within a collaborative work arrangement where students of a range of ability levels had the opportunity to work with and learn from one another.

Case Study Narrative #3: Rachelle

Definitions of reading comprehension.

Key components of reading comprehension. For Rachelle, reading comprehension was the natural result of prerequisite literacy learning about how to decode written language in a fluent way (see Appendix I). That is, reading

comprehension was the outcome of achieving reading fluency. Reading fluency, to Rachelle, was the combination of word identification and phrasing – learning to identify individual words in a text in an accurate, automatic way and learning to read those individual words in meaningful phrases. A student is a fluent reader when he or she can pronounce all the individual words accurately and does so by grouping those individual words into sensible phrase units.

Rachelle equated becoming a proficient reader, one capable of reading comprehension success, with having experienced success with two distinct, but related, processes: the process of learning to read and the process of learning to comprehend. She considered the relationship between the two processes as consecutive. One learns to read and, as a result, is in a position to learn to comprehend. Rachelle explained,

I think teaching them to read is not so much a conceptual thing. It is more that you learn the procedures. You learn the phonetic rules and you learn how to apply them. [...] The only real connection between the two is that you have to know the phonics and you have to have the phonemic awareness to read fluently, with automaticity. If you don't have that it's really hard to comprehend. So you have to have that foundation in order to achieve the fluency that you need to comprehend. To me, you've got to have the phonics first and then you build off of that to get to where you can comprehend. (I-2)

Once a student has acquired the phonics knowledge that lends itself to successful decoding, and the decoding experience that lends itself to fluent reading, that student is in a position to experience successful reading comprehension. Rachelle continued,

I hope that they can just kind of glide into it. I'm hoping that if they can read fluently the comprehension will sort of naturally follow. Maybe that's not right, but my way of thinking is you can't comprehend without fluency, or, if not, it's going to be time-consuming and frustrating. (I-2)

Rachelle recognized that beyond fluency development there was an additional range of factors that influenced reading comprehension development. First, there is a set of cognitive factors that impact how easily a reader would achieve fluency, with those factors including IQ and memory capacity, as well as whether or not one had a learning disability. Second, there is a set of affective factors that impact how a reader feels about the act of reading, and, consequently, how much he or she engages in reading practice on the whole or is willing to invest effort in the reading practice that he or she does experience. These affective factors both contribute to one's fluency development and are influenced by the ease with which one acquires fluency. Third, there is a small set of reading strategies that a reader can choose to use in the service of making sense of the most important information or ideas of a text. Both the extent to which the reading strategies are understood and utilized and the extent to which a reader knows how to identify what is most important in a text and to use those strategies to do so impact his or her reading comprehension.

To Rachelle, individuals have a set of fixed cognitive capabilities, namely IQ and memory capabilities, that play a role in how well he or she could process words and remember information from a text. These capabilities are additionally shaped by whether

an individual did or did not have a learning disability, such as dyslexia. Rachelle noticed how these capabilities influenced the students in her classroom, sharing,

I thought it was interesting today because some of the students that I thought the reading is the stumbling block, then I'm not always so sure. You assume that they can't read and thus can't comprehend. But then, for instance, I asked a question of the group about the reading and someone answered it correctly and immediately I asked another student. He looked tormented and it was like, "Oh, I'm trying to remember. I'm trying to remember". The answer was just given. I would have assumed that his struggle was the reading and yet I see those situations and it's not just the reading. It seems he has memory issues. (I-2)

In addition, a reader's affective stance towards the act of reading, the amount of interest that he or she has in reading, is impacted by one's degree of skill as a reader and that impacts the amount of reading that one is willing to do. This is such that, according to Rachelle, "Those who read well enjoy to read and read a lot and [...] those who struggle with reading don't enjoy it so they avoid it. It's that double-edged sword" (I-2). This affective stance consequently influences the degree to which a reader is willing to invest energy and concentration in attending to the content of a text and making sense of it, with a strong connection existing between interest in the content of the text and the devotion of concentration and mental energy to it. Rachelle explained,

Comprehension is also kids who don't concentrate on what they're doing. I know sometimes if I'm reading something I'm not interested in I have to go back and re-read it and re-read it because my mind isn't focusing on it. You know, it's

boring, I'll skim over it and I'll think, "Wait, what did I just read?" and I'll have to go back and read it again. So interest is there too. You have to have interest in what you're reading, and, if not, a teacher standing over you. (I-2)

Finally, Rachelle believed that readers, particularly fluent readers, could use a small set of thinking strategies including prediction, inferencing, and summarization in order to identify and keep track of the important information in a text. Comprehension was ultimately the result of a reader using thinking strategies and understanding text structure in order to accomplish this task. She explained this to her students while preparing to read a selection together out of their core reading program anthology:

I want you to decide or evaluate what the most important information is in the short story. A good reader or good reading means that when you read you are stopping at the end of a paragraph or the end of the section in a story and you are summarizing in your minds what you've just read. Sometimes I read books that have so many characters or such a twisting plot that I really have to stop after a section and review in my mind what I just read. This means who the people were and what happened and what was most important about it. If you're doing reading and you want to be reading well so that you are understanding everything that you've read what you want to do is stop every now and then and summarize in your minds about the important information too. (O-1)

Successful reading comprehension is being able to identify the main ideas or elements of text. Reading comprehension capacity is an extension of fluency development and the

employment of reading strategies, both of which are influenced by one's cognitive skill set and affective stance towards the act of reading.

Attributions for student success and failure. Rachelle's attributions for why students in her classroom experience reading comprehension success and failure aligned closely with what represented to her the key components of reading comprehension for any reader. Rachelle made three different types of attributions about the success and failure of students as comprehenders. She made attributions related to underlying factors that impact reading comprehension development, to reading comprehension skill development, and to opportunities and experiences with reading and reading instruction.

When first evaluating a student's reading comprehension performance, Rachelle looked to where that student was in his or her development of the factors that influence reading fluency, including cognitive factors, affective factors, and knowledge factors. Rachelle's first approach to making attributions about student success or failure was to consider if the student had achieved an adequate degree of fluency with grade level text, and if not, looked to determine why. She suggested that students who had not yet achieved such fluency had not done so because of a combination of the above three factors. From a cognitive perspective, the student might have a learning disability, a low working IQ, memory issues, or have not acquired the language knowledge to decode individual words well. She referenced her experience with helping her own son learn to read when considering these cognitive factors, explaining,

It's hard when you don't struggle with reading. It's hard to imagine why you would struggle because it just comes. If you're talking about people who don't

struggle with reading and there's no problem with decoding, then I would say once you learn how to decode and the fluency, you know, the automaticity is there, the typical reader will comprehend by reading in phrases. The problems, such as with my son with dyslexia, is that because the decoding isn't there and he doesn't have fluency he obviously can't comprehend everything he reads. (I-2)

Rachelle also recognized that the acquisition of reading fluency could be influenced by a student's affective stance towards being a reader in terms of the amount of reading he or she does, the willingness with which he or she invests effort in the act of reading, and the degree of attentiveness he or she devotes to reading instruction, all of which impact and are impacted by one's level of motivation to read. She suggested, "Overall I think those that struggle with reading in this class, honestly, I think if they practiced a lot, would make huge improvements" (I-2), reflecting her assumption that amount of reading practice, mediated by reading interest, made a difference in the reading comprehension performance of students.

Rachelle next thought about where a student was in his or her ability to recognize and make sense of the main ideas of a given text. She acknowledged that in order to do such a thing a reader needed to have an understanding of how significant ideas and information are organized within various genres of text and how to make predictions and inferences while reading in order to process those ideas. First, a reader needed to be able to determine what was significant in a text and then think about those significant elements in some sort of meaningful way by either making a prediction with it or drawing a conclusion about it. Rachelle had adopted a narrowly focused stance towards teaching

her students about the characteristics of genre and about narrative and informational text structure for this very reason. She was firm in her conviction that if she could get this information across to the readers in her classroom, then those who had achieved even a minimal sense of fluency could have a degree of success with reading comprehension. During the course of 12 days of observations, Rachelle covered literary text structure in her opening class meeting and assigned literary text structure based work during class time during nine of those days. She wanted to devote significant time to text structure instruction, first literary, then informational, in order to give her students the best opportunity she could to be able to find the most important information in a text. She worried about their capacity to do so and its impact on their reading comprehension performance. At the end of the school year, Rachelle reflected,

Main idea is difficult because I think it's hard for them to pinpoint and be able to separate all the details from what is actually a main idea. They can get caught up in a detail and in their mind they're thinking that that's what the whole thing is about. I really had a hard time teaching that and it's really important for them to be comprehending it. They couldn't decipher what was the most important part of what they read – it was all sort of just equal. (I-3)

Finally, Rachelle turned to considering the types of experiences students had access to both within and outside of school. She believed that her students had little literacy support in their homes and that this was a factor that interacted with a student's affective stances towards reading. She lamented, "If they got a lot of help at home in reading to parents and having parents follow along I think that would go a long way with

some of these kids, but I know they don't get that" (I-2). She also worried about the students receiving instructional experiences in the classroom that were most appropriate to their literacy learning needs, commenting, "That's a little bit of the frustrating part with my group is that so many of them need small group instruction or just need more help than unfortunately what I can give when I've got that many in here" (I-2). In her interview at the end of the school year, Rachelle expressed a sense that students had the most success as a result of her instruction when she made the deliberate choice to alter her instructional pace away from the guidelines of her curriculum materials, sharing, "I've learned to slow it down and work more at different levels, at where they're at" (I-3).

Rachelle's attributions for why students achieved in the ways that they did with reading comprehension combined her perspectives on reading comprehension as an outcome of fluency development, on knowledge of the main ideas in text as the fundamental goal of reading comprehension efforts, and on a lack of alignment between home and classroom experiences and literacy learning needs as an ongoing challenge for her most struggling students.

Classroom reading comprehension instruction. Rachelle's classroom sat around the backside of Fieldview Elementary. At the main entrance, one turns left past the main office, cafeteria, and gymnasium and walks down a long hallway off of which the lower elementary pods are located on one side and an outside courtyard area is located on the other side. At the end of the hallway sits the fourth and fifth grade pod area. Rachelle's classroom was the last room on the left, sitting to the right of Jessica's classroom. The classrooms shared an adjoining wall with a door in the middle of it, but

the door has been rendered completely non-functional, having been blocked by bookshelves in Jessica's classroom and a small storage table in Rachelle's. The door to enter Rachelle's classroom was in the front left corner of the classroom. Upon entering a classroom, a wall-length whiteboard, with bulletin boards on either side, extends along the remainder of the front wall of the classroom.

Immediately inside the classroom, to the right of the door, sits a moving storage cart with core reading program anthologies and other content area textbooks sitting on it. Beyond the storage cart, there is open space in the front of the classroom for whole group meetings, and past the open space at the right end of the whiteboard is a rocking chair positioned to be facing the open space. Rachelle's desk is located in the back right corner of the classroom, diagonal from the door to the classroom. In the back half of the classroom, between the open space in the front and Rachelle's desk in the back corner, sit eight rectangular tables with four chairs apiece, two chairs per long side of the table. Built-in cabinetry lines the top and bottom of the back wall of the classroom, allowing for wall-length shelving surface between the two. Rachelle has bins of leveled readers from the core reading program sitting out on top of this shelving.

Rachelle's language arts block was the second major instructional period of the day, typically scheduled to occur between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. in the day. Fourth and fifth grade students at Fieldview Elementary begin the day with a 15-minute homeroom period. Then all fourth and fifth grade students have a 30-minute intervention period called HAWKS, a reference to the school mascot. During the HAWKS period, students experience teaching related to a set of "focus instruction" skills in language arts

and math. HAWKS operates on a three week cycle in which students experience a pre-test on the target focus instruction skill, are assigned to either a remediation group with a classroom teacher or an enrichment group with a program assistant based on their degree of mastery in the focus skill evidenced on the pre-test, and then receive either additional instruction on the focus skill or participate in enrichment activities. After three weeks, the cycle begins again with a new focus skill. The skills taught during focus instruction time had been pre-identified prior to the beginning of the school year by school-level administrators.

After HAWKS, fourth and fifth grade students have either a daily special or science and social studies content area instruction. At times, content area instructional blocks are extended into the first hour of the language arts block. Then students arrive in Rachelle's classroom for the language arts block. Students travel from their homeroom classroom to their HAWKS classroom to their language arts classroom with "totes," small plastic bins that fit into slots mounted underneath the tables in all of the fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Totes are intended to hold all of a given student's materials, precluding the need for students to visit their assigned cubby during the day.

Students have been placed in language arts class on the basis of their performance on the MAP® assessment. The 32 students in Rachelle's classroom represent the fourth grade students who performed in the bottom half of the entire fourth grade class on the assessment. Rachelle had begun the school year with 24 students in her language arts classroom. However, a new apartment complex opened within Fieldview's portion of the school district in the middle of the school year. Consequently, Fieldview had received an

influx of new students following the winter break, and, as result, Rachelle had eight additional students added to her language arts class at that time.

In addition to Rachelle and her students, she had three program assistants in her classroom during language arts instruction. One program assistant was assigned to support three students in the classroom who had IEPs. The program assistant was charged with supporting the language arts learning of these students in the classroom during the first hour of language arts instruction each day and then accompanying these students to the school resource room for instruction during the second hour of the language arts block. Another program assistant had been assigned to Rachelle's classroom to assist Rachelle during the first hour of the language arts block because she was a first year teacher and had the lower performing fourth grade students in her room. The third program assistant was assigned to support an English Language Learner student who had recently enrolled at Fieldview. This student was assigned to be in Rachelle's classroom during the language arts block; however Rachelle was not responsible for his language arts instruction. Instead, the district second language coordinator planned his instructional experiences and the program assistant assigned to him carried them out. He occasionally participated in the activities of the class, based on what Rachelle felt would be appropriate for him, and spent the remainder of the time working in the classroom separately, one-on-one with his program assistant.

Classroom routines. Rachelle's classroom routines for reading comprehension instruction revolved two different cycles of activity, both based out of her core reading

program. Over the course of the school year, Rachelle reported experiencing three distinct phases in her reading comprehension instruction. She explained,

It's been kind of a three-phase thing. In the beginning, the very, very beginning, I followed it (the core reading program) to a tee because I was so afraid to deviate at all. Toward the middle I was probably getting away from it and still feeling overwhelmed but thinking the stories are really boring, the kids are not engaged, they're doing poorly on their assessments and that's when the Learning Sphere projects came about too. It was fun to watch them do research and other things. Towards the end, that's when I started going back to taking my time going through the stories and really making sure they're understanding it. (I-3)

I joined Rachelle in her classroom during the last third of the school year, when she had gotten into what she described above as her third phase of reading comprehension instruction. At this time, Rachelle was using a limited number of sharing routines and a consistent set of practice routines which, in concert with her core reading program, constituted her reading comprehension instruction.

Sharing routines. Rachelle wanted her students to share an appreciation of text with one another. However, her concerns about her reading comprehension instruction, which will be discussed in greater detail later in the case study narrative, made the challenge of creating and implementing such kinds of routines seem overwhelmingly difficult at the time. Instead, Rachelle integrated a daily teacher read aloud into her language arts day, typically during the last 10-15 minutes of the instructional block. There was limited talk with or among students about the read aloud. Rachelle began the

read aloud session by summarizing where the group had left off in the book, and occasionally she might ask a student to share this information instead. She read uninterrupted for a stretch of time and would sometimes close the read aloud session with either a question for the group about what had been read or an observation of her own about a character or plot event. On the whole, Rachelle found the teacher read aloud to be a valuable part of the language arts day, and in reflection at the end of the year, commented, “The read aloud everyone enjoyed. We continued that all the way out” (I-3).

Rachelle worked to encourage students to be independent readers by actively reinforcing that students should read at every opportunity available during the language arts block and attempting to routinize independent reading as the first choice of activity following the completion of any assigned work in the class. She had baskets of a range of leveled readers that had accompanied the core reading program sitting out at each table in case students had not brought an independent reading book with them to class. She did not monitor in any systematic way the independent reading that students were doing, nor did she regularly offer students any vehicles for sharing their independent reading with one another. While some students did bring independent reading books with them to class and did use extra available time to read those books, most students who had extra time and were encouraged to read, selected texts haphazardly from the leveled readers Rachelle had out on the tables, frequently not completing or continuing a text but simply reading out of any given text during that individual stretch of time.

Practice routines. Rachelle began each language arts block with a whole class meeting at the front of the classroom. Rachelle sat in the rocking chair at the front of the

classroom and students would sit on the floor around the rocking chair. During this time, Rachelle reviewed the agenda for that day that she had listed on the whiteboard. In addition, Rachelle used this time to review skills, terminology, and information that students would be practicing in greater detail during the course of that day of instruction. To do so, she asked students to answer questions about the content she would be covering that day in a fast-paced, quiz-like manner. During the following such session, Rachelle was reviewing the elements of a story with students prior to working on identifying these elements in leveled texts:

Rachelle: We have five elements of literature. All fiction will have these and some non-fiction. Who can tell me one element of a story?

S1: Theme.

Rachelle: Which elements have we been working on?

S2: Setting, plot.

Rachelle: (Student name)?

S3: Character

Rachelle: If you are in my homeroom you know that the last one is point of view.

Okay, let's talk about character. If you are going to talk about a character, how are you going to talk about that character? What are you going to use? Say you are describing me, how would you describe me?

S4: You are wearing pink.

Rachelle: So my physical appearance. How else would you describe me?

S5: You are angry.

Rachelle: Am I angry? I don't feel angry. Maybe my behavior – the way I act and react. What else? If I were to look out at the sea of faces I could say she's nice, he's funny, she's kind. I would be describing your personalities. Okay, that's characters, now plot. What are the parts of a plot? (O-8)

Her reviews typically lasted no more than ten minutes and frequently addressed skills and knowledge related to reading comprehension, such as the above review of elements of literary text. She reviewed the same material each day for several days, or a week, or more at a time.

After her whole group opening meeting, Rachelle provided students with practice related to reading comprehension instruction through two main vehicles: oral reading and re-reading of text and reading comprehension skill-based handouts about the text being read. These practice vehicles were completed in one of two cycles of activity. On most weeks, Rachelle worked with her class as a whole group with a text selection out of the core reading program student anthology. On a few select weeks, Rachelle divided her students into small groups and had them complete work in their small groups with the leveled reader texts that accompanied the core reading program.

Rachelle had her students reading the same instructional text multiple times over the course of a given week. These readings were always completed orally in a round robin fashion, most frequently with Rachelle assigning students to read certain portions of a given text in an ongoing fashion as they worked through the text, and occasionally students would volunteer to serve as readers. When students volunteered to read out of the text, there was a small core group of students willing to do so. During most readings

Rachelle did not stop the group, but instead proceeded with having them read uninterrupted through the entire text. However, during one of the multiple reading sessions during a week with any particular text, Rachelle would stop oral reading to ask questions about the text. When she did stop, her questioning revolved around either asking the comprehension questions that appeared in the teachers' manual of the core reading program or working with students to complete the comprehension skill practice handout that accompanied the core reading program selection for that week. When she worked with students to complete the comprehension skill practice handouts, she typically created a transparency copy of the handout, and completed with them on the classroom overhead projector. On the following day of instruction, Rachelle worked with students to read a short introductory selection from the core reading program and complete a comprehension handout on identifying main events in a text using a flow chart:

Rachelle: What you want to do is stop every now and then after paragraphs and sections and summarize in your mind what you've done. That's what we're going to do as we read this story *A Library Card for Emilio*. You need to read in a loud and clear voice (Student name).

The student reads the first paragraph and Rachelle calls on another student to read the second paragraph.

Rachelle: Okay, let's stop. Look back at your first paragraph. Is there an important event in the first paragraph that we should put on our chart? Does the first paragraph have anything important going on?

Student 1: That Emilio is gonna get his library card today.

Rachelle: Okay. Emilio is going to get his library card. I would say that's probably going to be even though I haven't read very far in the story. I'm going to guess that would be a detail that we would put down so I would just put on my chart Emilio is going to get a library card. The question that I'm wondering right now is what will happen next. Can you make any predictions about what will happen next based on what you read? [...] Okay we are now on the third paragraph. I need a reader who's got a loud voice (Student name).

Two more students read the third and fourth paragraph.

Rachelle: What else? Is there anything else you would put down on your summary? Anything else that you would consider an important event? (Student name) pay attention. You have to be able to summarize this. That means you have to listen to it even if someone else is reading. (Student name), can you tell me something?

Student 2: He was nervous.

Rachelle: Exactly. I'm just going to put E. was nervous. What was he nervous about, (Student name)?

Student 3: The librarian not understanding him.

Rachelle: Okay. So he was nervous about his?

Student 3: English.

Rachelle: English. Okay, good job. (Student name) read for us please. (O-1)

During the practice sessions, students were expected to read out of the text when asked, following along in the text when not reading, answer Rachelle's questions about the text, and complete their own copy of the comprehension handout as Rachelle completed hers on the overhead. Rachelle explained her rationale for this practice routine as follows,

The second day we would read through this and then we would stop and do the stuff in the sidebars (of the teachers' manual) and then we would also be filling in the charts. I make the overheads and I do use the overheads. We would do that they would fill out their own at their seat. If I just do it on the overhead, I don't have their attention so they would do their own. They actually really seemed to care about completing it even though it was done together and they weren't recording their own ideas. They were all pretty diligent about filling it out. I don't know if they got anything out of it but they wanted to make sure it was complete. (I-1)

The oral reading sessions and practice handouts represented the core strategies that Rachelle employed to have students practice reading comprehension skills and develop reading comprehension capabilities. Towards the end of the school year, Rachelle tried to experiment with offering practice experiences to student in a small group arrangement as opposed to a whole class arrangement. She took her students' RIT scores on the mid-year language arts assessment and placed them into small groups of four to eight students, depending on their recommended reading level based on those scores. She assigned each group texts to read from the leveled text library that

accompanied the core reading program and handouts to complete related to literary text structure. The handouts ranged in complexity from having one group drawing elements of the literary text structure to having another group write explanatory paragraphs about the literary text structure of the story.

Rachelle recruited the three program assistants assigned to her room during the first hour of language arts instruction and asked her sister to come into her classroom as a volunteer to help with her small groups. Each adult supervised a small group of students reading their leveled texts and completed their assigned handouts. With the exception of Rachelle, who worked with a group of the lowest performing eight students in the classroom, the other adults did not provide any active or ongoing instruction, instead they monitored students progress and worked to keep the students in their assigned group engaged, involved, and moving forward with their work. Without any direct guidance from Rachelle, some of the supervising adults had the students in their group orally read the texts in a round robin fashion, while others required the students to silent read their own copies of the text. Rachelle conducted these small groups over the course of a week of language arts class, providing each group with enough texts and enough handouts to work on for an hour a day across five days. Rachelle chose the weeks during which she would organize small groups on the basis of when she could assure that she would have enough adults available in the classroom to supervise all of the groups, commenting, “Breaking them down into small groups worked out great when I had all the help in here but when I’m in here alone I don’t know that I can do that on a regular basis” (I-2).

In summary, Rachelle's practice routines were consistent. She had students reading, typically orally, out of instructional texts, most often multiple times. She had students complete comprehension-based handouts related to those texts. She adopted a primarily whole group approach to the execution of these practice routines, but occasionally experimented with small group arrangements, when she could garner the additional support that she felt was necessary in order to do so.

Core reading program routines. The core reading program was the core organizing element of Rachelle's reading comprehension instruction. It was the primary source of all of the elements that comprise learning how to better make sense of what you read: texts to read, skills to teach, questions to talk about, activities to complete, and assessments to measure knowledge of those texts afterwards. By the latter portion of the school year, Rachelle had developed a consistent weekly cycle for how she put the core reading program to use for reading comprehension instruction. She began the week by reading the short introductory anthology selection for that week with students and completing any comprehension handouts that accompanied that introductory selection. Then she had students listen to the audio CD version of the main anthology selection for the week. Then she had students read aloud the main anthology selection for the week and complete the comprehension skill handout that accompanied it. Following that she had students either re-read the main anthology selection or re-listen to the audio CD version. At the end of the week her students took the selection assessment that accompanied it. During the reading of the anthology selection in which Rachelle stopped and talked with students about it, she covered the vocabulary words that were selected for

focus with the selection, asked the comprehension questions that appear in the teachers' manual, and ensured that students completed the comprehension handout with her.

In addition to this regular cycle of activity, Rachelle also heavily utilized the leveled reader collection that was a supplementary component of the core reading program. The leveled reader collection was the primary source of text available in her classroom outside of the core reading program, although she had a small classroom library collection that she was attempting to develop in addition. She choose not to utilize any of the other supplementary components of the core reading program, citing that she really had not had any time to even understand the remaining component or to think about what she could feasibly do with them with her students. She had tried to use the other assessment components, namely the unit assessments that were supposed to be administered after each unit of reading, typically every four to six weeks, but had abandoned them after discovering that they seemed way too difficult for her students.

Reading comprehension content. Rachelle taught the comprehension skills that appeared in her curriculum materials. While she did not actively or directly teach reading strategies, she incorporated their use into her questioning of students while listening to and reading instructional text.

Core reading program skills. Rachelle taught the main comprehension skills that accompanied the anthology text selections in the core reading program. She did so by working with students through the comprehension based handouts that accompanied the text selections. She introduced the skill when she read the introductory text selection with students and completed the associated handout during one of the times when

students read the main text selection. She typically made an overhead transparency of the handout that students were expected to complete and worked on it together with students. Rachelle expressed a frustration with the skills presented in the core reading program. She found many of them to be difficult to either explain to students or to get students to see the patterns associated with them in the text. She acknowledged this when discussing teaching the cause and effect skill, sharing,

When I say something is easy, it is relatively speaking. We have struggled less with some skills than others. Cause and effect was very difficult. [...] They struggled in just trying to figure out which is which. When I would give them things to read and ask them what is the cause and the effect to them they couldn't pull it apart and say this is what happened. It was a real struggle to get them to tell which was which. (I-2)

Rachelle did not have a well-developed sense of her own perspective on the nature of the skills presented or the nature of the practice provided with what accompanied those skills. She simply knew that she found them to be difficult to help students understand.

DesCartes skills. In contrast, Rachelle appreciated the DesCartes Continuum of Learning framework and the skills embedded within it. She found the framework itself made logical sense to her and crafted a progression of skill and vocabulary instruction that she could embrace. As with most elements in her teaching world at this time, she communicated a great deal of trepidation and insecurity about how to carry out instruction based on the DesCartes framework in practice, but nonetheless found that in

theory it made a great deal of sense to her. Even early on in the school year when “I had a lot of questions about DesCartes. I had a lot of questions about everything. It was so overwhelming” (I-1), Rachelle found that she could grasp onto the DesCartes framework itself in making initial instructional decisions, recalling,

I was trying to figure out what to do so I started with DesCartes pretty early on just because I knew (District name) was heading in that direction and I think because I was new and floundering and drowning it was sort of a guideline for me to follow. It was just like looking at the standard book where it just broke everything down into specific wording. So it wasn't that hard for me to figure out. It was just one more thing I had to figure out and it made sense to me. (I-1)

Specifically, Rachelle took away from DesCartes that she needed to teach her students about the features of different genres of text, narrative and informational text structure, and types of figurative language. Rachelle knew that she wanted to address skills related to these three types of content in the course of her instruction. She planned a multi-week unit on recognizing various forms of figurative language in the beginning of the school year and felt quite successful with the results of that particular unit. She decided then to address definitions and features of genre, concluding that they would be the straightforward things to cover. She had the definitions of different genres of text written on sentence strips and displayed in a pocket chart along the left wall of her classroom. She began by covering and reviewing the different genres with students during her whole class meeting at the beginning of the language arts block. Eventually, she incorporated discussion of and questioning about genre in the talk she did with

students around weekly reading selections, such as during the following discussion of a fairy tale selection:

Rachelle: What tells you that it is a fairy tale written in play form? I want to make sure you understand so that you can tell the different between the genres.

Student 1: It was fiction because there was a frog that could talk and there was magic.

Rachelle: Okay. There was magic and there was a talking frog. But you said fiction. Would that be the genre?

Student 1: Not real.

Rachelle: Okay. Not real. What else?

Student 1: Fairy tale.

Rachelle: Fairy tale. Okay. There was a talking frog and talking frogs are often used in fairy tales. There was something going with Ranita that was a real big hint to you that this was a fairy tale. What was going on with her?

Student 2: She was cast under a spell.

Rachelle: Exactly. Good job. (O-12)

In the second half of the school year, Rachelle chose to heavily emphasize text structure, beginning with literary text structure related work and then finishing with informational text structure related work. Once again, when she began this work, she started by covering and reviewing the elements of a fiction text during her whole class opening meeting. Then she began questioning students about these elements during their work with anthology reading selections. Finally she assigned work related to identifying

the elements in leveled texts when she began to experiment with having students complete reading practice assignments in a small group format. She utilized the same general trajectory for their work with informational text structures.

From the beginning of the school year, Rachelle felt most at ease with the DesCartes component of her language arts instruction. She appreciated being able to take student assessment scores, as indicated by student MAP[®] RIT scores, and connect those scores directly to substantive instructional recommendations. She spent a great deal of time making lists of where her students scored in different sub-categories on the MAP[®] language arts assessment and of who was weakest in which categories. The DesCartes framework itself seemed sensible to Rachelle in that she believed that it reflected knowledge that developing readers and writers would benefit from knowing. Her main challenge with teaching DesCartes skills was not the skills themselves, but with having the tools, resources, know-how, and activities to create instruction around those skills, as Rachelle suggested, “I love doing DesCartes, but it has been thrown together. I have nothing. I have no resources for it” (I-1).

Rachelle was so convinced that the skills captured in the DesCartes framework were worthwhile instructional aims that she decided to reach out to a district level elementary curriculum coordinator for access to additional DesCartes teaching resources. As a result of that contact, “She gave me all of these DesCartes teaching binders to use and I’m making copies of all of them before I send them back. That was really helpful because they pretty much broke everything down in the RIT bands” (I-1). While the DesCartes curriculum documents that Rachelle had previously had access to laid out the

framework and the skills that aligned with different RIT scores in the framework, these binders were descriptions of instructional activities and practice handouts that were aligned with the skill recommendations from each set of RIT scores, called RIT bands. Once Rachelle received these resources, she felt prepared to teach DesCartes skills as described above.

Reading strategies. Rachelle did not directly teach reading strategies to her students. However, she incorporated mentioning of and questioning about the use of several reading strategies, namely predicting, summarizing, and inferencing, into her talk around texts, including the reading anthology and her read aloud texts. She occasionally described her own use of such strategies to students as well. That is, Rachelle referenced the language of reading strategy use in the course of her reading comprehension instruction; however, she did not formally address reading strategies as a teaching element or goal. Specifically, Rachelle referenced the processes of predicting, inferencing, and summarizing throughout the course of observations. The following excerpt from a whole class reading session exemplifies the degree to which Rachelle addressed reading strategies with her students:

Rachelle: Okay, so you have to give information, which they recorded when you got your library card. So can you make a prediction about what Emilio is going to have to do (Student name)?

Student 1: Do the exact same thing.

Rachelle: Okay. He probably will have to do something like that. Can you imagine what kind of problems he might have with that? He is new to this

country. What might happen? We're making predictions. What might happen (Student name)?

Student 2: He might, um.

Rachelle: Okay. You're Emilio. You're new to this country. You're going to fill out a form. You're trying to get a library card. What kinds of things might be going on in your head? What concerns might you have? [...] If you don't speak Spanish and you go to Puerto Rico or Mexico you might have problems. What would your concerns be?

Student 3: He might not speak English.

Rachelle: He might not speak English well enough. He might have a hard time.

Thanks (Student name). (O-1)

Rachelle informally incorporated questioning relevant to the use of reading strategies during the reading of text in her classroom, but did not actively teach those strategies to her students beyond this referencing.

Decision-making factors. Rachelle's decision-making about her reading comprehension instruction was primarily influenced by a desire to respond to sources of frustration in her teaching world. That is, Rachelle made choices about what to do in her classroom in relation to reading comprehension and how to do it in such a way as to respond to and minimize experiences of frustration that existed for her and her students. First, she wanted to reduce the frustration that her students felt with the reading comprehension process. Second, she wanted to reduce the frustration that she felt with the reading comprehension instruction process. As a result, she had developed a series of

responses for coping with supporting her students and supporting herself. These responses represent the ways in which she made instructional decisions by attempting to address and reduce frustration.

Respond to student difficulty with reading comprehension. Rachelle felt that at this point in her teaching career she had to use the materials and knowledge that she had immediately available at her disposal to do the best that she could to make reading comprehension instruction as frustration-free as possible. She believed that she could best manage her students and as a result maintain the highest level of student engagement in the instruction that she was attempting to provide them by offering them tools to support their reading practice and by utilizing questioning techniques that preserved a certain pace in the day.

Rachelle had a small repertoire of instructional tools with which she felt comfortable using that would, in her opinion, support giving her students reading practice and maintaining their engagement in the experience. Specifically, she would have her students listen to selections from the core reading program student anthology on audio CD prior to reading it, she would read portions of anthology selections out loud to her students, and she would have students read anthology selections multiple times over the course of the week. In addition, she would provide words that students were experiencing difficulty with during oral reading to them and she would encourage her students to use bookmarks to track their way through text when reading together. When possible, she would use decoding techniques that she was aware of from her prior work experience as a Wilson® tutor. Towards the end of the school year, Rachelle began to experiment with

giving small groups of students differentiated reading experiences by utilizing the leveled text sets that accompanied the core reading program and asking different groups of students to complete different assignments with those texts.

Rachelle felt most comfortable with using the audio CD that accompanied the core reading program to engage students and reduce frustration. In reflection at the end of the school year, she did recognize that the core reading program anthology was not the appropriate level of text for her students, commenting, “I needed to get away from the basal a little bit and get into stories that were more appropriate for their reading level because I think it was probably all frustrational level for most of them” (I-3). However, Rachelle felt quite limited in the options that she had for reading materials and wanted to do the best she could with the materials that she did have on hand, sharing, “I don’t think that there’s any way to avoid that in your first year. You just don’t have the resources. You don’t have anything” (I-1).

As a result, her students regularly listened to the audio version of the reading selections that they were going to read out of their core reading program. During the time I spent in Rachelle’s classroom, every reading of a new selection from the anthology was preceded by listening to the audio version, and, in at least one instance, students listened to the audio version a second time just prior to taking an assessment about the selection. Rachelle worked to make these listening sessions purposeful and tried to communicate her rationale for offering them to her students. During an introduction to a new reading selection, Rachelle offered the following explanation to her students:

I think today we'll go through it one time with the tape. If you pay attention and follow along, you might come across a word that you don't know. You'll hear it on the tape and then remember what it looks like so that when we go to give parts to people we won't stumble around so much on the words. (O-10)

Rachelle first turned to this strategy of listening to a selection on tape prior to reading because it seemed like it was one of the better options for her to manage reading practice for her students and for herself, sharing, "Initially it was really overwhelming and still is somewhat because the only way I can really get through the stories where I feel like I've got them interested is if we listen to the tape" (I-1). She also felt that she had limited alternative options beyond using an instructional cycle that involved listening to an audio reading of a selection first and then engaging in repeated readings, commenting,

We listen to the tape and then we read it and then we read it. I was kind of unsure about using the tape at the beginning of the year but there's no way I could have them just read out loud or partner read because there's just too many that struggle with reading. (I-2)

Eventually, Rachelle concluded that this was the best approach for her within the current constraints of her teaching world because of her experience with it and her students over the course of the school year. In our final interview she explained, "It always worked better when I did the tape first so they became familiar and got a feeling for what the story is about" (I-3).

After students listened to a reading selection, Rachelle always read the selection with them as a group. She wanted to engage students in discussion about the selections that they read, and eventually settled on using what might be best described as a rapid-fire initiate-respond-evaluate-initiate questioning style. This was a deliberate decision on Rachelle's part because she wanted to preserve an instructional pace during reading and discussing texts in which she would be least likely to have students lose interest and, as a result, create frustrating management problems for herself and the rest of her group. She reflected, "I think discussion of the story helped but I had to keep them moving in their thoughts" (I-3). This element of Rachelle's decision making about how to talk to students about texts was most notably revealed in how she chose to handle student confusion evidenced by incorrect responses to her questions. During one of our interviews, Rachelle offered the following explanation as to why she questioned and responded to students the way that she did:

What I should do more of is try to guide them along to the correct answer but what I typically do is say, "Okay, let's hear from someone else", and I tend to move on. That's probably my inexperience because if I'm looking at the student who is way off base and I know it would probably take a long time to get to the correct answer I tend to move on. At this point it's kind of a matter of crowd control. I feel like I have to keep going or I've lost them. Honestly a lot of times I'm in a situation where I feel like I have to keep it going at a faster clip and I don't want it to be a long drawn out thing. When I'm asking some questions about something we've read I don't want it to become a big long process of where

I'm waiting for one student to think it through fully because then I've lost everyone else. It's unfortunate but if you came back in five years I might have a much better grasp on how to handle that. (I-2)

Rachelle tried to make instructional decisions that would minimize students having to experience frustration during her reading comprehension instruction. She did so by utilizing tools that she felt would facilitate students experience with the reading practice in which they engaged during instruction and by talking and questioning students about the reading that they did and the skills that they were practicing in a way that did not disrupt student engagement with her instruction.

Respond to own frustration with reading comprehension instruction. Rachelle also worked to make decisions that would allow her to respond to and to minimize her own feelings of frustration with her reading comprehension instruction. This desire to cope with and reduce her own frustration resulted in decisions that influenced how to plan for instruction, how to manage students during the course of instruction, how to organize and carry out instruction, and how to think about her own sense of self-efficacy within her teaching work.

From a planning perspective, Rachelle attempted to make choices during planning that seemed most feasible and allowed her to address her most pressing concerns at that point in time. In the beginning of the school year, Rachelle's most pressing concern was determining what she felt was feasible and manageable for her instruction. Rachelle shared how she first looked at and thought through the recommended weekly plans offered in the teachers' manual of the core reading program:

I opened up this and was overwhelmed again. I'm looking at all of this leading up to the story and I'm thinking what is all of this? What am I supposed to do with all of this? So finally I just went to the planner that started with Day 1 and I went through this and figured out what I thought I could do. Of course this is way more than you could ever do so I just kind of picked through it. I got some writing prompts out of it. I just muddled my way through small groups – I have a big group, you know, so there's nothing much I think I can do with that. Independent work stations I didn't think I could handle that myself. A lot of this was just kind of winging it and trial and error and thinking I can't do this, I can do this. (I-1)

Once Rachelle felt like she had reached a point in which she was comfortable with what she was capable of doing with her students during instruction, she began to respond to the frustrations she felt about not being able to address her students' reading comprehension needs. She oriented her planning efforts to this challenge. Rachelle started by trying to get a better picture of what her students needed by spending some time examining her students' scores on their most recent district language arts assessment, explaining,

I was going through the DesCartes NWEA test scores. I broke it down and I made lists of exactly where their weak areas were. It was almost broken in half between literary text structures and informational text structures and then fluency. This was pretty time consuming but I was really curious to see where they were weakest. Then I took the names of the kids and broke them into groups as far as which particular students struggled the most, what their biggest struggle was.

Then I put the names together and put which ones they had combined, which two or three they had struggled in as their weakest areas. So that was helpful for me. But then I was trying to think, “Okay, I’ve got this information. I see where they scored, where they are lacking. What do I do with it?” That’s where I felt I had no direction. That was the hardest part for me. (I-1)

Ultimately, Rachelle had to personally address the ways in which she felt inadequately prepared and presently unable to meet the needs of her students and lack self-efficacy and self-confidence in carrying out her reading comprehension instruction. She responded to those ongoing moments of frustration and disappointment with messages that allowed her to consider the larger structure within which she operated in her teaching world, to remind herself of the natural limitations of being a first-year teacher, and to commit herself to doing the best possible under her current teaching circumstances.

Considering the organizational structure within which Rachelle’s reading comprehension instruction occurred offered her an opportunity to step back and consider what was being expected of her. There were four teachers that comprised the fourth and fifth grade team – two of those teachers were first year teachers, including Rachelle, and the two other teachers each had at least five years of teaching experience. When language arts classes had been divided prior to the start of the school year, the other first year teacher was assigned to teach the students scoring in the top half of the fifth grade. The remaining two experienced teachers had the students scoring in the top half of the fourth grade and the bottom half of the fifth grade. In addition, fourth and fifth grade

teachers were allotted two hours of instructional time for language arts during four days of the week and one hour of instructional time on the fifth day of the week. However, in Rachelle's classroom, she had five students who left language arts instruction after the first hour of the instructional block every day to receive instruction in the school resource room. It had also been determined by the school literacy team that enough students in Rachelle's classroom could benefit from whole group Wilson® instruction that one additional hour of Rachelle's language arts instructional time was allocated to teaching provided by another school literacy team teacher. Rachelle explained,

That's one of the hard parts for me too. The first hour is really the only time that I have everyone. Then on Fridays we have (Teacher name) come in and do Wilson® so I don't have Fridays and then on Wednesdays I only have an hour. So even though you start out and you think you've got a whole week, I don't have a whole week with everyone. That's made it hard because I am still accountable for them knowing everything. I'm the teacher of record so it reflects poorly on me if they don't know something and yet I've only had them half the time. (I-1)

Rachelle did not view these structural issues as excuses for why she would be unable to do her work well, but instead as challenges that needed to be confronted and understood. She analyzed these circumstances in conjunction with acknowledging the natural limitations that she felt existed for her as first-year teacher. In particular, Rachelle shared the hopes that she had for herself when she was in a position to start to make changes instead of simply responding to the day-to-day teaching demands on her time. She commented,

I have no other materials to fall back on. I have to come up with my own materials and I see the kids struggling with that. Then I start thinking that I'm not doing a good job with this because they're not learning it and I don't know where to go to get the information to help them other than the basal, what I have here. So what I would change the most is I would know where to begin. I feel like I've wasted all this time and that's regrettable but it's a first year thing. (I-2)

In particular, she looked forward to moving beyond her first year experience, explaining, I hope I will have learned enough from this year to prepare myself for next year and will have gotten enough little strategies in my mind and in my filing cabinet that will help me deal with it better. Overall I would say this year I have felt pretty unsuccessful at teaching them what they need to know and the testing will show that. The level of accountability is just tremendous for a first year teacher. It's daunting, it's intimidating, and it's frightening. (I-1)

Finally, Rachelle communicated a real sense of joy and passion for the work in which she was engaged. This sense of commitment, which she reiterated frequently, buoyed her through responding to frustration and oriented her to looking forward to where she hoped to be able to go as a teacher in the future. She shared during an interview in the spring, "I love this job. I really do. I feel like right now it is what it is and I'll just handle it the best I can" (I-1) and then again at the end of the year, "I know in my heart and my head I feel like I did the best I could do. The situation was overwhelming but I put in the time and did the best I could. It wasn't the best but it was the best I could do so I have a clear conscience on that" (I-3).

During the course of our interviews, Rachelle voiced and thought back upon these three sentiments regularly. She utilized these points of reflection as a way to boost herself through making instructional decisions in what felt like limited and disappointing circumstances. Much of Rachelle's decision-making about her reading comprehension instruction occurred as a response to frustration, whether it was to minimize the frustration that her students felt as struggling but developing readers or the frustration that Rachelle felt as a struggling but developing teacher.

Learning about reading comprehension instruction. Rachelle looked for every available opportunity that might contribute to her learning about reading comprehension instruction. She relied heavily upon the district provided curriculum materials, any other district resources that she found immediately accessible, and her own background as a Wilson[®] tutor as sources of information to keep apprised of the direction in which she should be headed as a reading comprehension teacher. Rachelle identified her current first year of teaching as the most significant and critical learning experience that she had in her development as a reading comprehension teacher and she voiced and evidenced a range of student-oriented concerns that shed light on what she felt she needed to learn in order to continue to develop in confidence and efficacy.

Sources of information. Rachelle relied on all of the curriculum and instructional materials provided to her by the district as her primary sources of information about reading comprehension instruction. While she found it a challenge to learn how to draw from the materials and how to use them in balance with each other, Rachelle appreciated elements of each as venues through which she could glean ideas, explanations, activities,

and resources from which to operate. Specifically, Rachelle cited that she found the teachers manual and certain types of materials that accompanied the core reading program as well as instructional resources that accompanied the DesCartes framework to be most helpful.

Prior to entering her transition to teaching program, Rachelle had pursued training and certification in a commercial reading and spelling program called Wilson Language Training[®]. Rachelle had been working from home as a freelance graphic artist and was initially motivated to pursue the training in order to better support her son, whom she described as dyslexic and explained as having had significant difficulties in reading throughout his school experiences. Rachelle had hired a private tutor for her son who was Wilson[®] trained and she felt that it was working so well for him that she wanted to be trained herself and decided to pursue it independently. She spent five years after receiving the training working as a private Wilson[®] trainer for elementary and middle school aged students. She lamented not being better able to utilize this source of information in her current teaching position, explaining,

I thought I could really use the LIPS and the Wilson[®] and I'd seen success with that and I really wanted to implement that but not all of the kids in my class need it and once you've got readers who are reading really well there's no reason to go back. It's just that I feel like I have the know how to do it and it's been frustrating to me that I haven't been using it but it just didn't work out. (I-2)

While Rachelle did not use Wilson[®] instruction in her classroom, her background in Wilson[®] teaching and the philosophies that undergird it strongly influenced her

definition of reading comprehension that in turn played a critical role in how she carried out her reading comprehension instruction. In addition, Rachelle frequently utilized Wilson[®] terminology during the course of her instruction, particularly in relation to encouraging her students to work to achieve reading fluency. During a day of instruction in which Rachelle was reading an anthology selection with her students, she offered the following reminder to students about “scooping words”, a Wilson[®] technique of which she was aware, first in relation to their own oral reading, “Make sure you pay attention to phrasing. We’ve talked about scooping words together so that you are not reading word by word”, then in relation to listening to her reading, “I’ll read for a little bit. I want you to practice with your fingers phrasing it as I do. Scooping the words together that I put into a phrase” (O-1).

More than anything, Rachelle was desperate to connect with other people as collaborative sources of information to inform, discuss, and support her reading comprehension instruction. She found it surprisingly difficult to find people available in her teaching world to serve as those sources of information that she so readily and eagerly desired. This pursuit of people to inform her led to mixed results. She had little luck within the channels provided to her in her position. She had been assigned a mentor teacher by the district, as had been required of the district by the state for first and second year teachers at that time. However, her mentor teacher worked in a school building on the other end of the district and failed to fulfill any of her formal or informal mentoring responsibilities, even when sought out by Rachelle. She elaborated,

I can start out on the negative end and say that one way I feel that I am not getting support is with my mentor. I've met with her twice all year. She's not in the building. She's at a north school and logistically it's impractical. I basically have no one giving any guidance as far as for first year teaching. There are just so many practical things that would be helpful to apply and I know them but in the heat of the moment I'm so just trying to keep my head above water. [...] I feel like it would have helped so much if I had a mentor in the building and I could say, "Could you just in your plan time observe me for fifteen minutes and help me figure out what this student or this student or what's a better way to do this or this?" (I-1)

Rachelle worked in her building on a fourth and fifth grade level team that included another first year teacher, two experienced teachers, including Jessica. She wanted to work more closely with her team members but had found that the members of the team "are all busy and the other first year is having the same problems that I'm having" (I-1). Instead of finding sources of information within those existing support structures, Rachelle pursued people in other ways. She contacted the district-level differentiated instruction coordinator, she reached out to teachers whom she encountered during district professional development days, and she petitioned her school administrator to send her to locally available workshops. In addition, she chose to join this study because she hoped that it might be another avenue through which she could learn about reading comprehension instruction.

Critical experiences. Rachelle believed that she had not yet participated in any experiences out of which she had learned about reading comprehension in any transformational way. Instead, Rachelle felt that she was in the midst of an experience that would shape her understanding of reading comprehension and her classroom reading comprehension instruction in the future, with that experience being that she was in the midst of her first full year of teaching. She identified a range of moments of learning that she had already encountered during the course of the school years. However, there were three specific lessons that Rachelle felt that she was learning in particular that would transform the way in which she approached thinking about, planning for, and carrying out reading comprehension instruction in future years of teaching.

First, Rachelle discovered early on into the school year that she felt inadequately prepared to craft a yearlong vision for reading comprehension instruction that effectively utilized her curriculum materials, represented appropriately defined grade level and developmental level expectations, met student literacy learning needs, and created a sense of instructional momentum in her day-to-day teaching. She shared that, “What I’m missing this year is an overall plan, a vision of where I want to go. It’s more just, “Wow, this week we’re doing this, this, and this”, and it’s too rushed” (I-1). She attributes her difficulty with a vision for her reading instruction to a lack of familiarity with the grade level expectations and development needs of her students, explaining,

When I was in school they teach you how to teach and they teach you the content but I didn’t know fourth grade reading. [...] I didn’t know how high the

expectations should be and I would say that ties into my lack of confidence in teaching reading. (I-2)

As a result of her lack of familiarity with fourth grade reading development and fourth grade readers, Rachelle recognized that she struggled with fostering a sense of instructional momentum that would allow her and her students to feel as if they were moving forward together. Instead, she comments,

At the most, I feel like I've had some good lessons that I'm pleased with. I feel like I had them engaged and that's a big thing for me, if they're engaged or not. I feel like I had some solid individual lessons where I had them and they were learning. Otherwise right now I don't feel like there's too much going well. (I-1)

Second, Rachelle realized that she had made inaccurate assumptions about the nature of instructional decision-making as a teaching professional. As a result, she was quite surprised by the degree to which she was on one hand independent and on the other hand isolated in her work. She was immediately overwhelmed by the enormity of the task that this presented her, particularly by the amount of time the work required outside of the instructional day. After her first district professional development day, in which she attended workshops with elementary level teachers from schools across district, she reflected on her thinking about teacher and reading instruction:

What has floored me is the decision-making. How everything is my decision.

What I'm going to teach. When I'm going to teach it. I wasn't really fully prepared for that level of independence. I thought even within the grade level there would be sort of an overall plan and that was surprising to me that from day

I I decide everything. I don't think I was prepared for that. Even whether to follow the basal or not. I didn't find that out until our PBA day. I just thought everyone does the basal and here experienced teachers don't do that. They don't follow the basal. They have their own plan and they follow their own what they've had set up for years. So the decisions were really just you and you know nothing, you just graduated, you did a few months of student teaching and that was surprising. (I-1)

Third, Rachelle recognized the enormous pressures that existed within the accountability framework of the district and the state. These pressures felt daunting and created a sense of anxiety with which Rachelle carried out her instruction.

Each of these lessons challenged Rachelle to think differently about the teaching profession than she had prior to entering it. Even more pertinently, each required Rachelle to adopt strategies and approaches for doing her professional work, including work related to reading comprehension instruction in a contextually different sort of way.

Concerns. The concerns that Rachelle identified as currently pressing about her reading comprehension instruction were many and varied, revealing a teacher who believed she had a great deal to continue to learn before she could feel confident about her work. Her concerns fell generally into five broad categories: management concerns, planning and preparation concerns, instructional concerns, assessment concerns, and structural concerns. Each set of concerns shed light on what Rachelle wanted to know and to learn how to do in order to be a more effective reading comprehension teacher.

First, Rachelle had significant concerns about managing the various components of her instruction. Her insecurities about management ranged from those associated with managing multiple elements of her language arts curriculum, including those directly related to reading comprehension instruction, to those associated with managing her time, both during and outside of the course of instruction, and most pressing, to those associated with managing her student's behavior during her instruction. She explained how significantly her management challenges could disrupt her own capacity to think through her instruction, lamenting,

In the heat of the moment I'm so just trying to keep my head above water. All of my knowledge and all of the things that I learned in college are out the window because I've got this kid ready to belt this kid, I've got this one talking, I've got this one drawing, and so all of the things I know I'm supposed to do are kind of just gone and I'm classroom managing. I'm not teaching them. I'm just managing them. (I-1)

Rachelle was actively working to learn classroom procedures that would facilitate her day-to-day management of this group of students, which took considerable amounts of time away from both her instructional and planning efforts. Thus, Rachelle had concerns about being able to do adequate planning and preparation to keep up with her instruction. Rachelle planned daily for language arts, math, and content area instruction in either science or social studies, which alternated across the members of the fourth and fifth grade team. In addition, Rachelle planned daily for HAWKS intervention skill instruction, which she taught during the first thirty minutes of each day. She described

the concerns that she had about being well-planned and fully prepared for her teaching as follows,

I feel like I'm flying by the seat of my pants ninety percent of the time. I'm here forever – I get here at 6:30 a.m. in the morning and the earliest I leave is 6:00 p.m. I'm behind on grading. I'm behind on everything imaginable. I don't feel like I have the time to really sit down and plan good solid effective plans. [...] Then while I'm planning this out and getting used to this new stuff I feel like I'm letting other things go. That's probably the biggest obstacle for me as far as feeling like I'm doing a good job is that I don't have time. (I-1)

Rachelle's sense that she didn't have the time to devote to preparing well for her reading comprehension instruction, or for any of her instruction for that matter, led to voicing a real sense of concern about the quality and efficacy of her teaching. The ways in which Rachelle worried about how well her teaching was going were exacerbated by concerns about the ways in which students engaged with her teaching and how that teaching fulfilled their learning needs. Primary amongst these concerns was Rachelle's sense that she did not have the capacity to give every student in her classroom what they needed or deserved from her as their teacher. She worried,

I can't individually help them. It's more of a matter of if someone's raising their hand and they're saying "Can you help me with this?" then I can go over for a few minutes but I don't have time to do that with everyone and that is really frustrating for me. (I-3)

These constellations of concerns ultimately led Rachelle to the ways in which she opted to make instructional decisions that would address both the frustration that Rachelle felt and the difficulty that her students experienced. Nonetheless, Rachelle believed that this story would unfold when her students took their end of year state and district assessments and that those assessments would negatively impact her teaching moving forward. She shared,

I'm accountable. Do they know it or not? The scores will show it and if they don't know it I haven't taught it well enough. It's unbelievable. When you're just trying to keep everything in one piece and you know that the scores are being looked at it's very intimidating. That's why I have such a sense of urgency all the time. That's why there's so much pressure to make this work somehow. [...] I put a lot of pressure on myself. I'm always looking for new ways. That's why I saw this study as an opportunity. (I-1)

The sense of urgency that Rachelle described above raised serious concerns about how her capacity to be effective in her classroom was influenced by the larger structural elements of her teaching world. She was concerned about the ways in which students had been assigned to classrooms and the ways in which teachers had been assigned to groups of students. She was concerned about the amount of instructional time she truly had with students when taking into consideration all of the pull out and push in instruction that was occurring around her classroom. She was concerned about the ways in which she was being failed by the formal support structures that were intended to help her. In short, all of these different types of concerns were intimately linked and inexplicably connected to

one another. As such, each type of concern flexed a bit of influence over each other type of concern to create a situation in which all of Rachelle's concerns felt as if they existed as a singular, overwhelming concerns that manifested itself as a feeling of anxiety in Rachelle's teaching world.

Case study conclusion. Rachelle was a first year teacher who wanted to do the right thing for her students. That said, she lacked the resources, tools, structure, and collaborative support to do so and she realized that. She believed reading comprehension to be the outcome of a process in which developing readers learn how the English language works and then apply that knowledge to text in an accurate and automatic way. She had acquired this perspective through seeking out ways to help her son overcome reading difficulties, and, as a result, spending time working as a Wilson Reading System tutor.

Her reading comprehension instruction involved an extensive reliance on the core reading program to guide her. From out of the core reading program, Rachelle developed a consistent set of practice routines through which Rachelle intended to help her students achieve fluency with and identify the main ideas in the instructional text. Over time, Rachelle began to experiment with ways in which she could provide similar practice routines in a small group framework. Rachelle made decisions about and during instruction that were intended to reduce her students' sense of frustration with reading comprehension difficulty and her own sense of frustration with reading comprehension instruction for those students.

Rachelle utilized every available resource that was at her immediate disposal in her teaching world in order to inform her about reading comprehension instruction. She was particularly drawn to the DesCartes Continuum of Learning framework and sought out additional materials from district level staff in order to use it in her classroom. She believed that as a first year teacher she was in the midst of an important learning experience. In particular, she identified that she was learning about the demands and expectations of a teaching professional in a way that seemed impossible to experience outside of doing the work. Rachelle had many concerns including those about her classroom and time management, her organization and execution of instruction, the learning of her students, and the larger structural context in which her work was situated.

Case Study Narrative #4: Jessica

Definitions of reading comprehension.

Key components of reading comprehension. For Jessica, reading comprehension represented a performance outcome (see Appendix I). That is, reading comprehension was something that students acquire from text and then show their knowledge of to others through whichever opportunities are made available for them to do so. While there are factors that may impact how well a student performs in reading comprehension, Jessica did not conceptualize reading comprehension as part of a larger system. In the end, it is for her a stand-alone, holistic construct. She explained,

Comprehension to me is achieving understanding in what you are reading. That's pretty broad but it is understanding the setting, understanding what the problems

are, understanding the main idea. It is being able to retain and reuse what you are reading and learning. (I-3)

Jessica reflected her stance on reading comprehension as performance in thinking about her teaching as well. When asked to share her thought processes related to working with students on reading comprehension skills and strategies, Jessica commented, “I don’t necessarily think, “Oh, this is part of comprehension”. I think that there are different skills that can lead to comprehending better” (I-3). Jessica identified elements that do play a part in influencing the reading comprehension that students are able to evidence in their work with texts. Specifically, Jessica felt very strongly that reading practice, knowledge development, fluency development, and the use of thinking that allows one to predict and connect within text were significant in the development of reading comprehension performance capabilities in students.

Jessica recognized that reading volume, access to appropriately leveled and high-interest books, and motivation to read shaped the amount of reading practice students experienced. She believed that volume, access to books, and motivation are all significant concerns not only because the degree of reading practice one experiences impacts that reading comprehension one is able to show, but also because the impact ultimately extends into a range of language arts capabilities. She elaborated on her concern for her students as follows,

My language arts kids don’t like to read as much. And I really feel like if you read more, that’s more practice. They would do better. They would do better with comprehension. They would do better with grammar. They would do better with

spelling. They would do better with writing. That's why I grade them on their independent reading too and I put it on the report card. They would do better if they would just read more. (I-1)

Jessica worked to give students reading practice experiences that she perceived would be helpful to students doing better on the range of capabilities that she describes above. In addition, she believed that one important way in which she might be able to get students to read more is to provide students, when possible, access to high-interest books that they might not otherwise have the opportunity to find. Jessica offered her students a collection of classroom library books to which she tried to add when it was pertinent and possible to do so. She gave the following example during the course of one of our interviews, sharing,

I really try to help them find books that they would like to read. I know a lot of the boys who hated reading before loved the *Series of Unfortunate Events* series, so I bought two sets of them and I lend those out all the time to the boys, well anyone, but it seems that I struggle with the boys the most trying to find books they like so I really have to work at it with them. (I-1)

Equally as important to Jessica as reading practice and the components that contributed or detracted from students choosing to engage in regular reading practice was the role of knowledge development. Jessica believed that the presence or absence of certain sources of knowledge strongly affected how well students could comprehend a given text. Jessica was specifically concerned about three types of knowledge: vocabulary knowledge, world and background knowledge, and text knowledge. She felt

that if readers knew what words meant, knew what the content of a text was referring to outside of the confines of the text, and knew how writers organize important ideas and information in text, then those readers would be able to evidence successful reading comprehension in any form, whether it be answering questions, creating a product, or sharing with others. Consequently, readers who experienced greater difficulty in evidencing such reading comprehension did so because of a deficit in one or more of these knowledge types. In reference to her own students, she explained,

In my opinion, I think the ones who struggle with reading comprehension do because they don't know vocabulary and spelling. They don't know what they're reading. I honestly do because I see those who have better vocabulary and better writing they are able to picture more because there is more knowledge that they have and understand. Their horizons are broader. They know what the books are talking about. They know what the words mean. (I-2)

Jessica felt that these funds of knowledge were significant for two reasons. First, readers who know what words mean, what ideas in text represent in the larger world, what writers frequently do to organize meaning in print have a natural disposition towards being able to use that knowledge in reading comprehension performance. Second, readers with such funds of knowledge have the capacity to engage in more meaningful thinking processes while moving through a text. The readers for which this is true are able to use knowledge as a lever through which they can propel themselves through a text by making predictions and connections with text content. Jessica recognized that predicting through text and connecting with the content of a text were valuable ways of thinking that could

offer some support towards comprehending better. For her, these ways of thinking were inextricably linked to knowledge development. The more knowledge you have, the more you are able to use these thought processes to have better reading comprehension. She explained that when reading a text, you needed to “know enough to be able to make predictions” (I-3), and that when reading with students, “I pick the things that they can make predictions about – the genre, the author’s purpose, the clues in the pictures [...] because I get excited when I am able to make predictions and I can’t wait to find out about them” (I-2).

Reading comprehension is something that a reader shows or performs or evidences. It is less about a personal habit, process, or experience, and more about a public display or outcome at the end of a reading act. Reading comprehension can be better shown when a reader has more reading practice, more knowledge, and exercises more forms of thinking during the reading act.

Attributions for student success and failure. Consistent with her definition of reading comprehension as performance and her recognition of reading volume, knowledge, and predicting and connecting as key components of reading comprehension, Jessica made a small, consistent set of attributions for student success and failure at reading comprehension performance. She believed that student success and failure could be linked to student skill and knowledge development, to affective factors that impacted student participation in instruction, and to the kinds of opportunities students received during instruction and as part of reading comprehension assessment.

Jessica was concerned about how attentive and focused students were during reading instruction. She felt that if students made the choice to focus and attend better while she was providing them with reading practice experiences, that they would have an increased likelihood of performing better on classroom measures of reading comprehension, such as Accelerated Reader tests. At the start of one of her teacher read-aloud sessions, she reminded students, “Make sure you are paying attention. You need to be thinking about the characters, you need to be thinking about the plot because that is what they ask about on the AR test” (O-2). She reiterated this sense that student attentiveness played a role in the degree of success students experience as readers when reflecting on her own approach to instruction. First, Jessica planned her quarters of instruction in such a way that she focused on one element of reading or writing development at a time, having one quarter of the school year devoted to fluency, one quarter devoted to reading comprehension, and such. This was a deliberate effort to help students maintain attention and interest during instruction so that they had a greater likelihood of experiencing success when doing language arts performance tasks. She explained,

I like to teach to mastery a few things each grading period and just add on because it seems like they understand more instead of just having the same thing. They get bored. They don't pay attention. They still don't know it. (I-3)

Just as Jessica felt that the ways in which students were or were not able to attend well during the course of reading comprehension instruction had a significant impact on how well students performed at reading comprehension, she also believed that the ways

in which students were offered opportunities in both reading comprehension instruction and reading comprehension assessment could be recognized as reasons for student success and failure. First, Jessica wanted to see her students have the opportunity to have access to the kinds of instruction from which they could derive the greatest benefits based on what she perceived as their exhibited needs. For example, Jessica lamented that she did not have training in Wilson[®] instruction, which was offered as a small-group pullout intervention experience in the elementary buildings in the district, sharing, “I think that there would be huge gaps that would be closed. I wish I could give that to them. I wish I had that training” (I-1). Instead, she felt that it was inequitable that many of her students did not qualify for inclusion in the pull out instruction, explaining,

This is my opinion and it’s kind of scary to voice but I get frustrated because I have a lot of really low kids that would benefit a lot from the Wilson[®] group that’s here and the Fundamentals group that (Teacher name) does. There’s so many that need it. She can only pull the lowest. If some of them were at a north school (in the district) they would get it because they would be the lowest. It just does not really seem fair. I’m going to voice that right now. (I-1)

Jessica also recognized that the types of ways in which students were asked to show their reading comprehension of a given text influenced their degree of success or failure with that performance, commenting,

Comprehension can be hard because it’s all about what the test maker decides to ask, not necessarily what’s all in the book. It’s what little things or what big

things they are going to ask because that's how comprehension is tested. It's what did the test maker think that you should know. (I-2)

Finally, these preceding three factors – student attentiveness during instruction, the types of instruction offered to students, and the types of assessment opportunities offered to students not only contributed directly to how students performed as comprehenders, but also all contributed to how students developed skill and knowledge that would in turn inform and facilitate their reading comprehension performances.

Classroom reading comprehension instruction. Jessica's language arts classroom occupied a space in the fourth and fifth grade pod area around the back corner of the Fieldview building. It sat to the left of Rachelle's classroom. The front of the classroom was the back wall of the Fieldview building, and the windows in the corner of the front of the classroom looked out onto the Fieldview upper elementary playground space. The left and right walls of the classroom were both created through the use of temporary, movable walls. The classroom did not have a back wall, but instead opened directly into the shared fourth and fifth grade pod space that was comprised of student cubbies, student restrooms, and two shared computer station areas. Jessica had hung drapes across the opening of the classroom to create a barrier between the room and the pod space. Jessica's desk sat in the front left corner of the classroom, underneath the classroom windows. To the right of Jessica's desk was the classroom whiteboard, which extended across the remainder of the front wall of the classroom, stopping just short of the right corner, where Jessica had placed several small bookshelves that held her classroom library.

The rectangular student tables in the classroom were arranged into three long rows of tables extending vertically from the back of the classroom towards the whiteboard at the front of the classroom. The row on the left side had two tables placed together by their vertical ends and the middle row and the row on the right side each had three tables placed together in a similar fashion. Each individual table accommodated four students total, two students per long side of the table.

Jessica had 28 students in her language arts class. These students represented the students who had scored in the bottom half of the fifth grade class on their district language arts assessment either at the end of the previous school year or at the point in time when they had entered the school during the current school year. Two of the students in the classroom were accompanied by program assistants who sat with and were charged with the responsibility of supporting those students during the course of language arts instruction.

Jessica's language arts class met during the allotted time for all fourth and fifth grade language arts classes, typically between 10:00 – 12:00 in the morning. Students started their day in their homeroom class, then have a 30 minute HAWKS period, as described in Rachelle's case study, then a block of either content area or specials instruction, and then the language arts block. On one day a week, the language arts block was shortened from two hours to one hour to allow for additional content area instruction.

Jessica wrote her daily agenda for the language arts block on the whiteboard at the front of the classroom. She typically divided the block into two one-hour allocations of time and planned for her language arts time by the hour. The first hour of instruction

typically involved routines that utilized the core reading program and the second hour of instruction involved routines that were specific to her focus of instruction during that quarter of the year. There were several routines that she integrated into her instructional time throughout the year. When she worked on long-term projects with her language arts class, she changed her schedule to allow approximately an hour per day on the project itself and alternated the second hour between the core reading program and her given instructional focus at that time.

Jessica's reading comprehension instruction will be described in three dimensions. First will be a description of the kinds of routines Jessica used regularly in her classroom in relation to organizing and providing reading comprehension instruction to her students. Second will be a description of the kinds of skills and strategies Jessica taught her students as the content of her reading comprehension instruction. Third will be a description of the principles that seemed to guide Jessica's decision-making about reading comprehension instruction. That is, these are the factors that seemed to weigh most heavily on Jessica's mind as she made choices about what instruction and in what ways she offered that instruction to students in order to foster their development as comprehenders of written text.

Classroom routines. Jessica utilized a consistent set of sharing routines, practice routines, and core reading program routines to comprise the reading comprehension instruction in her language arts classroom. While there were a few independent sharing and practice routines that Jessica employed, many of her routines for sharing text and

practicing for reading comprehension performances of text were oriented around the use of her core reading program. Each will be described in turn.

Sharing routines. Jessica alternated between sharing a read aloud book with students and allocating students independent DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time at the beginning of the language arts block. When she was doing the teacher read aloud, she would read aloud from that book at the beginning of each language arts block. When she was not doing a teacher read aloud, she would give students 15 – 20 minutes for DEAR, the approximate equivalent amount of time as one of her read aloud sessions might take up. She preceded each read aloud with a review of what had previously happened in the text and closed each read aloud with a review of what had just happened in the text being read. Jessica generally limited questions and comments before and after the read aloud to make these summary points and observations about the characters and their actions. On occasion, she would ask students how they might have felt or what they might have done if they were in the position of one of the characters. The following exchange represents what could be considered a typical discussion surrounding one of Jessica’s read alouds:

Jessica: Someone tell me where we ended yesterday. What is happening, (Student name)?

S1: Something is going to happen to Nora.

Jessica: The superintendent said we are going to deal with this harshly. We are going to be very stern. How would you feel?

(Jessica reads.)

Jessica: So what did the superintendent just do? What did she just do, (Student name)?

S2: She panicked.

Jessica: Well, she's a little panicky. So what did she decide? What was her decision?

S3: Put it back on the principal.

Jessica: Okay. That was our last chapter for today. (O-2)

While Jessica informally assigned students 60 minutes of independent reading each night, she did not offer venues through which students might share that reading with one another, nor did she keep track of the independent reading that students were doing in any systematic way, with the exception of monitoring their performance on Accelerated Reader tests of independent reading books. Students did an extensive amount of oral reading in Jessica's classroom, with her having students take turns reading aloud almost every instructional text that they used at least once and frequently more than once during the course of given week. This practice extended to the class novel study book as well as her teacher read aloud books, which Jessica at times had students read aloud to one another. Prior to each reading of a new instructional text, Jessica devoted an extensive amount of time to sharing a preview of the text with students and, in particular, having students share knowledge and experiences that seemed relevant to the content of the text and having students share initial reactions and impressions of the text based on the pictures and noticeable text features. Her text previews frequently took as much time during her instructional routines as the reading of the text itself. During the following

discussion, Jessica is preparing students to read a selection out of their core reading program anthology about the costs and consequences of severe weather events:

Jessica: Alright. Turn to page 460 and tell me what you see on that page by raising your hand. (Student name), what do you see?

S1: A tornado.

Jessica: A tornado. What is the title?

S1: Extreme weather.

Jessica: Extreme weather. Very good. Okay, now I want to ask you a question. I think we've all been in some pretty big storms in our life. I know that there was one just a few years ago that happened around school time on the bus. I wanted to ask you what is the most extreme weather that you've been in? What happened? I'm going to ask three people.

(Jessica questions three students who volunteered to share their extreme weather experiences.)

Jessica: Wow. I said I was only going to pick three right now. If we have more time at the end I'll pick some more. Here in Indiana, what are some types of weather that we have that can cause damage or fear? What do you know about our extreme weather?

(Jessica has seven students share pieces of information that they know.)

Jessica: Now we're going to go through and look at the pictures first and see what's happening in those pictures and try to make some predictions and share some thoughts of what you think this story is going to be about. So looking at the

first picture and the title what do you think this story is going to talk about,

(Student name)?

(Jessica leads students through a discussion of each page and each picture in the selection.) (O-10)

On this particular day, her text preview discussion took about 25 minutes of instructional time during the block and the class reading of the selection took about 35 minutes of instructional time. This allocation of approximately equal time to previewing a text and reading it aligned closely with Jessica's perspective that knowledge, including vocabulary knowledge, text knowledge, and world and background knowledge, played a significant role in reading comprehension. As a result, it was important to Jessica to have students share and discuss relevant knowledge prior to reading as a way to give students the greatest opportunity to experience success with the reading that would follow.

Sharing text played a much more limited role in either the actual reading experience or in anything that followed the reading. Instead, it was Jessica's belief that once students began reading, her primary goals should be on helping students to gain oral reading fluency and maintain attentiveness and focus on the text in preparation for exhibiting their comprehension of the text that followed, typically in the form of a handout to complete or an Accelerated Reader test to take. Jessica did not want to distract students from those goals with anything superfluous, commenting about the recommendations for questioning that appear in her core reading program teachers' manual,

I don't like the questions they ask. They just kind of to me seem ridiculous the things they want you to stop them from reading for in the story. I check and look

at them. If I think it's a silly question I don't use it but if I think it's good then what I do is tweak it. I use what I think is valuable but I skip it if I think it's going to be an interruption to them. (I-1)

Sharing text, and more specifically, sharing knowledge relevant to a text, was a process that for Jessica was best situated prior to the reading of text. Otherwise, it could potentially disrupt a students' mental engagement in learning the content of a text, and, as a result, impact a students' reading comprehension performance of the text.

Practice routines. Jessica's routines for working with text during instruction as a way to improve student reading comprehension capabilities were oriented around developing and exhibiting oral reading fluency, specifically utilizing appropriate intonation and phrasing during oral reading, developing vocabulary, text, and content knowledge, answering questions about text being read, and exhibiting the use of reading comprehension skills through the completion of practice handouts.

The primary vehicle through which students worked with text was around oral reading sessions. These sessions included time devoted to an extensive sharing of knowledge and experience during a text preview prior to reading the text, time devoted to defining and reviewing vocabulary words from the text prior to reading it, time devoted to the actual reading of the text, and, after multiple reading sessions of the same text, time devoted to showing ones' comprehension of the text via either a handout or an Accelerated Reader test.

One of the central emphases of Jessica's oral reading sessions was on exhibiting oral reading fluency. Jessica was particularly focused on how students phrased their oral

reading performances of text based on the grammatical cues in the writing of the author. She frequently reviewed what she wanted to hear prior to beginning the reading of the text, such as during this reading of a selection out of the core reading program anthology:

Jessica: How many times do we read a story before we take a test?

Students: Two

Jessica: Two times. So we're going to re-read this. We're going to read this together. We're going to stop to answer questions. I might make you re-read sentences. Remember, what are we looking for?

Student 1: Fluency

Jessica: Fluency. So, if there's a word in italics, what do they want you to do?

Student 2: Stress it.

Jessica: Stress it. If there's a question mark, what usually happens to your voice at the end of the sentence?

Student 3: It goes higher.

Jessica: Yes, it goes up. Very good. So we have to look for those clues. (O-1)

Jessica stopped students during reading sessions to have them re-read portions of the text that sounded dysfluent or in which the reader ignored the grammatical cues, as she does in following:

Jessica: I'm going to stop you for just a second. We're going to re-read that sentence because see how there's a lot of commas there. It's because it has a list of things so we're going to take just little, little, little tiny pauses in between.

Okay, go ahead.

The student re-reads.

Jessica: Perfect. (O-10)

Jessica deliberately adopted an emphasis on oral reading fluency as part of her regular practice routines because she felt that fluency was a direct and observable measure of reading capacity and reading development. She believed that if students knew that she paid attention to their exhibition of fluency that they would be compelled to invest greater effort and care in the oral reading practice that they did together. She felt so strongly about fluency that she gave each of her students a specific fluency grade on their report card each quarter. In reflection upon the school year, Jessica perceived that her intention and effort in this area was paying off for students, sharing,

They're becoming better fluent readers just because they know if they don't do it right they're going to have to do it over again and they don't like to read in front of the class. I feel bad making them but I let them choose a paragraph or a page so those who like it can read the whole page and those who don't just have to read a paragraph. I'm finding that they're doing better with fluency and that they need to hear themselves to get better. (I-3)

In addition to this practice framework, Jessica liked to design and carry out extended projects that could give students additional practice with texts and cover a wider array of language arts objectives. Jessica did one novel study with her class during the course of the year, although she communicated her preference for novel studies and her desire to do additional novel studies in upcoming school years. Jessica designed one quarter of the year that she specifically devoted to emphasizing reading comprehension,

reflecting her perspectives that it was easier for students to acquire language arts skills and knowledge and she emphasized one area of language arts development at time. Jessica described this quarter, which has already been completed prior to the time I spent in her classroom, as follows,

That semester I really brought in graphic organizers. I would read. I would put a transparency up and they would have them at their seats. We would read a story and then we would go back and look for the development of the story. We'd write down the characters, the problems, the solutions, and go through the settings and as we wrote them down we saw the story being summarized. [...] That really is kind of comprehension to do a summary of the most important events in the story, so I really tried to hit those areas. And with that we did this huge writing project. It was writing a mystery, actually it was a pop-up book. I had them write a story and we use tons and tons of graphic organizers and we learned a lot of new vocabulary and we would break it down into the story elements. [...] It was all centered around the mystery pop-up book that they had to write and introducing the graphic organizers and covering main idea and summarization. I think it was a good quarter and I was really proud of what they ended up with. I think you could spend a whole year on comprehension and I only know of certain things to do. After that, you're kind of like, "We'll just keep practicing those things". (I-3)

Jessica's practice routines did just as she described above – positioned her students to keep practicing with text in the ways that Jessica knew of and felt were the best fit for achieving the best reading comprehension performance outcomes.

Core reading program routines. The core reading program was the central fixture and organizing feature of Jessica's reading comprehension instruction. It was the primary source of texts, vocabulary, skills, and practice handouts related to reading comprehension in her classroom. She had developed a weekly cycle of use for teaching with the core reading program, which she described as follows,

There's the weekly planner it gives you but I kind of do my own thing. We always do the vocabulary and I have them write it out on cards. I will kind of quiz them as we go because there's a short story that uses those vocabulary words and then you read the long story and it has them in there so they see them a lot. I always use those as we go through. So we do the vocabulary words. We read the short story. We read the long story and then for comprehension I ask them a lot of questions. (I-1)

As previously mentioned, Jessica tried to be deliberate about the kinds of questions that she asked during their readings of the anthology selections, with an orientation towards lines of questioning that were straightforward or relatively easy for students to answer and continue moving through the text. She referenced the question recommendations and suggestions for discussion that appeared in the teachers' manual for the reading selections but then made her own final decisions about the direction of her questioning. She explained,

At the bottom sometimes they'll have interesting facts that I use where they'll want you to stop at this specific point and ask this. I do if it's a HAWKS skill that we're focused on or if I think that it's something that we've covered that they should know or something that I think they'll be able to answer without a lot of difficulty. I don't want to have to stop a story and teach a lesson and then get back to the story. So I pick the things that they can do. [...] There's always a worksheet they can do to fill out and it just takes so much time during the story. It works better if I make an overhead and fill it out but it's still stopping in the middle of the story and having a lesson so I kind of pick and choose what I know they can do, what I've covered, or what can pull them back in if they're talking and not connecting with the story. (I-1)

Over the course of the week within this cycle, Jessica always has her students read any given long core reading program selection at least twice and complete the comprehension handout that accompanies it at some point in time outside of the actual reading of the story, as she mentioned above. Jessica always ended the week of instruction with the core reading program selection by having her students take an Accelerated Reader test on the selection. She believed this to be an important part of her instructional cycle for multiple reasons. First, it allowed her to give students experience with that type of reading comprehension assessment. Second, it served as a form of accountability for students in her classroom as she sent a printout of the test results home each week and recorded it for a grade.

Jessica was also deliberate about the components of the core reading program materials that she chose not to use in her reading instruction broadly or her reading comprehension instruction specifically. She was forthright in describing what those elements were and why she did not use them. In particular, Jessica did not use the leveled text collection that accompanied the materials, namely because “there’s only six so it makes it a little difficult” (I-1). In this case Jessica thought the leveled texts were difficult to use because she did not have a good sense of how you could use only six copies of any given text in instruction for a whole class of students. Jessica also did not use the formal assessment tools that accompanied the materials, opting for the AR comprehension tests instead because “no one passes so you kind of feel like you can’t use it as an accurate grade because the questions are ridiculous” (I-1). Her disdain for the selection and unit assessments aligned with her perspective that one component of reading comprehension performance was the nature of the performance task itself. She wanted to give her students performance tasks that seemed fair and accurate, which these tools did not.

Jessica had over time decided on a regular cycle of activity that utilized the core reading program to give her students experience with reading and displaying comprehension of text. In lieu of activities and teaching that would occur during the reading of text, her approaches to questioning served as a primary agent through which students thought through and responded to the texts that they read. Jessica had made a set of definitive decisions about what elements of the core reading program materials she found relevant and manageable for use in her classroom.

Reading comprehension content. Jessica taught her students the comprehension skills that appeared in the core reading program and a sampling of the skills that appeared in the DesCartes framework. She was most interested in teaching students the skills that the school administrators and literacy team had selected to be emphasized as part of the HAWKS morning instructional block. Jessica referenced the use of reading strategies during the reading of text but did not teach those strategies directly to students. In all of her instruction related to this reading comprehension content, Jessica emphasized the acquisition of knowledge, namely vocabulary and background knowledge, as the main venue through which it becomes easier to understand the texts her students read.

Core reading program skills. Jessica taught the main comprehension skills that accompanied each weekly reading selection in the core reading program. She frequently worked to position these skills as techniques that authors used to accomplish particular purposes in their writing. Her instruction around these skills namely consisted of discussing the skill during her text preview sessions, asking questions about the skill during the reading of the text, and having students complete the handout related to the skill at a point in time after the reading of the text and before the AR assessment on the text. On the following day of instruction, Jessica introduced students to the comprehension skill for the week, which in this case was identifying clue words in text. First is her explanation of the skill to students:

A lot of times as authors are writing they want to have details or they want to have descriptions to be able to have the reader understand or be able to picture things in their mind. Now as we are reading here there are clue words that are

going to help you be able to picture things in an order. The author here is using clue words to help organize his writing and they are organized to help describe things to us in an order so let's look for those clue words and see if you can recognize them. (O-10)

Then, at the conclusion of the reading, she led students back to find and discuss the clue words in the following fashion:

Jessica: I told you before that the author is going to use a lot of description to try to describe events to you. There were different settings. There were different places that he was telling you about in different years and he used organizational words that helped you be able to organize or sequence what happened. Can anybody tell me the clue words that they saw? The signal words that mean putting things in a specific order. (Student name) did you see any? How did he organize this?

Student 1: Well, he put damages, property, available, contact the vocabulary words in order.

Jessica: Okay. The vocabulary words you saw were in the order of how you looked them up. (Student name)?

Student 2: First, next, and finally.

Jessica: Perfect. Did anybody else see those words? On page 462 if you look there are signal words there. First, next, finally. Didn't the author use those to signal to you the sequence and order and give you some description there? What happened first? (O-10)

She wanted her students to come to understand the comprehension skills presented in the core reading program in the relation to the ways in which authors created sensible text, sharing, “I teach skills as organization and reading in books as seeing the different ways that authors organize their writing so that you can understand and picture it” (I-3). Jessica did not express in a particular stance or opinion on the comprehension skills offered for instruction in the core reading program, only that she found it most effective to embed them within a larger conversation about the work of authors and help authors use organization to help readers understand their ideas.

Descartes skills. Jessica did not explicitly reference the DesCartes framework or the skills reflected within it as a core component of her reading comprehension instruction. She emphasized certain elements of the DesCartes framework, namely related to genre knowledge and text structure in her questioning of students during reading sessions. Jessica was most interested in ensuring that she focused on the comprehension and text analysis skills that had been selected for teaching as part of the school-wide HAWKS instructional block. As such, she incorporated skill instruction from the DesCartes framework that represented skills that were also part of HAWKS instruction. Teachers had received a HAWKS instructional schedule at the beginning of the year, organized into three-week cycles, alternating between a focus on math and language arts skills that had outlined that skills that were to be taught during HAWKS time across the school year. If these were skills that did not expressly appear in the core reading program, these were the additional skills that Jessica worked to incorporate into her reading comprehension instruction.

Beyond supporting students in learning the characteristics of and recognizing the genres of the texts they read in class and attending to coverage of HAWKS skills that were also represented in the DesCartes framework, Jessica's main interest from the DesCartes framework was in promoting student understanding of the features of different genres of text and analysis of the characters of a given text. Jessica believed that if she could assist students in identifying pertinent links to the characters of a text that she could help them to better understand character behaviors and, in turn, story plots. She discussed how this had helped her students to display a thorough sense of understanding about one of her read alouds, *The Report Card*, by Andrew Clements:

This group connected with the main character because everyone thought she was dumb at first and a lot of these kids feel like they are because we're separated by abilities. [...] I think they really connected with that book because the main character was going through everyone wanting to test her, to see why she's getting all these D's and C's. A lot of these kids have been tested and it was really kind of neat to hear their thoughts or what they remember, like when I ask them to review the next day, the points that they remember. (I-2)

Jessica found that an orientation towards connecting with, analyzing, and understanding the experiences of the characters in a text resulted in better student reading comprehension performance, if even just informally, over time. This aligns closely with the recommendations in the DesCartes Continuum of Learning framework. That said, there were multiple points of alignment that could be seen in Jessica's classroom, but explicit reference to DesCartes itself was absent in both observations and interviews.

Reading strategies. Jessica frequently mentioned, questioning, and prompted students about the use of reading strategies during reading sessions, but she did not directly or explicitly teach reading strategy use to her students. In particular, Jessica incorporated talk around making predictions, connections, inferences, and summarizations into the questioning that she did with students around text. She made an intentional effort to link this talk about using strategies with an emphasis on using and developing vocabulary and background knowledge. On this day, Jessica is asking students to summarize what they learn as they read a selection on extreme weather:

Jessica: Okay. So what did we learn in that paragraph right there? Let's summarize.

Student 1: Hurricanes can happen year round.

Jessica: Do they for us?

Student 2: No. There's like five hurricanes a year for us.

Jessica: (Student name), what do you remember?

Student 3: On islands it's more dangerous than inland.

Jessica: Okay. Can anyone tell me why they think it would be more dangerous on an island during a hurricane? Draw a conclusion. (Student name), why would it be more dangerous on an island during a hurricane than it would be if you were inland? You need to know that inland means that you are off the coast away from the water.

Student 4: Because there's water.

Jessica: Water what?

Student 4: Surrounds it. (O-10)

Jessica adopted a streamlined approach to her reading comprehension content. She addressed all of the main comprehension skills that appeared in her core reading program, and those skills that were represented in both DesCartes and HAWKS materials, and she used talk about reading strategies in her questioning of students.

Decision-making factors. Jessica used two core principles to make decisions about her reading comprehension instruction. That is, these two principles guided how Jessica chose what to do in her classroom related to reading comprehension instruction, what to do it with, and in what ways to carry out her planning.

First, Jessica aimed to prepare students to participate in and exhibit their reading comprehension through a range of reading comprehension performance vehicles. She worked to make choices about her reading comprehension instruction that would give students experience with exhibiting their comprehension of the texts that they read in class, namely through answering questions about texts. She required students to read each instructional text twice during the course of the week to ensure that students had achieved a degree of fluency necessary to be able to make meaning from the text. She required students to take AR tests on every text that they encountered in class, including teacher read aloud books, anthology reading selections, and independent reading books as a check on their degree of comprehension with the big ideas and information in a text.

As part of an emphasis on preparing students for reading comprehension performance, Jessica questioned students about the texts that they were reading in class frequently. In addition, she intentionally avoided engaging in any kinds of talk or

activities during the reading of text that she perceived might draw a focus away from concentrating on the elements of the text that a student needed to remember and about which a student would need to exhibit knowledge. Jessica further explained this approach to her questioning,

I try to pull out the things that are interesting, things that I think are interesting, and that I think they will think are interesting to find those hooks to keep pulling them back. Then I pull out the things that I think are important to know and remember. I like when there are a lot of ways to connect it with things that they've been through. I feel like connecting it to them might pull them in a little more and they might remember more. That's really where I think I get my questions. (I-3)

Second, Jessica worked to help students learn about the meaningfulness of reading and of being a reader. She felt strongly that her students on the whole lacked a sense that reading played a valuable part of one's life both inside and outside of school. She wanted to do projects with students that engendered a sense of appreciation for reading and writing. She shared,

I feel that it's very, very important that it can be fun. We just have to guide them to learning why it's important and how it can be fun and easy for them to learn. We just have to find their nook or kind of their hook. I know there has to be ways to be able to incorporate it through all subjects. [...] I think we need more time and so it'd be nice to sit down and just incorporate it through everything. (I-3)

Jessica found that the skills that she was required to be teaching were “all difficult to teach” (I-3), instead she wanted to focus on having students do things around text in a meaningful ways that fostered a sense that reading was enjoyable, pertinent, and relevant. This was how she really wanted to make choices for her instruction – she just wasn’t always sure how to go about doing so.

Learning about reading comprehension instruction.

Sources of information. Jessica cited two types of sources of information from which she did or she had derived knowledge related to reading comprehension instruction. First, Jessica recognized the ways in which her curriculum materials had been helpful to her, with a particular appreciation for Accelerated Reader. She was convinced that Accelerated Reader gave her information about student selection of and performance with books that could otherwise not easily gauge on her own, and that, in turn, this information allowed her to be a better reading comprehension teacher. She explained,

I really like AR (Accelerated Reader). It has helped me a lot. It has the questions. Obviously I’m not going to be able to read all the books that they read and know if they’re really comprehending so that helps me a lot. It’s nice because it has the level of the book so I can tell if they’re reading on their reading level or lower or higher and comprehending at that level. Their scores help guide me to read alouds or to activities that we do to help them understand. (I-2)

In addition, since Jessica was centrally focused on reading comprehension as a form of performance, she found Accelerated Reader to be a resource to consult when

making decisions about what elements of a text to talk about during instruction. She shared,

I can look at the AR test and see what the questions are. A lot of times like with *Inkheart* (a classroom read aloud book) I have been asking a lot of those questions. Not just those but I include them and I'm hoping that they're grasping those things and remembering them. (I-2)

Jessica felt comfortable with the information that the Accelerated Reader program offered and the ways in which she could use it as a resource in her classroom.

Second, Jessica acknowledged what she was able to learn from working with her students and seeing how they interacted with her and in her classroom as developing readers. In particular, she tried to pay attention to what students were choosing as independent reading books and she looked at student writing to garner a sense of what students showed that they were noticing from her language arts instruction. She explained,

I like to look at what they read on their own. I look at what they read independently a lot to see what levels they choose. [...] It's nice to see that they remember little parts from our reading. I like to see in their writing when they are implementing things that we've talked about. (I-1)

Jessica uses all of these sources of information, Accelerated Reader data, student independent reading book selections, and student writing, as opportunities to both check the efficacy of her teaching and look for insight about her students and their development that will inform her future teaching.

Critical experiences. Jessica was firm in her conviction that she had yet to have a legitimate opportunity to learn about reading comprehension or reading comprehension instruction with any depth. Instead, she communicated a sense of insecurity about her reading comprehension instruction, noting that the components of her current approach to reading comprehension instruction were the things that she was aware of, that made intuitive sense to her, or that seemed to make a difference for her students. When asked to reflect upon learning about reading comprehension in either her pre-service teacher preparation program experiences or the graduate program in which she was presently enrolled, Jessica responded, “I really can’t think of any class that’s really taught much about comprehension or how to teach it” (I-3) and she wondered if classes did exist that emphasized comprehension instruction because she had yet to encounter one that had. She expressed a desire to know more about reading comprehension and teaching with reading comprehension in mind, commenting,

I think they (comprehension skills) are all difficult to teach. I don’t know that many strategies. I don’t know if I really know how to teach comprehension or if there are special ways that I don’t know or haven’t been taught or need to look up and learn. [...] I would like to know strategies, worksheets, skills, everything. Is there a class on comprehension that you can take? I would take it. (I-3)

Jessica felt that the closest that she had gotten to having experiences that taught her about reading comprehension instruction were the pre-service teaching education courses that she had taken that had emphasized multiple intelligences and learning styles. While not directly relevant to reading comprehension, it had been the information that

she had acquired in these classes that had impacted some of the techniques and routines that she implemented in her reading instruction. She shared,

My main knowledge is just that I remember learning about different learning types. You have those students who are visual learners and there are students who are kinesthetic. So I just try to meet all of those learning types I guess. Over the years I've just kind of tried different things to do that. Questioning is always one. Trying to connect it to something they've experienced or felt or done. Then graphic organizers – there are some that help a lot. I think writing helps a lot too. [...] When they read on their own and then come up and show me examples because they're excited because they notice it after they learned it. That's when I think okay this is working. (I-3)

Jessica tried to utilize the knowledge that she had gained about how students might learn and process information differently from one another and apply that knowledge to the development of classroom routines, activities, assignments, and instructional talk that would prompt student reading comprehension development. In addition, while she did not acknowledge her own literacy practices as a place out of which she had acquired knowledge that supported her reading comprehension instruction, she evidenced that she used her knowledge of her own reading when thinking about her students and their reading. When asked what she thought her students were thinking about while they read in her class, she responded,

That's a really good question actually because I was just thinking about what I do when I read. I love to read and I know that when you enjoy the book you

remember more and when you can connect with the book you remember more. I tried to think of the harder books that I read, like, I love *The Da Vinci Code* but if you don't know the buildings or the places or what they're talking about it's harder to comprehend because you're not able to picture those things. (I-3)

Jessica was able to recognize the kinds of challenges that a lack of knowledge can play in the reading process because she recognized those same challenges in her past reading experiences. In addition, she was able identify some of what she wanted her students to be able to experience in the reading process as a result of experiencing those same things as a reader herself. She shared,

I hope on their own that they're really getting into their book. When I read I get excited because I'm making predictions and I can't wait to find out what's gonna happen next so I'm hoping that they're doing the same things. That they're thinking about what will happen next or they're making predictions or sometimes even I'll put myself in the book and try to think, "Gosh, if that was me, I'd feel like this" or "I'd think this". I hope that they're doing the same thing because it's a whole new world sometimes. I know a lot of them love the Harry Potter series and how cool for them to imagine that you're there in that great dining room with the candles floating. (I-3)

Jessica understood what it felt like to have rich, fulfilling reading experiences. She wanted the same for her students. That said, she was convinced that she had more learning to do in order to feel completely confident that she was able to provide her students with the kinds of teaching and classroom experiences that would truly engender

that same kind of reading. She believed that she had had a learning void, so to speak, when it came to specifically learning about reading comprehension and reading comprehension instruction. Instead, she knowingly utilized the learning that she had experience in relation to learning styles and multiple intelligences and unknowingly drew off of her own literacy practices in order to fill that void for herself.

Concerns. Jessica communicated three main types of concerns related to reading comprehension instruction. First, Jessica had concerns about the structural arrangements within which she carried out her teaching. She had experienced her entire teaching career, including student teaching, in the Fieldview building. However, the framework in which her teaching had been carried out had changed each and every year that she had been at Fieldview. Jessica believed that this lack of consistency had inhibiting her from developing any sense of momentum in her teaching or from pursuing professional learning because she was constantly having to adjust to a new arrangement. She explained,

There has been a lot of turnover in our team and every year has been different. I feel like it's been a first year every year to be honest. My first year it was straight fifth grade and then we multi-aged and so it was having to prepare for that. And then for multi-age you have to have a year one and a year two so you don't repeat anything, so there's two new years for me. So the third year I was able to start doing my same thing and then we switched it again my fourth year and then we switched it again this year. It's always been different. It feels like it's always a new year, always a first year. (I-1)

She was not pleased with students having been placed into classrooms by their MAP[®] assessment scores, noticing, “I’ve heard some students really down on themselves. They’ll talk about the smart class and they don’t realize it isn’t smart or dumb. There’s too big a range for that” (I-2) and realizing “A lot of the materials I have is for enrichment and on grade level and I have the struggling readers and I’ve had to scramble” (I-1).

Second, Jessica had concerns about her instruction itself, namely in relation to her use of instructional time, to how to carry out comprehension skill instruction, and to how to handle student difficulty during the course of instruction. She elaborated on the kinds of situations that arose during reading comprehension instruction with students that she really worried about:

I have kids that I still don’t know what to do with because you ask the question and they answer the question and then right after you’ll ask them the same questions and they won’t know the answer and that’s a bit frustrating. I don’t know how to get them to remember. Usually I try to re-route my questioning to get them toward then answer but if I can’t there’s always somebody who knows the answer so I’ll choose somebody else but I really want and try to guide them to find the answer. And then I have kids who just can’t remember the sentence before and those are the ones that I really don’t know what to do with at all. (I-2)

Jessica knew that there had to be a better way to support and manage students when they evidenced difficulty with reading comprehension during the course of her instruction. That said, she did not feel privy to the kind of professional expertise that

would be required to address those moments of difficulty and those breakdowns in student processing in an effective manner. She shared a great desire to want to learn how to better handle such circumstances and students.

Finally, Jessica had additional concerns about her students themselves, namely in relation to the ways in which they did or did not engage with the learning process and the kinds of learning outcomes that they experienced as a result. She worried about the degree to which her students exhibited a sense of focus and attentiveness during class, and, in particular, the degree to which they embraced a sense they should work hard because it will benefit them. She lamented, “As a class, a weakness would be doing the work, having responsibility for doing the work and getting it in. I fight that a lot and it’s something that could raise them up easily” (I-1). Linked to this was a sense of concern about how to create classroom conditions in which her students could become motivated readers and learners. She explained,

I would say building motivation is one of the biggest hardships. I had a hard time making kids read during DEAR time, I have a hard time getting effort from some students, I have a hard time after they read a book they let too much time go by and they don’t finish it in a timely manner and there’s a lot that’s forgotten. I think a lot of kids don’t get books on their level and that’s hard when you have thirty-one kids. You want them to be challenged a little bit so helping them to realize what they can do to teach themselves or challenge themselves. (I-3)

Jessica wanted to see readers in her classroom that evidenced the same kind of fulfillment and desire to read that was such a central piece of her own experience as a

reader. She wanted a classroom context that would be able to instill such a sense in her own students. Again, she was unsure that she had the training, wherewithal, or skill to know what to do in order to achieve such a result with her students.

Case study conclusion. Jessica believed that reading comprehension was focused on having the capacity to exhibit your understanding of a text. As such, it was an outcome that one performed from which others evaluated and responded. She acknowledged a student's performance of their reading comprehension of a given text was influenced by their interest in the text, the kind of performance that was expected of them, and the degree of vocabulary and background knowledge that they could apply to the content of the text. She felt that student success and failure is also influenced by the degree to which a student attends to reading instruction and engages well with reading practice.

Jessica used a deliberately selected set of practice routines to provide her students with reading comprehension instruction using the core reading program. She spent a significant portion of time previewing texts with students and during the course of those previews activating or building knowledge that would support comprehension. Students read texts multiple times during the course of the week with an orientation towards being aware of ones' degree of reading fluency. Jessica tried to keep questioning and discussion during reading focused on those elements that would maintain student engagement and attentiveness with the text. After the conclusion of every reading experience in Jessica's classrooms, students were required to show their comprehension of the text, most frequently through the Accelerated Reader program.

Although Jessica had several years of teaching experience, she felt unsure and insecure about her reading comprehension instruction. She utilized the information provided by Accelerated Reader extensively to learn about young adult books and her students' experiences with them. She had yet to have a learning experience that was about reading comprehension instruction itself. Instead, she took what she knew from her own literacy practice and from her pre-service courses on multiple intelligence development and student learning styles and worked to apply that knowledge to her reading comprehension instruction. Jessica had significant concerns about the structural context of her teaching world, as well as about student engagement with her instruction and student outcomes as a result of that instruction.

Case Study Synthesis

Introduction. Each participating teacher had experiences in which her definition of reading comprehension and her perception of the most pressing concerns in her reading comprehension teaching world influenced the classroom reading comprehension instruction that she offered to her students. The teachers' concerns about reading comprehension instruction were strongly influenced by the types of learning opportunities that they had been able to access up to that point in their careers. Therefore, the classroom reading comprehension instruction of the participating teachers and their experiences with that instruction varied from one another in predictable ways that can be traced to the central decision-making factors that the teachers used to make choices about that instruction, which in turn can be traced to their working definitions of reading comprehension, which in turn can be traced to the learning opportunities that they

believed had supported their development as reading comprehension teachers (see Appendix J).

The ways in which the differences in classroom reading comprehension instruction varied from one another according to the teachers' working definition of reading comprehension can be made sense of through a consideration of symbolic interactionism. Within the lens of symbolic interactionism, reading comprehension represents a construct within which teachers interact in their teaching world, out of which teachers choose actions to enact with their students. In addition, the teachers used their definitions of reading comprehension as a lens through which to interpret the behaviors and responses of students to their instruction and to make attributions about why their students were experiencing success and failure in their classrooms. In turn, these attributions about student success and failure, made as a result of applying definitions of reading comprehension to the interactions teachers had with students, influenced subsequent decision-making about their reading comprehension teaching.

In this synthesis, I consider patterns of similarity and difference that emerged within each of the three dimensions of experience with reading comprehension instruction that were described in the case study narratives. There were many individual differences in the participating teachers' experiences with reading comprehension instruction. Beyond these individual differences, several patterns of similarity also emerged. These patterns of similarity may be linked to several consistent contextual elements of the teachers' classrooms, school buildings, and district.

Definitions of reading comprehension. Each teacher evidenced a different definition of reading comprehension, the core components of which influenced the ways in which she organized and provided her reading comprehension instruction in her classroom. In some cases, differences in definitions were cast in shades of similar ideas, while in other cases, differences represented stark contrasts in belief systems. Regardless of how definitions stood in contrast to one another, in all four cases they emerged as significant in the teaching worlds of the participants. As such, reading comprehension itself was an object whose role reflects an alignment with the three major premises of symbolic interactionism. First, the way in which each teacher created and held meaning for the construct of reading comprehension played a critical role in how she enacted her reading comprehension instruction. Second, each teacher arrived at her definition of reading comprehension through a process of interaction with others throughout her prior teaching experiences and critical professional learning experiences. Third, each teacher was in the midst of constantly re-affirming or revising her definitions of reading comprehension on the basis of her ongoing interactions with students and with new or ongoing professional learning experiences.

Tracy viewed reading comprehension as a part of a larger process in which students were engaged with the central content of a text. Carol viewed reading comprehension as a part of a larger process in which students pursued a sense of relationship with the characters and authors of a text. For both Tracy and Carol, reading comprehension was a component in a process in which students actively and willingly participated. They both privileged the value of the people participating in the reading

process. They both considered the content of the text and the experience of the student reader to be equally valuable and necessary in order to achieve success with the act.

Rachelle viewed reading comprehension as an outcome of the acquisition of decoding and fluency skill. Jessica viewed reading comprehension as an outcome to be performed, one that is influenced as much by the type of performance asked of readers as by what readers know in terms of vocabulary and background knowledge. For both Rachelle and Jessica, reading comprehension was the product of an act that was influenced but not defined by a range of contextual, cognitive, and affective factors. They both privileged the value of what students showed that they knew about text and the ways in which they showed it.

In large part, the kinds of attributions that each teacher made about why students experienced or evidenced reading comprehension success or failure aligned closely with their definitions of reading comprehension. There is one additional noteworthy pattern that emerged in relation to the ways in which the teachers made attributions for student success and failure at reading comprehension. With the exception of Tracy, the remaining three participating teachers, Carol, Rachelle, and Jessica, all identified the presence or absence of a learning disability to be a reason why a student would naturally fail at or experience significant difficulty with reading comprehension. In some cases, attributions about learning disabilities aligned closely to the definition of reading comprehension that the teacher held. In other cases, the persistence of the identification of a learning disability in a student as an automatic roadblock to reading comprehension success stood in contradiction to the overall belief system about reading comprehension.

In those cases it was considered an explanatory class all its own, one that if in play, precluded other components of their working definition of reading comprehension.

Contextually, all four teachers passionately expressed a dislike of the ways in which students had been placed in language arts classroom that school year. Each teacher believed that it was problematic to group students into classrooms primarily on the basis of their language arts assessment scores. However, each teacher expressed a different rationale for her aversion to this type of ability grouping of students. Tracy felt that it was problematic to group students on the basis of a single, isolated skill set because it robs the classroom community of students with a range of talents to share with one another. Tracy was highly sensitive to issues related to the social and emotional development of her students. As such, she wanted each student to feel a sense of value around his or her own individual talents and to have an opportunity to share his or her talents within a community in which all talents, not just reading and writing capacity, were appreciated. She commented,

I think that they have so much that they could learn from each other irrelevant of language arts ability like artistic abilities and social abilities. I feel like they all have something fantastic to offer and when you take those talents out of a room and you have just one specific talent it is really a shame that they're not exposed to all that each student has to offer. (I-2)

Carol felt that it was problematic because it removed the opportunity to offer authentic peer mentoring experiences within the language arts classroom. She valued the ways in which students at different developmental points as readers and writers could

come to learn from one another and she had experienced providing students with these kinds of learning opportunities in previous years of teaching. She felt that her teaching lacked richness in this school year because she wasn't in the position to support students in supporting one another as well as she previously had. She reflected on those previous experiences, explaining,

There are a lot of things I miss. I think a main one is that of the challenge of how am I going to do this and how am I going to reach that kid and how am I going to challenge that kid. I felt like such a teacher because I had to think all of those things through and I still do but just not at as high a level. What I miss the most are the kids who are high ability really being mentors and examples and being able to help the kids who are lower ability and the other way around too the low ability teaching the high ability kids. That whole mixture of working together – I really miss that. [...] That can be very exciting when you have that in your room and you see it work. (I-2)

Rachelle felt that it was problematic to group students on the basis of assessment scores because of the impact it had on the teacher and her work as a member of a teaching community. She recognized that this kind of an arrangement gave certain teachers, namely those teachers who had the students in the top half of the student pool, an unfair advantage over other teachers to experience success with their students. It exacerbated the sense of frustration that some teachers would feel with their work and would contribute to a sense of divisiveness across teachers working on a grade level team. Rachelle was concerned about how such an arrangement impacted a collegial work

environment in which teachers should be collaborating with one another. In addition, in a teaching context with high-stakes accountability for both teachers and students, Rachelle worried about how teaching a group of predominantly low-performing students would reflect upon their teacher of record. She explained,

I had thirty-four of them that were struggling and it wasn't fair to them. Actually, in a way it wasn't fair to me because their test scores are not going to be impressive. The high reading groups will look good but those of us who took the low reading groups will not look as good. [...] Out of the two content areas, math and language arts and reading, two thirds of those as far as if anyone were to look at how I did as a teacher and use those scores as my assessment, I would look like two thirds of the content areas I did poorly in because of the kids I had for those content areas. In math it'll look like I'm a great math teacher. In language arts and reading I'm going to look pretty sub-standard. But I know in my heart and in my head I did the best I could. (I-3)

Jessica felt that it was problematic because dividing classes by student ability created an organizational arrangement across of group of teachers that made it difficult to teach in a cross-curricular manner. She recognized that this type of placement of students into subject area classes, in which students switch rooms and teachers for individual subject area instruction, inherently created a fragmented instructional experience for both teachers and students. Teachers were not able to integrate well instruction in other content areas into language arts instruction and vice-versa, nor were teachers able to tailor well content area instruction to the learning interests of students. This eliminated

an opportunity for teachers to do their work in a rich, relevant manner and for students to experience a holistic learning experience:

I think it would be really nice if we had time to do social studies reports where it's reading and writing and research. [...] It's just I think that we need more time so it'd be nice to be able to sit down and incorporate it through everything. Here you can't control what other teachers teach. It's nice to have your homeroom all day.

You would be able to intertwine a lot more through all of your subjects. (I-3)

This approach to student class placements also resulted in the teachers operating on or gravitating towards an assumption of student homogeneity. That is, the implied similarity amongst the students in a language arts classroom based on similarly higher or lower assessment scores led teachers to draw large-scale conclusions about the literacy learning capabilities and needs of their students as a whole unit. It obscured any sense that the students in the classroom still represented a range of individually developing readers and writers who had different patterns of strength and weakness to which the teachers should individually tailor their instruction. Instead, the teachers frequently referred to what they believed "these kids" or "this class" could or couldn't do. For example, when outlining the concerns that she had about teaching DesCartes terminology, Tracy commented, "I think for this class it's okay and they can understand it" (I-1). Again, when Jessica shared her exasperation with the difficulty of getting students to participate in independent reading, she concluded, "I have to fight them at DEAR time. I don't feel like they do that very well. My homeroom does huge but these kids don't like to read as much" (I-1).

The only exception to the teachers having and communicating a sense of student homogeneity was Rachelle. This might have been because she was newer to teaching, or she perceived her students to have such great needs, or she was willing to follow the general district directive to look closely at the breakdown of student assessment scores on the sub-measures of the language arts assessment. Regardless, over the course of school year, she embraced and communicated a sense that the students in her classroom were not homogeneous. She did not necessarily feel like she had the capacity in terms of tools and expertise to provide well-tailored instructional experiences to her students, but she did recognize that they were not the same as one another. She explained this conclusion as follows,

I've learned to work more at different levels. At the beginning of the year I pretty much had everyone at the on level books and workbooks. I've had to really recognize that even though we are ability grouped in our classroom technically we're not. Basically it's flexible grouping. Even though you would think with their RIT scores it's a pretty big clump but I've got so many outliers that I still have to differentiate a lot. [...] You know, in my mind, I'd think, "Well, this is pretty much the same ability", but even within this group I've got such a wide range. (I-2)

In summary, all four teachers adopted a particular stance based on a set of beliefs about the nature of reading comprehension and the core components that influence the development of reading comprehension and student reading comprehension performance. The teachers interacted with their construct of reading comprehension in a way that

assigned specific meaning to the particular elements emphasized and reflected in their reading comprehension instruction and vice-versa. All four teachers made different sets of attributions about why they believed that students generally succeeded or failed with reading comprehension. All four teachers objected to students being organized into language arts classrooms on the basis of their performance on a standardized assessment. The attributions for student reading comprehension success and failure and the rationales for their objections to student class placements varied in predictable ways, predictable in the sense that they could be made sense of in light of their definitions of reading comprehension. Finally, most of the participating teachers believed that student learning disabilities were critical reasons for why certain students consistently failed. Likewise, teachers adopted a belief of homogeneity when considering the strengths and needs of the students in their classroom.

Classroom reading comprehension instruction. Each teacher adopted a focused set of routines for consistent use in classroom reading comprehension instruction. That is, the teachers used the same or similar routines on a regular basis with different instructional texts to form the core of their approach to reading comprehension instruction. While the nature of these routines varied from one teacher to another, they were utilized for similar purposes. On the whole, routines were intended to either allow students to share their reading and thinking about texts with one another or to gain practice with reading, thinking within texts, and applying comprehension skills to texts.

Tracy and Carol had the most well developed repertoire of sharing and practice routines, but even that repertoire was relatively narrow. In particular, Tracy and Carol

had many more sharing routines in place that offered students the opportunity to bring their independent reading into the life of the language arts classroom. In addition, their sharing routines offered students many more opportunities to share with one another the thinking that they were doing in relation to a range of texts they were reading, both independently and instructionally. In contrast, Rachelle and Jessica utilized few, if any, routines for having students share reading with one another. Little accountability existed for students in relation to their independent reading practice, beyond taking Accelerated Reader tests, and Rachelle and Jessica both lacked either formal or informal structures for keeping track of the independent reading that students were doing. All four teachers regularly read aloud to their students, and in most cases, engaged in discussion, albeit minimal, around that read aloud.

All four teachers used a set of practice routines to give students experience with reading and working through text. The nature of these practice routines, however, differed widely from one another. Rachelle and Jessica both frequently had students participate in whole class oral reading or listening sessions with instructional text. Neither Rachelle nor Jessica wanted to belabor these reading sessions with in-depth discussion or note taking or work with the content of the text that might have resulted in exacerbating student disengagement with the reading. Rachelle and Jessica's students always encountered an instructional text in its entirety more than once. In Rachelle's classroom, students typically went through a given instructional text at least three times in a week – once listening to it on audio CD, once reading it orally without interruption, and once reading it and completing a comprehension-based handout or assignment either

during or after the reading. Jessica's students typically went through a given text twice in a week – once to discuss background knowledge, preview the text extensively, and answer comprehension questions about it and once to exhibit fluency and to review key vocabulary and text events and ideas prior to taking an Accelerated Reader test on the text. Rachelle and Jessica did not discuss the content of a text or the handouts completed in relation to a text beyond that done during the time spent completing those things. They worked to move students through text and on to the next text in as expeditious a manner possible.

Tracy and Carol rarely had students reading aloud to one another or listening to instructional text. In their classrooms, students read the instructional text independently or in partners or small groups. Their students carried out a significant number of the practice routines that Tracy and Carol employed during the act of reading the instructional text, frequently taking notes on the text in a graphic organizer or looking for examples of a comprehension skill or text element while reading the text. Tracy and Carol's students may have spent time working in an instructional text at more than one point during the course of a given week, but they rarely encountered an instructional text in its entirety more than once. Typically the additional time spent with a text was spent discussing the content of the text or discussing the notes or skill examples that they had recorded while reading it. Tracy and Carol worked to create opportunities for students to extend their experiences with instructional texts in other ways, via extended research experiences, writing assignments, or projects.

All four teachers used their core reading programs extensively in the course of their reading comprehension instruction. Three of the four teachers, Tracy, Carol, and Jessica were selective in their usage of the core reading program, viewing the core reading program as a curricular resources to be adapted, not adopted, and opting to incorporate certain elements of the program and teachers' manual into their regular routines and intentionally omitting other elements. Tracy seemed to utilize the core reading program the least, treating it as a source for instructional texts and comprehension skills and little more. Carol also identified instructional texts and comprehension skills from the core reading program for use in her classroom, in conjunction with Tracy, and also noted that she referenced the comprehension questions that appeared in the teachers' manual at times. Jessica used the core reading program as a source for instructional texts, comprehension skills and skill handouts, vocabulary words and vocabulary handouts, and occasionally comprehension questions. Rachelle began the school year using the core reading program as the primary structure for her reading instruction, following the elements of the weekly schedule that she felt that she had the capacity to carry out as closely to recommended as possible. By the end of the school year, Rachelle reported that she was using the core reading program much more selectively and had identified a couple of components of the materials that she choose to use regularly. These included the instructional texts and audio CDs that accompanied them and the comprehension skills and skill handouts.

In the experience of all four teachers, the core reading program represented the primary source of instructional text within their reading instruction. All four teachers

also taught the comprehension skills that appeared in the core reading program as presented. That is, none of the teachers altered the nature of the comprehension skills as they existed in the core reading program; however, all four teachers made deviations from or ignored the instructional recommendations made for how to teach those skills. The same pattern was true of the DesCartes Continuum of Learning curriculum framework. All four teachers incorporated, to some degree, the DesCartes vocabulary and text analysis skill instruction into their teaching. While all of the teachers made choices about which DesCartes skills to incorporate, none of the teachers made adaptations to those skills they had chosen from how they were presented or described in the DesCartes materials. Tracy and Carol devised their own approaches to incorporating and addressing the elements of DesCartes while Jessica and Rachelle used the instructional recommendations and resources that had been compiled at the district level for use with DesCartes and their HAWKS intervention skill instruction teaching.

All four teachers referenced the use of effective reader strategies and approaches to engage with and respond to text during the course of their reading comprehension instruction. All four teachers mentioned strategies to students and either prompted students to use them or questioned students about their use. Only Tracy and Carol discussed or evidenced active teaching of either reading strategies or text engagement and response approaches. None of the four teachers were seen regularly modeling them or providing fully developed, explicit explanations to students about their use.

All four teachers primarily used a whole group approach to the delivery of their reading comprehension instruction. There were few instances in any of the classrooms

where teachers provided either different instructional experiences or different instructional materials to any subset of students. Tracy, Carol, and Jessica all grouped students into partners or small groups to complete readings, assignments, or projects as part of their reading comprehension instruction, but in all of these cases all of the pairs or small groups were doing the same work. Rachelle was the lone exception to this pattern. Towards the end of the school year, Rachelle attempted to put her students into small groups on the basis of their performance on the mid-year language arts assessment. Within these small groups, students were engaged in the same types of work, but Rachelle gave them different materials with which to complete that work. She had all the students reading out of the leveled text that accompanied the core reading program, but with texts of different levels. She had all the students completing work related to identification of setting, character traits, and plot events in the leveled texts, but with handouts of differing levels of complexity. For example, one group had to draw an illustration of the setting of their text while another had to write a summative description of the setting of their text. I did not observe any of the teachers conducting any instruction in a small group setting; however, both Tracy and Carol discussed carrying out small group teaching in previous school years when student class placements had been made differently.

Each teacher identified and evidenced a different set of principles for making decisions about reading comprehension instruction. That is, each teacher used a different set of guiding principles to lead them to decide what to do in their reading comprehension instruction and in what ways to do it. Tracy was guided in her decision-making by

fulfilling a sense of responsibility and professional obligation to her position and her fellow teaching colleagues and by meeting the perceived needs of her students in a holistic sense. Carol was guided in her decision-making by creating a literate community in which she was viewed as a legitimate fellow reader and by fostering a sense of authenticity within language arts work in which students had the opportunity to create and share around text. Rachelle was guided in her decision-making by a need to cope with her personal sense of frustration with the challenges of her teaching world and a desire to reduce the difficulty and frustration that her students experience with reading comprehension learning. Jessica was guided in her decision-making by an intention to prepare students for reading comprehension assessment and an interest in helping students to recognize the meaningfulness of reading in their school and personal lives.

Learning about reading comprehension instruction. Tracy, Carol, Rachelle, and Jessica had each experienced a significantly different trajectory in their learning about reading comprehension instruction. The differences in those individual trajectories were marked by their access to key sources of information and perceived opportunities to participate in critical learning experiences. In addition, the current working concerns of each teacher offers some insight into the future learning she hoped to experience in order to improve her reading comprehension instruction.

All four of the teachers identified their district provided curriculum frameworks and materials, in the form of the core reading program, the MAP[®] assessments, and the DesCartes Continuum of Learning, as sources of information which they accessed to one degree or another to inform their reading comprehension teaching. They each believed

that they had learned something useful about reading comprehension instruction from these materials, although not necessarily anything systematic or comprehensive. Instead, these sources of information were deemed informative in bits and pieces, with a suggested question here informing how Carol discusses text with students or a skill explanation there informing how Jessica elucidates the value of a reading assignment to her students. Just as their use of these materials was largely selective, so was the learning experienced as a result of their interactions with them equally as selective.

Beyond the materials offered for their use by the district, each teacher had differential access to additional sources of information that she believed had played a significant role in her learning about reading comprehension instruction. Tracy and Carol were both convinced that the time that they had each spent reading and learning about young adult literature was critically important to them knowing how to continually better support the reading comprehension development of their students. Tracy also credited her contact with professional texts, namely *Strategies that Work*, for helping her to become a more effective reading strategies teacher in her classroom over time. Rachelle and Jessica both expressed a sense of frustration over a lack of access to additional sources of information about reading comprehension instruction. Rachelle had garnered some additional resources for teaching from the DesCartes framework from the district differentiated instruction coordinator, to whom she had reached out personally for assistance. Jessica asked at several junctures if I knew of additional resources that she might access for information about reading comprehension and reading comprehension instruction. The teachers occupied a wide range of positions on the types of resources

that they had been able to access or found useful for continued learning on reading comprehension instruction.

The teachers also perceived themselves to occupy very different positions in terms of the kinds of collegial support to which they had regular access that could contribute to their ongoing professional learning. Both Tracy and Carol cited their working relationship with one another as an important venue through which they experienced embedded learning in their teaching worlds. That is, both Tracy and Carol felt that the chance that they had to plan and carry out reading comprehension instruction in tandem with another, the regularly allocated time to meet together to discuss their instruction, and the ongoing access to the thinking, expertise, and insight of the other was allowing them to have a year of teaching rich in learning about not only reading comprehension instruction but also language arts instruction more broadly.

Both Rachelle and Jessica cited that a desire to work more collaboratively with other teaching professionals as an avenue for future learning, including other members of their grade level team. The irony in their sense of isolation in their work and their desire to work with others is that they occupied classrooms immediately adjacent to one another and were members of the same grade level team. They communicated a sense of respect and appreciation for their other grade level team members, including one another, but acknowledged that there was too much other work to be done as a team to allow time for collegial collaboration around classroom instruction in any systematic way. Instead Rachelle and Jessica both felt quite alone in their day-to-day teaching work and the

challenges which they faced in that work as well as in their progress toward improvement and learning about reading comprehension instruction.

These differences in their current sources of professional support in learning also existed across the kinds of learning experiences in which the teachers had already participated. Tracy believed that she had had an abundance of opportunities in her first years of teaching to experience learning about reading comprehension instruction. Most notably, Tracy identified a series of formal and informal teacher mentors with whom she had spent extensive amounts of time talking and asking questions about a range of instructional challenges, including those surrounding reading comprehension instruction. Carol was a naturally self-reflective person, and as a result of this disposition, believed that she had been able to learn a great deal about reading comprehension instruction as a result of evaluating and thinking through her past reading comprehension instruction. She also cited her work as a member of a middle school level instructional team as important to her earlier learning about reading comprehension instruction. Rachelle believed that she was in the midst of having a critical learning experience about reading comprehension instruction as a result of being in her first year of teaching. She also cited her previous work with the Wilson[®] Reading System as important for informing her about the underlying capabilities that support the development of reading fluency, which in turn leads to reading comprehension. Jessica believed that she had yet to participate in a learning experience that was specific to helping her improve her reading comprehension instruction. She cited her pre-service teacher education classes that had covered teaching with multiple intelligences and a range of learning styles in mind as being peripherally

helpful. She also was curious about what kinds of experiences might be available for learning more about reading comprehension instruction more specifically.

All four teachers expressed or evidenced a core set of concerns about their current reading comprehension instruction that were remarkably similar. Tracy, Carol, Rachelle, and Jessica all identified concerns about student learning, about the execution of instruction, and about their structural context. In terms of student learning, student engagement with reading and in reading instruction was the primary concern that existed across teachers. Every teacher communicated concerns about what extent and how well their students engaged with the act of reading and with their reading comprehension instruction. Every teacher communicated concerns about the efficacy of her reading comprehension instruction, with particular worry surrounding the integration of multiple curriculum materials and frameworks and the use of instructional time in their classroom. Every teacher communicated concerns about the way in which students had been placed into language arts classrooms, and every teacher had a sense of concern around the opportunity or the continuation of the opportunity to work closely with colleagues.

Most notably to the focus of this study, every teacher communicated a sense of insecurity about meeting the needs of struggling readers. Linked to the concerns about supporting struggling students, every teacher communicated a sense of concern about student fluency development and the relationship between achieving fluency and experiencing comprehension success. In addition, the primary set of concerns related to helping struggling students with comprehension directly were oriented around helping students to do two things: remember what they had read and identify and make inferences

about the main ideas and events of a text. Not one of the four participating teachers in this study felt that she had the tools, resources, expertise, or experience to successfully foster the growth of students who exhibited difficulty with reading comprehension. Not one of the four participating teachers felt that she had been adequately prepared in her pre-service training or adequately supported in her current teaching context to address the challenge of successfully supporting the reading comprehension development of her most struggling students.

In addition, several of the teachers expressed other concerns as well. Tracy communicated a sense of concern that the expectations for success in language arts learning were so narrowly focused on standardized test performance. She also was the only teacher who had trepidation over the nature and volume of her reading curriculum as they were organized and recommended in the curriculum materials. Finally, Rachelle communicated a sense of concern about the management and planning and preparation demands that existed for her in her first year of teaching. She also was the only teacher who had serious concerns about the language arts assessment as an accountability measure that reflected upon the capabilities and effectiveness of the teacher as opposed to the status of the student.

In summary, all four teachers expressed a desire to continue to learn about and improve at providing reading comprehension instruction for their students. Every teacher believed that she had acquired small bits of valuable information from throughout their curriculum materials. Every teacher was concerned about how well students were learning and engaging in learning in their classroom as well as whether she had the most

supportive structures in place to facilitate her best teaching. Every teacher identified knowledge for the teaching of struggling readers as an area in which she did not know enough and wanted to learn more. Two of the teachers, Tracy and Carol, identified a set of additional sources of information, of critical learning experiences, and of ongoing collegial support that had contributed to their development as reading comprehension teachers. The other two teachers, Rachelle and Jessica, expressed a sense of frustration with having a lack of access to additional sources of information, critical learning experiences, and ongoing collegial support that would contribute to their development as reading comprehension teachers. Each teacher felt that she was providing students the best reading comprehension instruction that she could in her given teaching context with the learning that she had been able to do and was currently doing about reading comprehension instruction.

Conclusion. There were several patterns of similarity that emerged across the experiences of the participating teachers with reading comprehension instruction. First, every teacher had concerns about the efficacy of her instruction, the learning outcomes of her students, particularly the most struggling ones, and the contextual conditions that surrounded her teaching world. Second, every teacher utilized a small, consistent set of routines for sharing and practicing with text in her classroom. These routines tended to lack an orientation towards direct, explicit talk about reading comprehension and the application of reading comprehension strategies to it, although all of the teachers referenced and prompted student use of reading comprehension strategies. Reading comprehension instruction was predominantly delivered to students in a whole group

setting and there was minimal differentiated teaching or grouping during the course of it. Finally, every teacher taught the skills presented in her curriculum materials with little adaptation or adjustment to them.

The differences that emerged across the experiences of the four teachers did so in a predictable fashion that could be linked to the definitions that the teachers held of reading comprehension. These definitions influenced how the teachers interpreted the actions and outcomes of the students in their classrooms in the form of the attributions that the teachers made about student reading comprehension success and failure and how the teachers broadly made decisions about their reading comprehension instruction. Finally, there were distinct differences in the teachers' perceptions of the sources of information that best inform their understanding of reading comprehension instruction and of the opportunities that they had to both experience learning about reading comprehension instruction and to work in a collaborative fashion with other teaching professionals in their buildings.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

Chapter Introduction

This study examined the experiences of four upper elementary teachers with reading comprehension instruction. Using a case study methodological approach involving a series of interviews and classroom observations, I examined how each teacher worked to foster student reading comprehension capabilities within her classroom. The findings of this study lend support to earlier findings that exist in the research literature in relation to reading comprehension instruction, curriculum materials usage, and teacher learning. In addition, they suggest several implications for current professional development and research endeavors as well as new and promising directions for future scholarship.

Discussion

There are multiple points of agreement between the findings of this study and the existing research literature on reading comprehension instruction, curriculum materials usage, and teacher learning.

Reading comprehension instruction. The findings of this study reaffirm several dominant themes in the research literature regarding reading comprehension instruction, particularly in the upper elementary classrooms. Specifically, the findings of this study suggest that reading comprehension instruction is a relatively challenging enterprise for most teachers, one for which teachers feel ill prepared to carry out well, particularly in the service of their most struggling students (Hilden & Pressley, 2007). This is characteristic of both the results of this study and the larger literature on reading

comprehension instruction in three ways. First, teachers seem to have a tendency to adopt and utilize a small, consistent set of classroom routines to comprise their reading comprehension instruction (Pressley et al., 1998). While the exact content and nature of these routines vary from teacher to teacher, even within a single school building or district, they do not vary within the classroom of any individual teacher. That is, individual teachers seem to settle on a narrow set of instructional practices which they feel comfortable carrying out with their students and then stick to those practices on a regular basis. Without a compelling rationale or support system, teachers seem hard pressed to alter or expand the repertoire of classroom routines and instructional practices that they use to support student reading comprehension development.

Second, many teachers feel especially challenged by the task of fostering student reading comprehension skill and strategy usage (Hilden & Pressley, 2007). Teachers evidence great difficulty understanding the nature of reading comprehension skills and strategies, communicating their nuances to students, and creating instructional contexts and learning experiences that promote their acquisition by students. In particular, teachers do not spontaneously develop and use the kinds of classroom talk and instructional language that is most effective at supporting students in learning about and using reading comprehension skills and strategies and in processing text content (Duffy, 1993; Duffy, Roehler, & Rackliffe, 1986; Duffy et al., 1987). Instead, teachers seem to require that their own learning experiences and long-term support systems help them acquire the kinds of discussion orientations and talk that will best promote student reading comprehension proficiency.

Third, on the whole there is limited evidence that teachers consistently employ classroom practices or instructional routines that are reflective of what might be considered rich, active, and engaging reading comprehension instruction (Durkin, 1978/1979, 1981, 1984). Instead, much of what teachers tend to use and label as reading comprehension instruction still serves an assessment function which helps teachers to determine how well students have understood a given text instead of instructing students about how to better make sense of a range of texts in a thoughtful, sophisticated way.

Curriculum materials. Curriculum materials for upper elementary reading appear to continue to yield a relatively significant degree of influence over the enacted reading comprehension content and instruction that teachers provide students (Barr & Sadow, 1989; Durkin, 1984). Since a collection of scholars have raised serious concerns about the ways in which reading comprehension instruction is organized and recommended to be carried out in these materials (McGill-Franzen et al, 2006; Dewitz, Jones, & Leahy, 2009), it seems to be feasible to suggest that the materials themselves may play a role in the noted lack of rich reading comprehension instruction occurring in upper elementary classrooms. In addition, it might be important to consider how changes in the design of curriculum materials could potentially impact the reading comprehension instruction provided by many upper elementary teachers (Ball & Cohen, 1996).

As has been suggested with curriculum materials for math and science educations, the findings of this study support the use of applying a “teaching as design” framework (Brown & Edelson, 2003) to the use of curriculum materials for reading instruction. That is, based on how the teachers in this study conceptualized of and utilized their curriculum

materials as resources, it seems reasonable to further examine teacher use of curriculum materials for reading instruction through the lens of a design process: teachers read materials, select and enact instructional tasks from the materials, respond to students during the enactment of those tasks, and then map instruction over time. The application of such a framework to the use of language arts curriculum materials may shed additional light into the ways in which teachers both experience learning or limitations with their curriculum materials.

Teacher learning. Finally, the findings of this study offer two important points of agreement with the existing research literature on teacher learning. First and foremost, the findings of this study represent continued confirmation that teachers appreciate, value, and perceive as beneficial those professional learning opportunities that are based on and carried out in the context of sustained collaboration (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Teachers want to experience learning that will contribute to instructional improvement and they find the most effective and meaningful means through which to do so involve working closely with others over extended periods of time. In addition, these findings lend credence to the suggestion that early teaching experiences are especially formative and influential on teacher development over time (Valencia, Place, Martin, & Grossman, 2006). Special attention should continue to be paid to the kinds of experiences teachers are having during their early years in the profession and how those experiences impact their growth and learning over time. Together, these findings suggest that both early and ongoing teacher learning experiences need to be carefully crafted and executed with a

mindfulness towards giving teachers the opportunity to carry out their work in a collaborative context.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest several important implications for current and future professional development and research endeavors.

Professional development. Professional developers need to take into consideration how the teachers with whom they work conceptualize the construct of reading comprehension, independent of planning and carrying out reading comprehension instruction. These working definitions of reading comprehension both influence and are influenced by what teachers choose to do around reading comprehension development with their students in their classrooms. If professional developers are able to help teachers broaden and complicate their understanding of reading comprehension and recognize the impact that such a revised framework can have on their instruction, this may make the task of supporting and fostering the growth of all teachers a more efficacious endeavor.

Teachers have a tendency to regularly utilize a consistent core of instructional routines in their classrooms (Pressley et al., 1998), and I found this to be the case in this study as well. Professional developers might consider working to help teachers both evaluate their existing repertoire of classroom routines and expand that repertoire to incorporate more powerful ones. Instructional improvement efforts could be conceptualized as changes that alter instructional routines in degrees over time to increase their efficacy as well as changes that introduce completely new or different routines that

replace ineffective ones. I suspect that most teachers are similar to the teachers in this study in that they have components, although fragmented, of powerful routines and ways of talking already in place in their classrooms. The goal of professional development efforts should be to help teachers recognize what is going well and in what ways and why and to build from that foundation.

In addition, another of the important findings of this study was that teachers adapted their core reading programs according to what aligns with their belief systems about reading development, what they find personally useful or manageable, and what fits with their repertoire of instructional routines. Teachers viewed the core reading program as a resource to be accessed as opposed to a teaching approach to be faithfully implemented. Professional developers might consider working with teachers around curriculum materials in such a way as to support a practice of mindful adaptation of the materials, one that aligns with what is known about the effective teaching of reading comprehension.

The teachers in this study found it difficult to naturally and consistently embed the kinds of instructional talk that have been shown to be most beneficial for reading comprehension development. Professional developers might consider working with teachers to learn how to integrate direct, explicit talk about reading comprehension strategies and how to foster classroom discussions that emphasize reasoning and accountability to the text within their classroom routines. In particular, teachers need to develop more expertise for thinking about and carrying out reading comprehension

instruction with struggling readers, particular in relation to the development of instructional talk that is robust, meaningful, and powerful for those students.

Finally, teachers in this study, as in previous research, perceived the opportunity to work in a collaborative fashion with colleagues as beneficial to their professional learning and growth. Better structures are required to create the kind of collaborative work environment in which colleagues can serve one another as professional support systems in the process of instructional improvement. This is of particular importance for teachers who are early in their careers, most notably, first year teachers.

Research. There are several avenues of future research that seem pertinent to explore as a result of the findings of this study. I would like to further pursue how definitions of reading comprehension play an active role in how teachers plan, organize, and carry out reading comprehension instruction, how teachers interpret student reading comprehension performance and the factors behind it, and how teachers engage in processes of professional learning and instructional improvement. In addition, I would like to further pursue how teachers' perceptions of their learning align with changes in teaching practice. Specifically, it seems worthwhile to pay attention to what teachers identify as significant elements in their learning and to craft learning experiences that reflect the critical components of those self-identified learning opportunities. It is hoped that this study might serve a starting point for future research in these areas by others as well.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Documents

Study Information Sheet

Teachers' Experiences with Comprehension Instruction in Upper Elementary Classrooms

INTRODUCTION: The goal of this study is to understand the experiences of upper elementary teachers providing comprehension instruction to students, particularly while drawing off of or adapting core reading programs. Comprehension instruction is defined as reading instruction focused on helping students to construct and acquire meaning from whole texts, especially through the use of text processing strategies. The intent of this study is to re-focus attention and interest on the development of the expertise of teachers for making decisions that result in powerful and responsive reading instruction. The study is guided by the following research questions:

What is the nature of upper elementary teachers' experiences with comprehension instruction, particularly when using and adapting core reading programs?

- How do teachers organize and provide comprehension instruction to students?
- What sources of information do teachers use when making decisions about comprehension instruction?
- How do teachers believe that they have learned to provide explanations and information to students about comprehension and text processing strategies?
- What do teachers believe that they have learned from the experience of having access to and using their core reading program and other professional materials?

The intended approach is to develop cases studies of individual teachers in order to better understand teachers' experiences organizing, carrying out, and learning about comprehension instruction. There is a particular interest in the role of core reading programs and the experiences of making adaptations to them in order to meet the needs of all readers.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT: It is intended that four 3-5 grades participating teachers will be recruited from across two school buildings. Participating teachers should be those who are responsible for providing reading instruction to a heterogeneous group of students. It is expected and welcomed that participating teachers range in years of experience and educational attainment. Data would be collected from each participating teacher as follows:

- Teacher would be observed during reading instruction every day for three consecutive weeks. These observed reading instruction periods would be audio recorded. During observations, field notes would be taken on a laptop computer by the researcher. The researcher would sit in an unobtrusive location in the classroom and would follow and note the action and talk of the teacher with students.
- Teachers would be asked following each observation to share briefly, either in person with the researcher or via e-mail, any thoughts about or reactions to that day's teaching.

- Teachers would participate in a one hour interview during each week of observation and one final interview within the last two weeks of the school year, for a total of 4 interviews. These interviews will be audio recorded.
- Teachers would be asked to share copies of any lesson plans, as well as any other resources that they find helpful for thinking about or planning their instruction.
- Teachers would be asked over summer 2008 to review any findings about their experiences as comprehension teachers for accuracy and give feedback to the researcher.

Tentative Schedule:

- Teacher #1: Observations beginning 1/14 through 2/1 (no school on 1/21)
- Teacher #2: Observations beginning 2/4 through 2/22 (no school on 2/18)
- Teacher #3: Observations beginning 3/10 through 3/28 (no school on 3/21)
- Teacher #4: Observations beginning 4/21 through 5/9 (no school on 5/2)

RISKS: There is minimal risk associated with participating in this study. Participating teachers would be observed in the context of providing instruction to students and interviewed regarding those observations. These observations and interviews will not constitute any discomfort or stress greater than that encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS: The findings from this research may benefit teachers, teacher educators, and those who support teachers once the results have been published.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All information gathered during the study will be kept confidential and will at no time be shared with anyone outside the researcher and the faculty advisor. Participating teachers will select a pseudonym that they will be referred to throughout the research process and in any written reports. All data collection files will be marked with participant pseudonyms and at no time will participants be referred to by their own names. All audio recordings would be transcribed by the researcher. Data will be stored securely in a secure location and only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the study.

CONTACT: If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Katie Solic, at [Number]. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Office at {Number}.

PARTICIPATION: Participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

Informed Consent Statement

Teachers' Experiences with Comprehension Instruction in Upper Elementary Classrooms

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand upper elementary teachers' experiences planning and carrying out comprehension instruction.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Each participant will be observed during reading instruction for three consecutive weeks during spring 2008. The researcher will take field notes that record your interactions with students during instruction. Observations will be audio-taped, given your consent and the consent of your students, to ensure an accurate representation of your teaching. Following each observation, each participant will be asked to share briefly, either in person with the researcher or via e-mail, any thoughts about or reactions to that day's teaching.

Each participant will be interviewed once per week, as well as once at the end of the school year, for a total four one hour interviews. Interviews will be audio-taped, given your consent, to ensure an accurate representation of the interview. Audio tapes of all observations and interviews will be transcribed by the researcher, after which they will be stored securely for the remainder of the study. Each participant will be asked over summer 2008 to review any findings about their experiences as comprehension teachers for accuracy and give feedback to the researcher.

RISKS

There is minimal risk associated with participating in this study. Participating teachers will be observed in the context of providing instruction to students and interviewed regarding those observations. These observations and interviews will not constitute any discomfort or stress greater than that encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS

The findings from this research may benefit teachers, teacher educators, and those who support teachers once the results have been published.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information gathered during the study will be kept confidential and will at no time be shared with anyone outside the researcher and the faculty advisor. You will be asked to select a pseudonym that you will be referred to throughout the research process and in any written reports. All data collection files will be marked with your pseudonym and at no time will you be referred to by your own names. All audio recordings would be transcribed by the researcher. Data will be stored securely in a secure location and only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

Participant initials _____

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

The University of Tennessee does not "automatically" reimburse participants for medical claims. If physical injury is suffered in the course of research, please notify Katie Solic at [Number].

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact Katie Solic at [Number] or Dr. Anne McGill-Franzen at the University of Tennessee Reading Center, [Number]. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee Office of Research Compliance Officer at [Number].

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Research Bargain

Katie's Responsibilities:

- Communicate clearly about the intent of the study and the expected involvement of each person participating.
- Schedule classroom observations and interviews in advance and confirm that scheduled times and dates work well for participating teachers.
- Communicate any changes of schedule promptly.
- Enter and exit classroom quietly and without interruption.
- Conduct observations from a non-obtrusive seat.
- Keep interactions with students to a minimum as not to distract from instruction.
- Explain and demonstrate any technology being utilized clearly and thoroughly.
- Answer all questions promptly and thoroughly.
- Share findings with participants and request feedback and clarification.
- Offer instructional support to participating teachers following the conclusion of data collection.

Participating Teacher's Responsibilities:

- Carry out daily reading instruction as normally planned and organized.
- Distribute and collect parent permission forms.
- Be willing and able to share thinking about instructional decisions related to reading.
- Be willing to share written lesson plans and other useful materials for designing and thinking about instruction.
- E-mail any reactions to classroom instruction during three weeks of observation.
- Meet for three one hour interviews over three weeks of observation.
- Meet for an additional one hour interview in last two weeks of school.
- Review findings during August 2008 and meet to clarify findings.
- Communicate any changes that would impact observation or interview schedules as soon as possible.
- Ask questions or voice concerns about study as they arise.

Time Commitment:

- Teacher #1: Observations 1/14 through 2/1 (No school on 1/21)
- Teacher #2: Observations 2/4 through 2/22 (No school on 2/18)
- Teacher #3: Observations 3/10 through 3/28 (No school on 3/21)
- Teacher #4: Observations 4/21 through 5/9 (No school on 5/2)
- Final interviews scheduled during weeks of 5/12-5/23
- Findings reviews scheduled during August 2008

Parental Letter of Consent

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child's teacher is participating in a research study that has been approved by both the University of Tennessee (my home university) and the Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation. The purpose of the study is to understand how upper elementary teachers plan and provide reading comprehension instruction to students. This spring I will be observing and audio-taping your child's teacher during reading instruction. Here is what I will be doing and when:

I will visit your child's classroom during the reading instruction portion of the day for three consecutive weeks. During these visits, I will be sitting in the classroom and taking notes on a laptop computer as well as audio-taping classroom instruction. The focus of audio-taping and note-taking is to create an accurate record of what your child's teacher says and does in the course of their teaching. Participation in the study will allow your child to be included in note-taking about and audio-taping of his/her teacher's classroom instruction. At no point in time will your child be referred to by their name in either observation notes or written transcripts of audio-tapings. I will transcribe all audio-tapes. All files and tapes will remain confidential and will be stored in a secure location to which only my advisor and I will have access.

There is minimal risk associated with this research study. If at any time your child becomes uncomfortable with the process, he/she may elect to withdraw with no consequence. The benefits from this study include that the findings may be of help to teachers, teacher educators, and those who support teachers.

If you have questions at any time about the study, you may contact me, Katie Solic, at [Number] or [E-mail Address].

If you have any questions about your child's right as a participant, contact the Compliance Section of the Office of Research at [Number].

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary; you, or your child, may decline to participate without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If your child withdraws from the study before data collection is completed, data related to him/her will be destroyed.

Thank you for your consideration,
Katie Solic

Doctoral Candidate
Department of Theory and Practice in Teacher Education

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I grant permission for my son/daughter, _____, to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

*Please ask your child to return this form to his/her teacher as soon as possible. Please keep the second copy for your records.

Student Assent Statement

Thank you for meeting with me today. I would like to start by telling you about the project I am working on, so that you may decide for yourself if you are willing to participate in it. Your parent/guardian, teacher, and school have provided me with permission to talk to you about the project.

As a reading teacher, I believe it is important to learn how teachers plan and go about teaching students to understand what they read. I would like to observe and audio-tape your teacher for three weeks in order to learn how he/she teaches you to understand what you read. I am going to take notes on my laptop and audio-tape about what your teacher says and does during reading instruction. If you agree to participate, I may record what you say and do as well. I will never at any time write down your actual name in my notes or in my written copies of the audio-taping.

I will use my notes and audio-tapes, along with other information I receive from your teacher, to learn how he/she teaches you to understand what you read. I will be talking with your teacher about how he/she teaches you, but I will not be talking about your grades, so your grades will not be affected by your participation. I do plan to publish what I learn in journals written for teachers and professors, as well as present the results at teacher conferences. Do you have any questions about this project?

At this time I would like for you to decide whether you are interested in participating in this project. If you are, please sign and date this paper below. If you are not, please understand there are no consequences for this decision, and it has been a pleasure to meet you.

If at any time you have questions, you may contact me, Katie Solic, at [Number] or [E-mail Address].

(If student decides to participate) Thank you for agreeing to participate. I will be sitting in your classroom during reading instruction, but I will not interrupt what you and your teacher are doing. I want you to know that you may, at any time, decide to stop participating should you become uncomfortable.

I agree to participate in this research project. I understand the purpose of the project, and understand that I may decide to stop participating if I become uncomfortable.

Student name: _____

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Master Interview Guiding Questions

Master Interview Guiding Questions

Background and Training

- Why don't you start off by talking about how you became a 4th or 5th grade teacher?
- Tell me how your pre-service teacher training experiences prepared you to teach reading.

Induction and Professional Development

- How do you think you have come to teach reading comprehension that way that you do and/or learned to teach reading comprehension?
- Can you think of a time when you learned something important about teaching reading comprehension?
- What would you like to know more about when it comes to teaching reading comprehension?
- What concerns you most about teaching students to understand what they read?

Core Reading Program Experience

- What are your thoughts about your new core reading program?
- Are there specific parts of the teacher's manual that you find useful or valuable?
- What portions of the core reading program do you find valuable or useful to use with students?
- Describe the parts of the core reading program that you do not like and why.
- Share how you use the core reading program when you plan for instruction/
- Take me through a typical week of teaching with the core reading program.

Perspectives on Reading and Reading Comprehension

- What is your thinking on what readers do in general to understand what they read?
- Why do you think students who struggle as readers struggle and students who have success are successful?

Perspectives on Reading Comprehension Instruction

- Will you share a little bit about the process you use to plan for reading instruction?
- How has the way that you have approached teaching reading changed over your years of experience? What has stayed the same and what is different?
- What kind of information do you find helpful for knowing where your students are at as readers?
- What do you see as the different strengths and weaknesses of your students as readers?

- What do you think are the parts of your reading teaching that are working really well and what are the parts that you'd like to keep working on?
- What is your thinking about situations during discussion where you ask a question and you get responses that are way off the mark?
- What are your thoughts on Accelerated Reader and how do you use it with your students?
- How do you decide what your questions are going to be while you are reading aloud?
- How do you decide what to say to students when you are giving an explanation related to reading comprehension?
- Which comprehension strategies do you find easy to teach and which ones do you find more difficult?
- Which strategies do you think are most important for helping students to improve at how they comprehend what they read?
- What do you find challenging about teaching reading comprehension and what goes well for you?
- What are your feelings about DesCartes and teaching with the DesCartes terminology?
- Talk a little bit about the assessments you use for reading and your thoughts about them.
- How do you make decisions about what you choose to teach for reading out of the resources that are available to you?

Final Reflections

- How do you think that year went for you with reading?
- Is there anything else that has come to mind throughout this process about reading comprehension instruction that is really important to you and how you think about it?

Appendix C: Data Samples

Sample Interview Transcript Excerpt

Teacher 2 Interview 1

Elementary #1
2/13/08 6:45-7:40 a.m.

I: I'm glad to get to talk to you I was driving out here and thinking that I've been spending a lot of time with you and not getting to talk so

T: Oh I know I know I know

I: I actually felt like it had been a long time since I had been out here when I was

T: it has been I mean when you think of it it has but still when you're on that schedule of being here every day you know or supposed to be here every day

I: yeah and then it seems like such a long break to be gone

T: right

I: um could you start out by maybe talking a little bit about how you came to be a fifth grade teacher and what that process was like

T: oh sure sure this is my fifth year teaching and I was a nurse for a long time

I: really

T: uh huh

I: well I had heard you you were talking about a story from when you were a nurse

T: oh yes I tell them stories all the time (laughs) yeah I was and uh I worked at St. Joe med center

I: okay

T: and then I decided to stop doing that my husband traveled a lot and it was just too hard to work out with with the kids

I: schedules

T: yeah so I just decided I'd just stay at home for a while and be a mom at home and so I did that for a long and then decided it was right around my fortieth birthday and I wanted to really get back into having a career and just didn't feel prepared to go back into the medical field and just because of working weekends and all that and just felt like I had had enough of it so I just started subbing as for something to do um had no thought of even being a teacher at all

I: really

T: no no and I was really trying to decide though what is it I want to do and I pretty much decided I would go back into nursing I just had to take a course and to work my way back into it and um but I just started subbing and I just loved it and the more I subbed the more I loved it and people had always told me when I was nurse when I do um sometimes we'd do employee lectures and things like that or talks and they always said you should be a teacher you should be a teacher but I didn't it just wasn't something I even thought about

Sample Observation Protocol Excerpt

Elementary #1
Teacher 2 language arts classroom
2/8/08
8:05 – 11:00 a.m.
1 teacher, 30 students

I arrived in the classroom during the homeroom period in order to set up and be ready for the observation. The language arts class had been assigned the last four chapters of the novel study book to read last night. As I was walking in the door of the classroom, a student was talking to the teacher about the reading.

S: "I was trembling when I was writing my summary last night because I couldn't get it down fast enough."

Several others students are crowded around the front right table showing the teacher a fictional Hyde Park newsletter that they had created using information about characters in the story.

8:10 a.m. – Students from the other homerooms have come in and taken their seats at their tables. The teacher puts the daily language box on the overhead projector, which is projecting onto the slanted wall above the whiteboard. Students are to do the language box and then write in their journals.

[There seems to be a lot of excitement in the classroom this morning.]

Last night students finished reading their novel study book. After the morning student-run television program, the principal made an announcement that the local television station has just called and that the school building had won the weekly school level competition as part of the I Love to Read Challenge during the month of February. The school competition involves individuals voting for schools on the television station website. This school building had received over 5,000 votes but had only won by 28 votes. By being the winning school, the news station will have an assembly in the building this afternoon and a local television personality will read aloud to the student body.

8:15 a.m. – The teacher is working on an e-mail behind her desk at her computer. Students are working at their tables. The telephone rings and the teacher reminds a student that she is supposed to be at a student council meeting. The teacher is taking attendance by asking each table if everyone from that table is present. She puts up the language arts agenda on the television screen. It reads:

Lang. Boxes/Writing Journal
Read aloud/I Love to Read update
Spelling Test/Grammar
Novel Discussion/Groups
Dialogue mini-lesson
H/W: PowerPoint Prep.

The teacher is moving around from the back left table to the back right table to the front right table. She is stopping to talk to students at each table.

8:19 a.m. – The teacher moves over to stand to the left of the overhead with a blue pen in her hand. The language boxes for today involve five sentences in which students need to add capitalization, punctuation, and underlining as needed. When the teacher asks about number 1, three students raise their hands to answer.

T: "Pathetic, pathetic, what a pathetic response. Come on, you all did it. Table 2 I want to see some hands."

There is an appositive in the first sentence that needs to be set off by commas. The teacher asks students what the name of that sentence construction is called. Every student but five raise their hands to give the answer. The teacher gives an extended definition of appositives. The teacher continues calling on students for the remaining four sentences. The teacher asks students to make any corrections and keep it in either their reading binder or writing binder.

A student asks if he can read what he wrote in his journal.

S: “Finally *The Wright 3* is over but the coincidences remain unanswered. My main suspects are Mr. Dare and Vermeer. I read some of the Q&A with Blue Balliet and she says there is going to be another book.”

8: 34 a.m. – The teacher asks students to join her at the front of the room. She is sitting in the rocking chair. She asks student to move forward and away from the wall. The teacher is talking through the schedule on the television. The teacher begins to return I Love to Read calendars that she collected yesterday. She is announcing that the total number of minutes read by the class was 13, 604 with the minutes for several absent students still not included in the total. The chart paper graph is sitting between the rocking chair and the cement front wall. The students have earned extra recess and are voting on when they would like to have the extra recess time today or next week.

8:40 a.m. – The seven students who had made the Hyde Park newsletter are standing in between the overhead projector and the front right table facing the whiteboard. They are taking turns reading the newsletter to the rest of the class. The single page printed newsletter is modeled after the cover of a gossip magazine. As the students read the gossip items, the teacher is marking on the bar graph the number of minutes that had been read this week for I Love to Read.

8:45 a.m. – The teacher moves on to the peer read aloud session. The first student takes her seat in the rocking chair. She is reading from the book *Black Tuesday*. The teacher is sitting up against the left side of the front right table. She has a clipboard in her right hand and a red pen in her left and is taking notes while the student is reading aloud.

T: “The part that really jumped out at me, I don’t know about anyone else, was the Jell-O. You know those days, for her it was moments, when your brain just feels like there is a dense fog around it.”

S: “I chose this part because it really brings the story together.”

T: “So for you as a reader that is where it all comes together.”

The next student takes the rocking chair. She is reading from a book of poems. She is reading a poem entitled, “Chicago Poet”.

T: “It’s really refreshing to hear a poem. A different type of genre. Very refreshing. Why did you pick that poem?”

S: “When I read that looking glass poem I thought of the Robie House and the man in mirror.”

The next student takes the rocking chair. She is reading from *Twilight*.

S: “I’m reading the part that (Student name) read in case some of you didn’t hear it. She read it at the beginning of the year but I couldn’t even remember it.”

The student reads her selection.

Appendix D: Data Overview

Date	Formal Interview	Observation	Cancelled Observation	Reason
Weds, 1/16/08		T1, 8:05 – 11:00 a.m.		
Thurs., 1/17/08		T1, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.		
Fri., 1/18/08	T1	T1, 8:05 – 11:00 a.m.		
Tues., 1/22/08		T1, 8:05 – 10:20 a.m.		
Weds., 1/23/08		T1, 8:05 – 11:00 a.m.		
Thurs., 1/24/08		T1, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.		
Fri., 1/25/08	T1	T1, 8:05 – 11:00 a.m.		
Mon., 1/28/08		T1, 8:05 – 11:00 a.m.		
Tues., 1/29/08			T1	Personal Day
Weds., 1/30/08			T1	Snow Day
Thurs., 1/31/08		T1, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.		
Fri., 2/1/08			T1	Snow Day
Mon., 2/4/08		T2, 8:05 – 9:30 a.m.		
Tues., 2/5/08			T2	2 Hour Delay
Weds., 2/6/08		T2, 8:05 – 10:15 a.m.		
Thurs., 2/7/08		T2, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.		
Fri., 2/8/08		T2, 8:05 – 11:00 a.m.		
Mon., 2/11/08			T2	Snow Day
Tues., 2/12/08			T2	District PD
Weds., 2/13/08	T2	T2, 8:05 – 10:15 a.m.		
Thurs., 2/14/08		T2, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.		
Fri., 2/15/08		T2, 8:00 – 11:00 a.m.		
Tues., 2/19/08		T2, 8:05 – 11:00 a.m.		
Weds., 2/20/08	T2	T2, 8:05 – 10:15 a.m.		

Thurs., 2/21/08			T2	Personal Day
Fri., 2/22/08		T2, 8:00 – 11:00 a.m.		
Mon., 3/3/08		T1, 8:05 – 9:30 a.m.		
Tues., 3/4/08		T1, 8:05 – 10:15 a.m.		
Weds., 3/5/08	T1	T1, 8:05 – 10:15 a.m.		
Thurs., 3/6/08		T1, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.		
Fri., 3/7/08			T1	Movie Day
Mon., 3/17/08		T3, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Tues., 3/18/08			T3	Field Trip
Weds., 3/19/08		T3, 10:45 – 12:00 p.m.		
Thurs., 3/20/08		T3, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Mon., 3/24/08			T3	Sick Day
Tues., 3/25/08		T3, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Weds., 3/26/08	T3	T3, 11:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Thurs., 3/27/08		T3, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Fri., 3/28/08		T3, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Mon., 3/31/08		T3, 10:10 – 12:00 p.m.		
Tues., 4/1/08		T3, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Weds., 4/2/08			T3	No LA
Mon., 4/14/08		T3, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Tues., 4/15/08			T3	Sick Day
Weds., 4/16/08		T3, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Thurs., 4/17/08	T3	T3, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Fri., 4/18/08			T3	Art Smart
Mon., 4/21/08		T4, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Tues., 4/22/08			T4	Meeting

Weds., 4/23/08		T4, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Thurs., 4/24/08		T4, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Fri., 4/25/08			T4	MAP® Testing
Mon., 4/28/08		T4, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Tues., 4/29/08			T4	District PD
Weds., 4/30/08		T4, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Thurs., 5/1/08		T4, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Fri., 5/2/08	T4	T4, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Mon., 5/5/08		T4, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Tues., 5/6/08			T4	District PD
Weds., 5/7/08			T4	School Mother's Day Event
Thurs., 5/8/08	T4	T4, 10:05 – 12:00		
Fri., 5/9/08			T4	5 th Grade Graduation
Mon., 5/19/08		T2, 8:00 – 9:30 a.m.		
Tues., 5/20/08		T4, 10:05 – 12:00 p.m.		
Weds., 5/21/08	T1, T2, T4	T2, 8:05 – 10:15 a.m.		
Thurs., 5/22/08			T4	Textbook Collection
Thurs., 5/29/08	T3			
Total: 69 days of data collection	13 interviews	47 completed observations	20 cancelled observations	

Appendix E: Data Analysis Domains and Sample Documents

Domain Identifications by Teacher

Tracy	Carol	Rachelle	Jessica
Is a source of information for reading comprehension instruction	Is a source of information for reading comprehension instruction	Is a source of information for reading comprehension instruction	Is a source of information for reading comprehension instruction
Is a component of reading comprehension	Is a component of reading comprehension	Is a component of reading comprehension	Is a component of reading comprehension
Is a component of reading comprehension instruction	Is a component of reading comprehension instruction	Is a component of reading comprehension instruction	Is a component of reading comprehension instruction
Is a reason for student reading comprehension performance	Is a reason for student reading comprehension performance	Is a reason for student reading comprehension performance	Is a reason for reading comprehension performance
Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction	Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction	Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction	Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction
Is a way to use the core reading program for reading comprehension instruction	Is a way to use the core reading program for reading comprehension instruction	Is a way to use the core reading program for reading comprehension instruction	Is a way to use the core reading program for reading comprehension instruction
Is a way in which the teacher has learned about reading comprehension instruction	Is a way in which the teacher has learned about reading comprehension instruction	Is a way in which the teacher has learned about reading comprehension instruction	Is a way in which the teacher has learned about reading comprehension instruction
Is a reason for making instructional decisions	Is a way to draw off of own literacy experience in instruction	Is a way to respond to student reading comprehension difficulty	Is a way that reading comprehension represents a performance outcome
	Is a way to respond to students during read alouds and discussions	Is a way to respond to frustrations about reading comprehension instruction	Is a type of question to ask during reading comprehension instruction
		Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction specific to being a first year teacher	

Sample Domain Cover Sheet Page

Domain Analysis Domain Cover Sheet

- I Is a component of language arts instruction
 - Is a way to respond to students
 - Is used for instructional decisions
- III* Is a source of information for reading comprehension instruction
- IV* Is a component of reading comprehension instruction
- II Is a kind of language arts accountability measure for teachers
- V* Is a reason for student reading comprehension performance
- VI* Is a component of reading comprehension
 - Is used as a student reading comprehension assignment
 - Is a kind of reaction to the core reading program
 - Is a type of teacher language response to students
 - Is used for teacher learning about reading comprehension
 - Is a step in a reading comprehension instructional cycle
 - Is a type of teacher knowledge about reading comprehension
 - Is a concern about student reading comprehension learning
- X* Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction
- VIII* Is a reason for making instructional decisions
 - Is a place for reading comprehension experience or learning
 - Is a type of text used in reading instruction
- VII* Is a way to use the core reading program for reading comprehension instruction
 - Is a concern about the core reading program
 - Is a type of prior experience that taught about reading comprehension
- VIII* Is a way in which a teacher has learned about reading comprehension
 - Is a procedure used for teaching a reading comprehension skill
 - Is a challenge in reading comprehension teaching
 - Is a component of instruction that the teacher wants to learn more about
 - Is a way to organize time for reading comprehension instruction
 - Is a way to organize students for reading comprehension instruction

Sample Domain Summary Sheet Page

Domain Sheet IV: Is a component of reading comprehension instruction
PQ: What do you use to help students make sense of whole texts?

- A Peer read aloud: D1L40, D1L384, D1L887, D2L266, I1L325, D3L25, D3L786, D5L17, D5L150, D6L11, D6L474, D7L11, D7L128, D8L58, D10L15, D11L82, D13L314
- B Written summary: D1L37, D1L53, D1L259, D2L65, D8L77
- C Text marking: D1L53, D1L67, D1L124
- D Novel study: D1L38, D1L75, D3L25, D3L664, D4L12, D4L48, D5L17, D6L11, I2L140, I2L507, D7L11, D8L16, D9L31
- E Identify/Record main ideas: D1L77, D1L134, D1L192, D1L213, D3L75, D4L48, D5L31, D6L116, I2L373, D8L125
- F Skimming: D1L77, D1L192
- G Discussion: D1L77, D1L415, D3L75, D4L217, D6L38, D6L116, I2L373, D8L125, D12L193, D13L50, I4L204
- H Post-it notes: D1L67
- I Highlighter tape: D1L67
- J Re-reading: D1L415
- K Prediction: D1L206, D2L12, D3L59, D3L118, D8L77, D12L255, D13L50
- L Written response: D1L37, D1L53, D1L328, D2L65, D3L437, D6L20, D8L77
- M Individual conferences: D1L722, D2L75, D4L129, D5L163, I2L428
- N Book selection: D1L373, D1L874, I1L325, D4L149, I2L387
- O Classroom library: D1L26, D3L736, D4L48, D4L192
- P Independent reading: D1L362, D1L373, I1L154, I1L289, D3L736, D4L48, D5L248, I4L51
- Q Inferencing: I1L108, I1L499, I2L345, I3L482
- R Text-based examples: D1L157, D1L177, D1L287, D1L415, D1L741, D2L144, D3L75, D3L664, D4L48, D4L217, D6L401, D8L125, D12L255, D13L50
- S Teacher read aloud: D1L653, D2L12, I1L278, I1L289, D3L25, D3L59, D3L664, D4L12, D4L42, D4L48, D5L17, D5L31, D5L150, D6L11, D7L11, D11L67, D12L46
- T Point of view: D1L684, D3L194, I3L43
- U Small group assignments: D1L699, D2L144, D3L612, D5L17, D5L163, D7L169, D11L116
- V Character map: D1L699, D3L612, D5L163
- W Setting map: D1L699, D3L612, D5L163
- X Literary devices: D1L181, D1L415, D1L699, D3L226, D6L116, I3L43
- Y Background information: D1L653, D1L699, D3L612, D3L786, D5L163, D7L128, D13L50
- Z Internal/external conflict: D1L741, D2L144, I1L54
- AA Nightly reading: D1L800, D6L458, D12L255, D13L50
- AB Reading trophies: D1L874, D8L447

AC Accelerated Reader tests: D1L874, I1L289, D5L31
 AD Book recommendations: D2L263, I1L325, D3L736, D11L233, I4L51
 AE Summary: D2L12, D3L59, D4L42, D5L31, D6L116
 AF Above & beyond work: D1L393, D3L736, D4L192, D7L82, D8L77
 AG Reading buddies: D2L263, I1L358, D7L11, D7L68
 AH DesCartes/DesCartes binder: I1L54, I1L115, I3L114
 AI Nonfiction CRP selections: I1L144, I4L80
 AJ CRP: I1L144, I1L266, I2L604, I3L114, I3L451, D12L255, D13L50, I4L80
 AK Reading web: I1L289
 AL Parent/student book talks: I1L325, D7L82
 AM CRP reading skills: I1L154, I4L111
 AN Strategies That Work: I1L499, I2L198
 AO Figurative language: D1L415, D3L244, D3L612, D5L163
 AQ Mood/tone: D3L664, D4L48, D4L217
 AR T-Chart: D3L664, D4L48, D12L255, D13L50
 AS Irony: D1L415, D6L401, D8L429
 AT Reading quizzes: D3L736, D5L238
 AU Trade books/picture books: I1L499, I2L345, D11L8
 AV Propaganda: I1L424, I2L246, D7L144
 AW Right level of book: I2L387, I2L573
 AX Reading interest: D1L229, D6L38, I2L403, I2L573, I3L526, I4L51, I4L144, I4L204
 AY MAP[®] testing/RIT scores: I1L377, I1L424, I1L483, I3L95, I4L30
 AZ Connections: D1L415, I2L573, D7L29, I3L526, D13L50, I4L204
 BA Imagery/mind pictures: D1L77, D1L415, D3L244, D7L29, D9L31
 BB I Love to Read Challenge: D8L147, D11L40
 BC Reading projects: D10L79, D13L349
 BD Think alouds: I3L569
 BE Record thinking: I3L569
 BF Author's purpose: I3L603, D12L193, D13L50
 BG Picture walk: D12L255
 BH Topic studies: I4L80
 BI Reading choice: D6L38, I4L204
 BJ Personification: D1L124, D3L226, D6L116
 BK Emotional response: D1L287, D3L437, D6L116
 BL Character analysis: D3L357, D3L437, D6L116, D8L125

Sample Within Domain Analysis Page

Domain Sheet IV: Is a component of reading comprehension instruction
PQ: What do you use to help students make sense of whole texts?

Classroom Routines

Sharing Routines

- Peer read aloud
- Teacher read aloud
- Discussion
- Book recommendations
- Reading buddies
- Individual conferences
- Reading web
- Reading projects (Parent/Student book talks)
- Reading trophies
- I Love to Read Challenge

Practice Routines

- Record main ideas
- Record text-based examples
- Written summary
- Written response
- Independent reading
- Nightly reading
- Above & beyond work
- Novel study
- Topic study
- Small group assignments (character map, setting map, centers)

Instructional Strategies and Skills

Core Reading Program Skills

- Author's purpose

DesCartes Skills

- Literary devices
- Figurative language
- Point of view
- Internal and external conflict
- Mood and tone
- Irony
- Propaganda

Reading Strategies

- Identify main ideas
- Summarize
- Skim

Re-read

Prediction

Inferencing

Accessing background information

Connections

Mind pictures

Engagement Strategies

Record thinking

Text marking

Think alouds

Picture walk

Character analysis

Emotional response to text

Student Resources

Post-it notes

Highlighter tape

Classroom library

Graphic organizers (T-Chart)

Teacher Resources

Planning Resources

DesCartes

DesCartes binder

Student RIT scores

MAP[®] test observations

CRP

Text selections

Reading skills

Trade books/picture books

Assessment Resources

AR tests

Reading quizzes

MAP[®] testing

Student Considerations

Book selection

Right level of book

Reading interest

Reading choice

Sample Case Study Outline

- I. Definitions of Reading Comprehension
 - A. Key Components of Reading Comprehension
 1. Engagement with Self and Others around Act of Reading
 - a. Affective Factors
 - (1.) Confidence
 - (2.) Regular reading/reading volume
 - (3.) Degree of genre and topic interest
 - (4.) Degree of interest in reading
 - (5.) Knowledge of reading preferences
 - (6.) Effort willing to invest to analyze text
 - (7.) Appreciation of other's perspectives on a text
 - b. Opportunities
 - (1.) Opportunity to have authentic reading experience
 - (2.) Opportunity to choose reading materials
 - (3.) Opportunity to access appropriate, appealing text
 - (4.) Opportunity and ability to engage in discussion
 - (5.) Opportunity to hear fluent reading
 - (6.) Opportunity to share reading with others
 - (7.) Family literacy culture
 2. Engagement with Content of a Text
 - a. Indirect Influences on Engagement
 - (1.) Background knowledge
 - (2.) Genre knowledge
 - (3.) Word recognition ability
 - (4.) Fluency ability
 - b. Direct Elements of Engagement*
 - (1.) Ability to notice textual clues
 - (2.) Ability to understand main events and ideas
 - (3.) Ability to draw text-based inferences
 - (4.) Ability to make text-based predictions
 - (5.) Ability to make connections to text
 - (6.) Recognition of emotional response to text
 - (7.) Opportunity to mark text
 - (8.) Ability to analyze character and author's purpose
 - B. Attributions for Student Success and Failure
 1. Strategy Use
 - a. Summarizes
 - b. Makes Predictions
 - c. Makes Inferences
 - d. Makes Connections
 - e. Makes Mind Pictures
 2. Affective Factors

- a. Degree and type of reading interests
- b. Confidence
- c. Feelings about the act of reading
- d. Feelings about themselves as readers
- e. Topic interests
- f. Level of effort
- 3. Opportunities and Habits
 - a. Listen to good reading
 - b. Access to appealing reading selections
 - c. Opportunity to share with others
 - d. Reads regularly
 - e. Level of parent interest in reading at home
 - f. Gives and takes book recommendations
 - g. Selects appropriate books
- 4. Skills
 - a. Takes careful notes
 - b. References text-based examples
 - c. Marks text
 - d. Level of analysis
 - e. Level of focus on text
 - f. Pays attention/participates during discussion
 - g. Level of fluency
 - h. Performs well or poorly on tests
 - i. Has awareness of author's purpose

II. Reading Comprehension Instruction

A. Classroom Routines

- 1. Sharing Routines: Routines intended to share text
 - a. Teacher read aloud
 - b. Peer read aloud
 - c. Discussion
 - d. Book recommendations
 - e. Individual conferences
 - f. Reading buddies
 - g. Reading web
 - h. Reading projects
 - i. Accelerated Reader/Reading trophies
 - j. I Love to Read Challenge
- 2. Practice Routines
 - a. Record main ideas
 - b. Record text-based examples
 - c. Written summary
 - d. Written response
 - e. Independent reading

- f. Nightly reading
- g. Above & Beyond work
- h. Novel study
- i. Topic study
- j. Small group assignments
- 3. Core Reading Program Usage
 - a. Text source
 - (1.) Reading selections
 - (2.) Non-fiction reading selections
 - (3.) Short reading selections
 - (4.) Nightly reading assignments
 - b. Practice source
 - (1.) Main weekly skill
 - (2.) Text-based examples
 - (3.) Text-based discussion
 - c. Assessment source
- B. Reading Comprehension Content
 - 1. Core Reading Program Skills
 - a. Author's purpose
 - b. Teacher's manual skill information
 - 2. DesCartes Skills
 - a. Literary devices
 - b. Figurative language
 - c. Point of view
 - d. Internal and external conflict
 - e. Mood and tone
 - f. Irony
 - g. Propaganda
 - 3. Reading Strategies
 - a. Identify main ideas
 - b. Summarize
 - c. Skim
 - d. Re-read
 - e. Prediction
 - f. Inferencing
 - g. Accessing background knowledge
 - h. Connections
 - i. Mind pictures
 - 4. Engagement Strategies
 - a. Record thinking
 - b. Text marking
 - c. Think alouds
 - d. Picture walk
 - e. Character analysis

- f. Emotional response to text
- C. Resources
 - 1. Student Resources
 - a. Post-it notes
 - b. Highlighter tape
 - c. Classroom library
 - d. Graphic organizers
 - e. Instructional texts
 - 2. Teacher Resources
 - a. Planning Resources
 - (1.) DesCartes binder
 - (2.) Core reading program
 - (3.) Trade books
 - b. Assessment Resources
 - (1.) Accelerated Reader tests
 - (2.) Reading quizzes
 - (3.) MAP® testing
 - (4.) Core reading program weekly assessments
- D. Decision Making Factors: Personal Conviction and Knowledge
 - 1. Curricular Factors
 - a. DesCartes
 - (1.) DesCartes terms
 - (2.) MAP® RIT scores
 - (3.) MAP® test questions
 - (4.) Degree of proficiency expected
 - b. Standards on report cards
 - c. Need for curricular coverage
 - d. Need for curricular balance
 - 2. Student Factors
 - a. Student Needs
 - (1.) Social and Emotional Needs
 - (2.) Individual Academic Needs
 - b. Student Outcomes
 - (1.) Students able to make connections in text
 - (2.) Students able to understand the main ideas
 - c. Student Engagement
 - (1.) Degree of participation and focus
 - (2.) Opportunity to do “feel good” activities
 - 3. Textual Factors
 - a. Appropriate level of text
 - b. Content of instructional texts
 - c. Appeal of instructional texts
 - d. Ability to use text to teach skills and text elements

4. External Factors
 - a. Expertise of partner teacher
 - b. Staying on track with partner teacher
 - c. Suggestions of other teachers
 - d. Suggestions from websites
 - e. Whole school initiatives
- III. Learning about Reading Comprehension Instruction
- A. Sources of Information
 1. Texts
 - a. Children's Texts
 - (1.) Trade books
 - (2.) Picture books
 - b. Professional Texts
 - (1.) Strategies that Work
 2. Guidance Materials
 - a. District
 - (1.) Core Reading Program
 - (2.) DesCartes binder
 - (3.) District standards on report cards
 - (4.) MAP[®] test
 - b. External Sources
 - (1.) State standards
 - (2.) Readwritethink.org
 - B. Critical Experiences
 1. Pre-service experiences
 - a. Own literacy experience
 - b. College observation experiences
 - c. Student teaching
 2. In-service experience
 - a. First year of teaching
 - (1.) Weekly lesson plans
 - (2.) Informal teacher mentors
 - b. Current teaching
 - (1.) Partner teacher
 - (2.) Personal reflection
 - (3.) Student writing
 - (4.) Student RIT scores
 - (5.) District DI coordinator
 - C. Concerns
 1. Concerns about Expectations
 - a. Adhering to personal principles
 - b. Expectations of parents, administrators, other teachers

- c. Students meeting MAP® test performance expectations
- d. Living up to example of mentor teachers
- e. Expectations regarding whole school initiatives
- 2. Concerns about Students
 - a. Students appreciating other’s thoughts
 - b. Students having fluency
 - c. Students giving a best effort
 - d. Students reading appropriately leveled text
 - e. Students who don’t enjoy reading
 - f. Students lacking confidence as readers
 - g. Parents who don’t support reading at home
 - h. Students who still struggle after instruction/discussion
- 3. Concerns about Instructional Experiences
 - a. Motivational Concerns
 - (1.) Students stayed engaged during instruction
 - (2.) Offering appealing instructional texts
 - (3.) Offering “feel good” experiences
 - (4.) Getting students to think and work more deeply
 - b. Core Reading Program Concerns
 - (1.) Core reading program coverage expectations
 - (2.) Too much in core reading program manual
 - (3.) CRP irrelevant, uninteresting, or too tedious
 - c. Time/Balance Concerns
 - (1.) Being able to conference with students regularly
 - (2.) Giving time for independent reading
 - (3.) Activities for challenge, confidence, and fun
 - (4.) Meeting all individual needs
 - (5.) Seeing student work on a regular basis
 - (6.) Creating opportunities to give students choices
 - (7.) Keeping pace with partner teacher
 - d. Structural Concerns
 - (1.) Disagreeing with class groupings
 - (2.) Continuing to have partner teacher
 - (3.) Lack of feedback about teaching
- iv. Curricular Concerns
 - a. Amount of terminology expected to teach
 - b. Depth at which to explore concepts
 - c. Lack of focused curriculum guidance

Appendix F: Findings Matrices

Findings Matrix: Tracy

		Research Question: What is the nature of upper elementary teachers' experiences with reading comprehension instruction?	Sub-Question #1: How do teachers organize and provide reading comprehension instruction, including their utilization of core reading programs?	Sub-Question #2: What sources of information do teachers use when making decisions about reading comprehension instruction?	Sub-Question #3: To what do teachers attribute their knowledge of reading comprehension instruction?
Definitions of Reading Comprehension	Is a component of reading comprehension	X	X	X	
	Is a reason for student comprehension performance	X	X	X	
Classroom Reading Comprehension Instruction	Is a component of reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
	Is a way to use the core reading program for reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
	Is a reason for making decisions about reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X
Learning about Reading Comprehension Instruction	Is a source of information for reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X
	Is a way in which the teacher has learned about reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X
	Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	

Findings Matrix: Carol

		Research Question: What is the nature of upper elementary teachers' experiences with reading comprehension instruction?	Sub-Question #1: How do teachers organize and provide reading comprehension instruction, including their utilization of core reading programs?	Sub-Question #2: What sources of information do teachers use when making decisions about reading comprehension instruction?	Sub-Question #3: To what do teachers attribute their knowledge of reading comprehension instruction?
Definitions of Reading Comprehension	Is a component of reading comprehension	X	X	X	
	Is a reason for student comprehension performance	X	X	X	
Classroom Reading Comprehension Instruction	Is a component of reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
	Is a way to use the core reading program for reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
	Is a way to respond to students during read alouds and discussions	X	X	X	
Learning about Reading Comprehension Instruction	Is a source of information for reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X
	Is a way in which the teacher has learned about reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X
	Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
	Is a way to draw off of own literacy experience	X	X	X	X

Findings Matrix: Rachelle

		Research Question: What is the nature of upper elementary teachers' experiences with reading comprehension instruction?	Sub-Question #1: How do teachers organize and provide reading comprehension instruction, including their utilization of core reading programs?	Sub-Question #2: What sources of information do teachers use when making decisions about reading comprehension instruction?	Sub-Question #3: To what do teachers attribute their knowledge of reading comprehension instruction?
Definitions of Reading Comprehension	Is a component of reading comprehension	X	X	X	
	Is a reason for student comprehension performance	X	X	X	
Classroom Reading Comprehension Instruction	Is a component of reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
	Is a way to use the core reading program for reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
	Is a way to respond to student reading comprehension difficulty during instruction	X	X	X	
	Is a way to respond to frustration about reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
Learning about Reading Comprehension Instruction	Is a source of information for reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X
	Is a way in which the teacher has learned about reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X
	Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X
	Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction associated with first year teaching	X	X	X	X

Findings Matrix: Jessica

		Research Question: What is the nature of upper elementary teachers' experiences with reading comprehension instruction?	Sub-Question #1: How do teachers organize and provide reading comprehension instruction, including their utilization of core reading programs?	Sub-Question #2: What sources of information do teachers use when making decisions about reading comprehension instruction?	Sub-Question #3: To what do teachers attribute their knowledge of reading comprehension instruction?
Definitions of Reading Comprehension	Is a component of reading comprehension	X	X	X	
	Is a way in which reading comprehension represents a performance outcome	X	X	X	
	Is a reason for student comprehension performance	X	X	X	
Classroom Reading Comprehension Instruction	Is a component of reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
	Is a way to use the core reading program for reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
	Is a type of questioning used during reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	
Learning about Reading Comprehension Instruction	Is a source of information for reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X
	Is a way in which the teacher has learned about reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X
	Is a concern about reading comprehension instruction	X	X	X	X

Appendix G: DesCartes Continuum of Learning Framework Samples

Subject: Reading

Goal Strand: Reading Strategies, Comprehending Literary Texts

RIT Score Range: 201 - 210

Skills and Concepts to Enhance 191 - 200	Skills and Concepts to Develop 201 - 210	Skills and Concepts to Introduce 211 - 220
Text Structure, Literary Elements, Genre	Text Structure, Literary Elements, Genre	Text Structure, Literary Elements, Genre
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguishes between a result of a given event and other non-related events in literary text* • Explains why a specific effect (term not used) occurred using information supplied in a literary passage (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences) describing events • Contrasts (term not used) characters in literary text (1-3 paragraphs)* • Examines author's techniques that influence mood in literary text* • Makes inferences from literary texts describing events • Recognizes characteristics of fiction* • Classifies literary text as a story • Identifies the characteristics of poems* • Identifies the plot of a legend* • Defines fable* • Distinguishes among literary genres to recognize a fantasy • Classifies literary texts as plays • Recognizes characteristics of plays* • Distinguishes among genres to recognize literary magazine articles* • Classifies literary text as a memoir* • Infers the setting of a literary passage based on information in the passage • Identifies the development of character in a literary text* • Analyzes character traits (term not used) in literary text • Determines a character's feelings and/or emotions based on the information found in literary texts* • Infers a character's feelings in simple literary text* • Recognizes the author's use of the first person as a technique to create interest in literary text* • Infers the point of view for a third person narrative (term not used)* • Infers the speaker for a literary text* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines events as examples of cause and effect in literary text* • Compares settings used in literary texts* • Identifies sequence of events in literary text (first and last) • Identifies chronological order of events in literary text* • Evaluates author's style and its effects on literary text* • Classifies stories as fiction • Identifies characteristics of narrative text* • Classifies literary text as folk tale* • Classifies literary texts as fables* • Classifies literary texts as myths* • Classifies literary text as a tall tale* • Classifies literary texts as science fiction* • Recognizes the characteristics of biographies • Classifies text as historical fiction* • Describes the plot of a story* • Identifies the development of plot in a literary text* • Analyzes events important to plot development in literary text* • Analyzes a literary passage and defines setting • Recognizes how characters are developed in literary texts* • Explains how the author introduces characters in literary text* • Assesses character development in literary text • Determines a character's feelings and/or emotions based on the information found in literary texts* • Identifies the point of view used in a literary passage* • Infers who is speaking or thinking in literary texts* • Recognizes the author's use of conflict as a technique to create interest in literary texts* • Describes the conflict implied in literary texts* • Identifies the conflict in a literary passage (3 to 6 paragraphs) • Infers the conflict (term not used) in a literary text* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes contrasts made among characters in literary texts (1-10 complex paragraphs)* • Defines genre • Classifies stories as fiction • Classifies literary text as folk tale* • Classifies literary texts as science fiction* • Classifies a literary text as an autobiography* • Identifies the characteristics of historical fiction* • Defines plot* • Analyzes setting in literary texts • Describes how characters are developed in literary texts* • Assesses character development in literary text • Infers the reason behind a character's actions • Evaluates character development in literary text* • Infers the qualities (emotional and/or physical) of a character based on information found in literary texts • Infers the reason behind a character's feelings/emotions* • Identifies the qualities (emotional and/or physical) of a character in literary texts* • Infers the point of view for a first person literary text (term not used)* • Identifies the conflict in a literary passage (3 to 6 paragraphs) • Makes inferences to determine the problem and/or solution in literary texts* • Recognizes dialogue in literary text • Analyzes the use of dialogue in advancing plot in literary text* • Analyzes literary texts to determine how suspense is achieved* • Classifies text as a true story*

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies the narrator in a literary passage Determines a narrator's feelings and/or emotions based on the information found in literary texts* Identifies the conflict in a short (3 to 5 sentences) literary text Infers the conflict (term not used) in a literary text* Analyzes the conflict (term not used) in a literary text* Describes the use of resolution in plot* Identifies the characteristics of nonfiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infers the conflict in a literary text* Analyzes to determine the problem presented in literary texts* Defines dialogue* Recognizes author's use of suspense to create interest in literary text 	
Main Ideas, Central Themes, Important Details	Main Ideas, Central Themes, Important Details	Main Ideas, Central Themes, Important Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locates information in literary passages containing long, complex, or incomplete sentences Locates information in short literary passages (1 to 3 paragraphs, complex sentences) Summarizes information using supporting details in literary text Restates supporting details in literary text (1 to 3 paragraphs) Analyzes literary text to identify a title representing the main idea of literary text Analyzes short literary passages (1-5 sentences) containing complex sentences to determine the main idea (term not used, expressed as a short phrase) in literary text Analyzes short literary passages (1-5 sentences) describing events and expresses the main idea in the form of a phrase* Recognizes details that support the main idea in literary text* Identifies which supporting detail does not belong in a literary paragraph* Makes inferences based upon supporting details in literary text Draws conclusions based on supporting details in literary text Evaluates conclusions drawn from supporting details in literary text* Analyzes literary passages (1-4 paragraphs) to determine the theme (term not used)* Analyzes poems to identify the theme* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locates information in literary passages containing long, complex, or incomplete sentences Locates information in literary passages containing long, complex, or incomplete sentences with high level vocabulary Restates supporting details in literary text (1 to 3 paragraphs) Evaluates literary passages to select the best summary Recognizes details that support the main idea in literary text* Recognizes details that support the main idea in passages containing long, complex, or incomplete literary sentences Analyzes literary passages (1-4 paragraphs) to determine the theme (term not used)* Analyzes literary passages (5-15 paragraphs) to determine its theme (term not used)* Analyzes literary passages (5-15 paragraphs) to determine the theme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locates information in literary passages containing long, complex, or incomplete sentences with high level vocabulary Summarizes information in literary text based on supporting details* Recognizes details that support the main idea in passages containing long, complex, or incomplete literary sentences Analyzes how detail is used in a literary text to set the scene* Analyzes literary passages (5-15 paragraphs) to determine its theme (term not used)*
Predictions, Inferences and Conclusions	Predictions, Inferences and Conclusions	Predictions, Inferences and Conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compares short literary texts to determine the common theme* Examines the author's attitude or feelings based on descriptive language used in a literary text* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compares short literary texts to determine the common theme* Makes inferences to determine an author's bias or viewpoint (terms not used) from paragraphs of literary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infers the author's viewpoint (term not used) in passages (containing one or more complex sentences) of literary text* Infers author's viewpoint/attitude in literary text

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infers the author's viewpoint (term not used) in poems* • Determines the idea that an author wants to convey (intent) in a given literary paragraph* • Classifies the purpose of a short literary passage (1-2 sentences) as "to entertain"* • Makes predictions from literary texts (1-3 paragraphs) • Evaluates predictions about what will happen next from literary texts (1-3 paragraphs) • Evaluates predictions from literary texts (1-3 paragraphs) • Draws conclusions from literary text (1-3 paragraphs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • text containing one or more complex sentences* • Makes inferences to determine an author's bias or viewpoint or attitude (terms used) from paragraphs of literary text containing one or more complex sentences* • Infers the author's viewpoint (term not used) in passages (containing one or more complex sentences) of literary text* • Examines the author's purpose in a literary text (to persuade)* • Examines the author's purpose in a literary text (to describe)* • Evaluates the likelihood of occurrence of a particular event using information supplied in a literary text • Makes inferences from information found in literary text* • Infers meaning in literary text (4-6 paragraphs)* • Infers a title using information found in literary text* • Makes inferences (term not used) from literary passages (1-3 paragraphs)* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzes devices used by an author to accomplish his or her purpose in literary text* • Infers the author's purpose for using a specific literary genre* • Evaluates the likelihood of occurrence of a particular event using information supplied in a literary text • Makes inferences from information found in literary text* • Makes inferences from literary passages (1-3 paragraphs) • Makes inferences from information in complicated literary texts* • Makes inferences in long literary passages • Infers the meaning of phrases found in literary text* • Draws conclusions from literary text (3-5 paragraphs)*
<p>Literary Devices and Figurative Language</p>	<p>Literary Devices and Figurative Language</p>	<p>Literary Devices and Figurative Language</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes the author's use of rhyme as a technique to increase the interest of a literary text* • Analyzes repetition used by an author to add emphasis in literary text* • Analyzes description used by an author to introduce characters in literary text* • Analyzes literary text to determine a particular feeling or mood (term not used) • Identifies sentences that describe feelings* • Analyzes literary text to determine a character's mood* • Identifies the mood in a poem* • Infers the meaning of figurative language in literary text* • Infers the meaning of figurative language (synecdoche, term not used)* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes the author's use of rhyme as a technique to increase the interest of a literary text* • Identifies rhyme as a literary device* • Recognizes examples of alliteration* • Analyzes the author's use of onomatopoeia (term not used) in literary text* • Analyzes the meaning of images used in literary text* • Analyzes the author's use of descriptive language in literary text* • Analyzes literary text to determine which words describe a particular sensation (term not used) • Infers the use of symbolism found in literary text* • Identifies examples of literal statements in literary texts* • Analyzes authors use of foreshadowing (term not used) in literary text* • Analyzes literary text to determine the author's mood • Analyzes tone used to create humor in literary text* • Defines simile* • Gives examples of similes in literary text • Identifies extended metaphors (term not used) in poetry* • Infers the meaning of metaphors (term not used) in literary text* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzes the author's use of rhythm in literary text* • Identifies alliteration in literary text • Recognizes the author's use of descriptive language as a technique to create interest in literary text* • Analyzes the author's use of imagery in literary text* • Recognizes the author's use of imagery as a technique to create interest in literary text* • Analyzes descriptions used to begin a story* • Analyzes literary text to determine a particular feeling or mood • Defines simile* • Identifies similes in literary text • Gives examples of similes in literary text • Identifies metaphors in literary text • Infers the meaning of metaphors in literary text • Defines personification • Recognizes figurative language used to describe setting* • Identifies figurative language in literary text*

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies idioms in literary texts* 	
<i>New Vocabulary:</i> British literature, characterize, climax, memoir, narrate, resolution, rising action, viewpoint	<i>New Vocabulary:</i> alliteration, autobiography, book review, dialogue, exposition, falling action, feeling, figurative language, idiom, library, literary device, literary element, memoirs, personification, satire, scene, simile, symbolism	<i>New Vocabulary:</i> assonance, characterization, consonance, contrast, episode, foreshadowing, homophone, imagery, irony, onomatopoeia, pun, word play
<i>New Signs and Symbols:</i> none	<i>New Signs and Symbols:</i> none	<i>New Signs and Symbols:</i> none

Subject: Reading

Goal Strand: Comprehending Informative and Persuasive Texts

RIT Score Range: 201 - 210

Skills and Concepts to Enhance 191 - 200	Skills and Concepts to Develop 201 - 210	Skills and Concepts to Introduce 211 - 220
<p>Identify and use Text Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locates information found in a simple chart in informational text* 	<p>Identify and use Text Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locates and interprets information in a schedule, index, or label* Locates information in a table of contents that uses Roman numerals* Identifies features of charts in informational text* 	<p>Identify and use Text Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locates and interprets information in a schedule, index, or label* Locates information in an index containing multiple entries for a single topic Locates information in a table of contents that uses Roman numerals* Identifies the characteristics of directions*
<p>Author's Strategy to Support Audience, Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives examples of informational sentences that are facts Gives examples of sentences in informational text that are opinions Describes characteristics of sentences that are opinions in informational text* Distinguishes between fact and opinion in informational text Distinguishes between examples of fact and opinion in short (4-5 sentences) passages of informational text Distinguishes between examples of fact and opinion paraphrased from passages of informational text Distinguishes between facts and propaganda in advertisements* Infers an author's bias from short paragraphs of informational text (1-4 sentences)* Identifies the use of propaganda in informational text* Distinguishes between facts and propaganda in informational advertisements* Analyzes persuasive language used in informational text* Determines author's validity using information supplied in informational text (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)* Classifies the purpose of a short informational passage (1 to 3 sentences) as "to inform" Infers the author's purpose (term not used) in writing an informational passage (persuasive)* 	<p>Author's Strategy to Support Audience, Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives examples of sentences in informational text that are opinions Classifies statements as examples of fact and opinion in informational text Distinguishes between fact and opinion in informational text Distinguishes between examples of fact and opinion in short (4-5 sentences) passages of informational text Distinguishes between examples of fact and opinion paraphrased from passages of informational text Distinguishes between facts and generalizations (term not used) in informational text Distinguishes between facts and opinions that are unsubstantiated by informational text* Distinguishes characteristics of informational sentences that are opinions versus sentences that are facts* Explains how one's experiences and values affect the interpretation of facts in informational text* Classifies examples of propaganda to determine the method of persuasion used in informational text (loaded words--use of emotionally charged words to produce strong feelings)* Analyzes persuasive/loaded language used in informational text* Analyzes examples of propaganda to determine the method of persuasion used in informational text (bandwagon--if many people do something, it must be right or good) Analyzes examples of propaganda to determine the 	<p>Author's Strategy to Support Audience, Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classifies statements as examples of opposing opinion in informational text* Distinguishes between facts and opinions that are unsubstantiated by informational text* Classifies examples of propaganda to determine the method of persuasion used in informational text (loaded words--use of emotionally charged words to produce strong feelings)* Analyzes persuasive/loaded language used in informational text* Analyzes examples of propaganda to determine the method of persuasion used in informational text (broad generalizations--using specific examples to describe the general phenomenon)* Analyzes examples of propaganda to determine the method of persuasion used in informational text (loaded words--use of emotionally charged words to produce strong feelings) Evaluates validity of information in informational text Infers author's viewpoint/attitude in informational text Classifies the purpose of a short informational passage (3-8 sentences) as "to inform" Infers the author's specific purpose for an informational passage (persuasive) Infers the specific purpose of short informational passages (announcements/advertisements)* Infers the author's purpose (term not used) in writing an informational passage (advertisement)* Infers the author's feelings toward the subject of

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infers the author's specific purpose (term not used) for an informational passage (to inform)* • Identifies techniques used by the author to play with the sound of words* 	<p>method of persuasion used in informational text (loaded words--use of emotionally charged words to produce strong feelings)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzes examples of propaganda to determine the method of persuasion used in informational text (red herring--use of words that are irrelevant)* • Evaluates validity of information in informational text • Infers the author's viewpoint (term not used) in passages (containing one or more complex sentences) of informational text* • Evaluates the author's viewpoint or attitude in informational text using complex sentences and difficult vocabulary* • Analyzes when the author's purpose is to inform in informational text* • Infers the author's specific/main purpose for an informational passage (to inform) 	<p>informational text*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infers the author's intended purpose for an informational passage (to inform) • Infers the author's specific/main purpose for an informational passage (to inform) • Evaluates the author's main purpose for an informational passage (inform)* • Explains techniques used by an author to create a specific image in informational text* • Interprets the mood created by the author in informational text* • Classifies informational text as persuasive* • Classifies text as personal writing*
<p>Main Idea and Important Details</p>	<p>Main Idea and Important Details</p>	<p>Main Idea and Important Details</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locates information not found in informational text* • Locates information in passages (5 to 25 sentences) of informational text containing multiple compound or incomplete sentences or sentence constructions containing prepositions, compound subjects, objects, or subordinate clauses • Locates and summarizes information in informational passages containing compound subjects or objects • Locates and paraphrases information in informational text (5-6 paragraphs) • Locates information in a simple index • Summarizes informational text (1-2 paragraphs)* • Summarizes (1-3 complex paragraphs) informational text* • Restates information found in informational text • Paraphrases information found in complex informational text* • Synthesizes information found in informational text • Identifies the main idea of informational text • Identifies the main idea in short informational text (1 to 3 paragraphs) • Identifies the main idea of informational text (complex sentences and paragraphs) • Determines which sentences in an informational passage support the main idea* • Analyzes passages (1-3 complex paragraphs) of informational text and rephrases the main idea of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locates information in informational text* • Locates information in passages (5 to 25 sentences) of informational text containing multiple compound or incomplete sentences or sentence constructions containing prepositions, compound subjects, objects, or subordinate clauses • Locates information and draws conclusions from complex informational text • Locates and summarizes information in informational passages containing compound subjects or objects • Locates information in informational passages containing long, complex, or incomplete sentences, containing more difficult vocabulary* • Summarizes informational text (1-2 paragraphs)* • Summarizes informational texts (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)* • Summarizes complex informational text • Identifies the main idea in short informational text (1 to 3 paragraphs) • Identifies the main idea of informational text (complex sentences and paragraphs) • Determines the intended meaning of a sentence based on supporting details in informational text* • Analyzes passages (1-3 complex paragraphs) of informational text and rephrases the main idea (term not used) of the text • Analyzes informational text (complex paragraph) to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locates information in informational text* • Locates information in passages of informational text in which the majority of sentences are compound or incomplete and contain compound subjects, objects, or subordinate clauses* • Locates and paraphrases information in complex informational text • Locates information in informational passages containing long, complex, or incomplete sentences, containing more difficult vocabulary* • Summarize informational text (complex paragraph) to identify a title* • Summarizes complex informational text • Distinguishes between appropriate and inappropriate main idea for a given title in informational text* • Analyzes informational text (complex paragraph) to identify a title best representing the main idea (term not used) • Analyzes informational text (complex paragraph) to identify a title best representing the main idea* • Evaluates informational text to identify a statement best representing the main idea (term not used) of the passage* • Evaluates informational text to identify a statement best representing the main idea of the passage • Evaluates statements to choose the one which best represents the main idea of an informational paragraph

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<p>text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzes informational text to identify a title representing the main idea (term not used) Evaluates informational text (1-5 simple sentences) to identify a statement best representing the main idea of the passage Identifies the supporting details in short (3 to 8 sentences) passages of informational text containing one or more compound sentences Deletes sentences that do not support the main idea* Restates supporting details in informational text (1 to 3 paragraphs) Follows directions by choosing the correct order in a passage of informational text Locates and paraphrases directions in informational text* Locates information in informational text containing directions Makes predictions (term not used) from short informational texts (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)* Extrapolates (term not used) based on patterns described in short informational texts (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)* Makes predictions from informational texts (1-5 simple sentences) describing situations* Makes inferences from short informational texts (1-3 paragraphs) Makes inferences using information supplied in informational text (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)* Infers meaning in informational text* Infers character traits using informational text* Draws conclusions using information supplied in informational text (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)* Evaluates conclusions from informational text* 	<p>identify a title best representing the main idea (term not used)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzes informational text (complex paragraph) to identify a title best representing the main idea* Evaluates informational text to identify a statement best representing the main idea (term not used) of the passage* Evaluates informational text (1-3 complex paragraphs) to determine main idea Identifies the supporting details in passages of informational text containing compound or incomplete sentences, or complex sentence structure (such as compound subject or object, subordinate clauses) Makes predictions from short informational texts (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)* Evaluates predictions based on content in informational text* Makes inferences using information supplied in informational text (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)* Infers the meaning of terminology in informational text* Infers information in technical text* Draws conclusions based on information supplied by informational texts Draws conclusions from short informational texts (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences) Evaluates to select the most appropriate conclusion drawn from short informational texts (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)* 	<p>(complex)*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locates information in informational text containing complex directions Evaluates predictions based on content in informational text* Evaluates to select the most valid prediction (term not used) that is limited to the evidence provided by informational texts (3 or more paragraphs containing multiple complex sentences and high level vocabulary) Describes ideas that are implied in an informational passage* Makes inferences from short informational texts (1-3 paragraphs) Makes inferences from information found in informational text* Makes inferences from information in complicated informational texts Infers the meaning of terminology in informational text* Evaluates to select the most appropriate conclusion drawn from short informational texts (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)*
<p>Organizational Patterns and Text Structures</p>	<p>Organizational Patterns and Text Structures</p>	<p>Organizational Patterns and Text Structures</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determines events as examples of cause and effect in informational text* Determines the cause for a given effect using information supplied in an informational passage (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences)* Explains why a specific effect (term not used) occurred using information supplied in an informational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locates the portion of a sentence that gives the effect for a given cause in informational text* Explains why a specific effect (term not used) occurred using information supplied in an informational passage (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences) describing events Speculates as to the cause for a given real-life effect in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locates the portion of a sentence that gives the cause for a given effect in informational text* Makes inferences as to the possible effects for a given action based on information contained in informational text* Evaluates information supplied in informational text to determine the most likely cause for a given effect*

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CO 3.3.1

* Both data from test items and review by NWEA curriculum specialists are used to place learning continuum statements into appropriate RIT ranges.

Blank cells indicate data are limited or unavailable for this range or document version.

<p>passage (1-3 paragraphs containing complex sentences) describing events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the utility of Venn diagrams in comparing and contrasting in informational text* • Describes contrasts made in informational text • Makes comparative judgments about characters in informational text* • Explains how the author makes a given comparison in informational text* • Compares arguments or assertions made in informational text* • Identifies sequence of events in informational text (first)* • Orders directions sequentially in informational text • Completes an analogy found in informational text* 	<p>informational text*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluates information supplied in informational text to determine the most likely cause for a given effect* • Explains how the author makes a given comparison in informational text* • Compares characteristics to evaluate informational text* • Identifies sequence of events in informational text (first)* • Identifies words used to denote sequence in informational text* • Orders and paraphrases a sequence of events in informational text • Evaluates to select the best order of directions to yield a specific product in informational text* • Completes an analogy found in informational text* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes that compare and contrast is a useful strategy for informational texts* • Locates examples of compare and contrast in informational text* • Explains how the author makes a given comparison in informational text* • Compares or contrasts (terms not used) characteristics of objects/concepts described in informational text (1-5 paragraphs) • Identifies sequence of events in informational text (last) • Identifies sequential or chronological order in informational text* • Orders and paraphrases a sequence of events in informational text • Identifies sequential order of events (more than three) in informational text* • Identifies the organizational pattern of main idea plus supporting details in informational text
<p><i>New Vocabulary:</i> argue, arguments, brochure, fact and opinion, job announcement, pamphlet, reports, science book, statements, summary</p>	<p><i>New Vocabulary:</i> evaluate, instruction, persuasion, picture book, thesis paper</p>	<p><i>New Vocabulary:</i> coupon, intent, persuasive</p>
<p><i>New Signs and Symbols:</i> none</p>	<p><i>New Signs and Symbols:</i> none</p>	<p><i>New Signs and Symbols:</i> none</p>

Appendix H: Cross Case Clustered Meta-Matrix

		Tracy	Carol	Rachelle	Jessica
Definitions of Reading Comprehension	Key Components of Reading Comprehension*	Engagement	Relationships	Skill Acquisition	Performance
		Process	Process	Product	Product
	Role of Learning Disabilities	Challenge	Cause	Cause	Cause
	Class Placements	Dislike Lose talents	Dislike Lose peer support	Dislike Disparate T. impact	Dislike Lose time
Perception of Homogeneity	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
Classroom Reading Comprehension Instruction	Core Routines*	Sharing routines Textual examples Textual clues Summarization Social Messages	Sharing routines Graphic organizers Self-questioning Visualizing Connecting	Listening Reading/re-reading CRP worksheets Fluency Text structure	Reading/re-reading Worksheets AR tests Knowledge Text structure
	Use of CRP	Text/skills	Text/skills	Text/transparencies	Text/skills Vocabulary/facts
	Perception of CRP*	Resource	Resource	Structure	Resource
	CRP disregarded elements	Comp. Workbooks Supplement.	Comp Workbooks Supplement.	Unit assessments Supplement.	Unit assessments Supplement. Leveled readers
	Core Groupings	Whole group Non-diff. small groups Partners	Whole group Non-diff. small groups Partners	Whole group Diff. small groups	Whole group Partners
	Time Spent in Whole Text	Reading practice Skill practice	Reading practice Skill practice	Reading practice Worksheet completion	Reading practice Worksheet completion
	Text-Based Talk*	Discussion	Discussion	Questioning	Questioning
	Reading Comp. Content	Skills as presented Strategies	Skills as presented Strategies	Skills as presented Strategies	Skills as presented Strategies
	Talk around Skills and Strategies	Modeling Limited Explanation Prompt/Mention Questioning Sometimes Explicit	Modeling Limited Explanation Prompt/Mention Questioning Sometimes Explicit	Limited Modeling Some Explanation Prompt/Mention Questioning Limited Explicitness	No Modeling No Explanation Prompt/Mention Questioning Not Explicit
	Decision-Making Factors*	Fulfill responsibilities Meet student needs	Community of literacy practice Authentic experiences	Respond to frustration Respond to student difficulty	Performance opportunities Teach meaningfulness

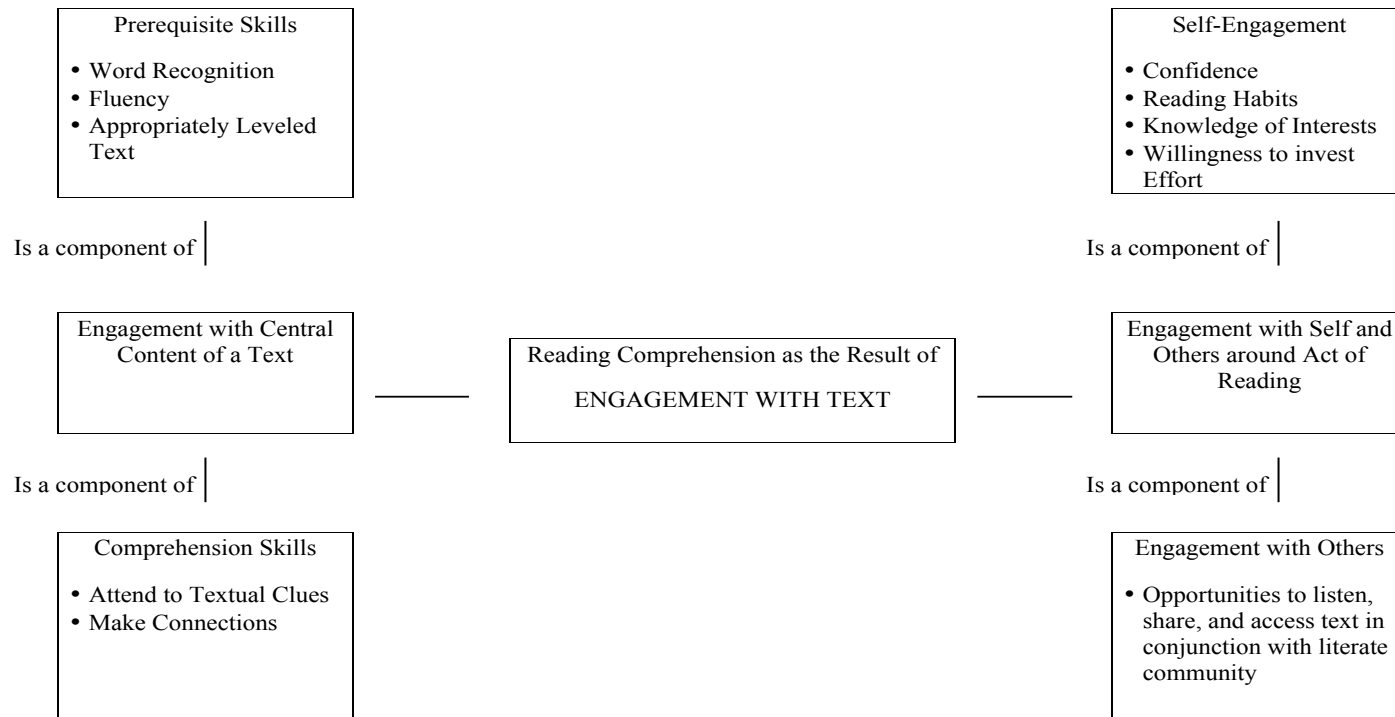
Learning about Reading Comprehension Instruction	Learning Experiences	Strategies that Work Mentor teachers	Own literacy experience Past teaching experience	Wilson [®] tutoring experience First year of teaching	None specific to comprehension Knowledge of learning styles
	Current Ongoing Support Sources	Partner teacher	Partner teacher	None	None
	Sources of Information	District Materials Texts	District Materials Self	District Materials District Staff	District Materials Student Performance
	Types of Concerns	Expectations Students Instruction Curriculum Structural	Students Instruction Structural	Management Preparation Students Instruction Structural	Students Instruction Structural
	Struggling Readers	Unsure	Unsure	Unsure	Unsure

Appendix I: Teacher Demographics and Reading Comprehension Models

Teacher Demographics

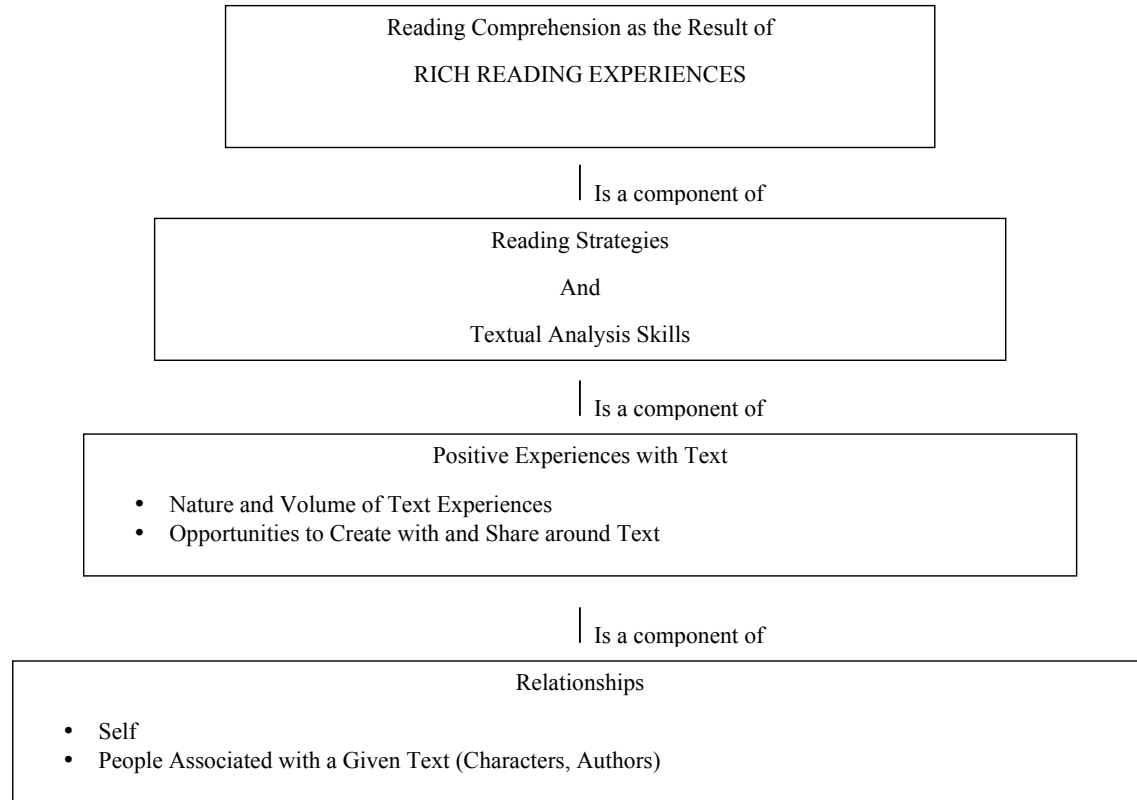
	Tracy	Carol	Rachelle	Jessica
School Building	Hilltop Elementary	Hilltop Elementary	Fieldview Elementary	Fieldview Elementary
Grade Level	5 th Grade	5 th Grade	4 th Grade	5 th Grade
Years of Experience	4 th Year	5 th Year	1 st Year	5 th Year
Preparation	Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Program	Transition to Teaching Program	Transition to Teaching Program	Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Program
Prior Experiences	4 th /5 th Grade Multi-Age	Middle School Language Arts	Wilson [®] Reading System Tutor	4 th /5 th Grade Multi-Age

Reading Comprehension Model: Tracy



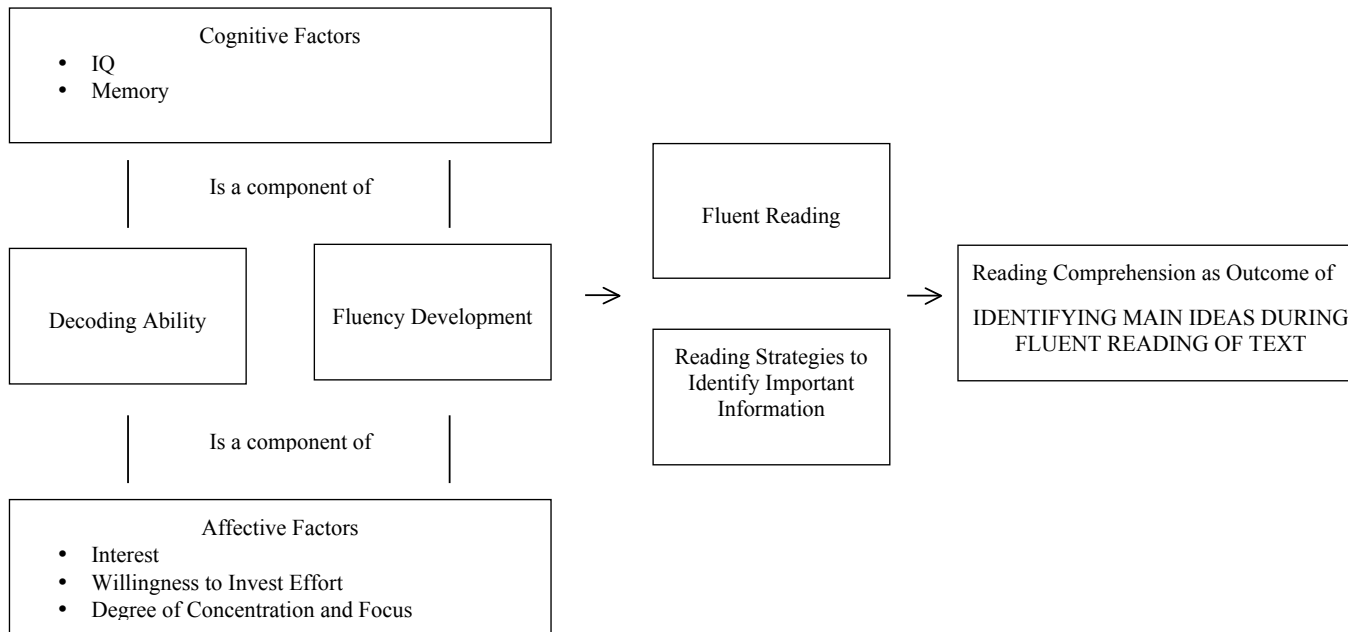
Attributions for Student Success and Failure: Reading Strategy Use, Personal Affective Factors, Access to Opportunities, School Performance Skills

Reading Comprehension Model: Carol



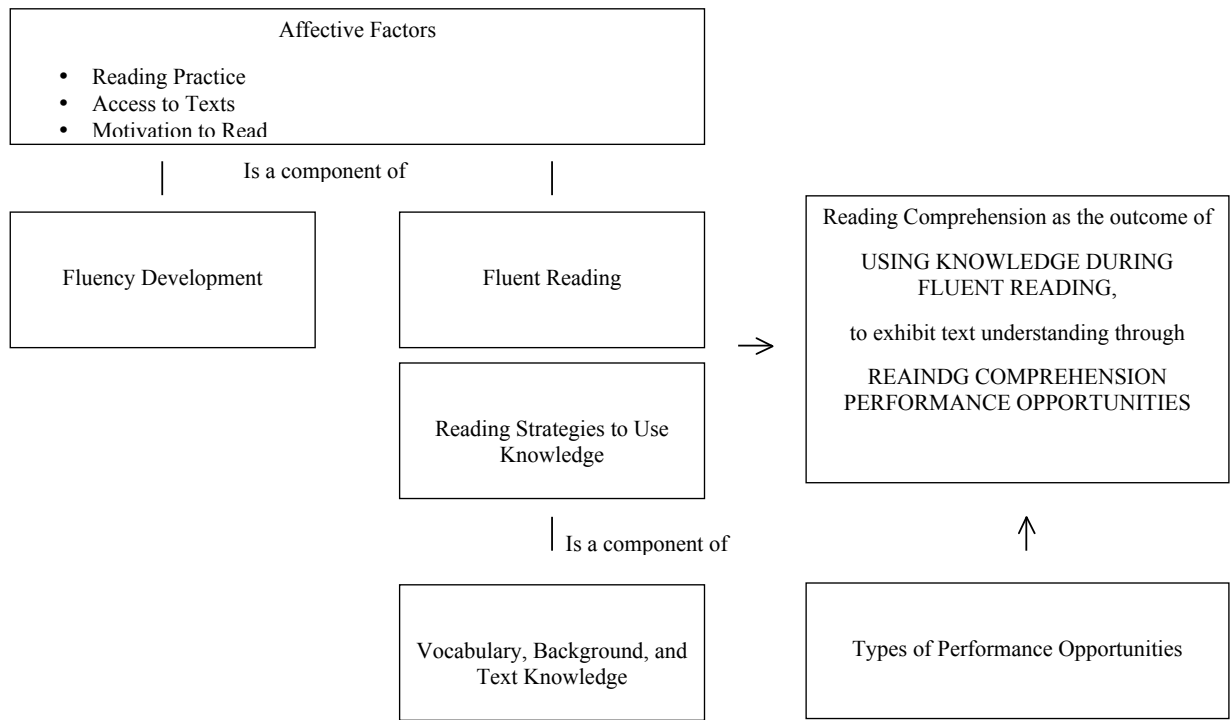
Attributions for Student Success and Failure: Types of Experiences, Personal Affective Factors, Individual Cognitive Factors

Reading Comprehension Model: Rachelle



Attributions for Student Success and Failure: Factors in Fluency Development, Types of Experiences, Comprehension Skill Development

Reading Comprehension Model: Jessica



Attributions for Student Success and Failure: Skill and Knowledge Development, Personal Affective Factors, Opportunities

Appendix J: Cross Case Synthesis Model



Vita

Kathryn Louise Solic was born in State College, Pennsylvania on October 2nd, 1981. She graduated from State College Area High School in 1999. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a concentration in Public Policy from the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Indiana in 2003, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude and was inducted into the Psi Chi and Phi Beta Kappa honor societies.

She earned a Master of Education in Reading Education from the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida in 2004, at which time she became a certified K-12 reading specialist. Katie has taught elementary level language arts at the Benchmark School in Media, Pennsylvania and high school level literacy intervention classes at Penn High School in Mishawaka, Indiana. She has taught various undergraduate and graduate courses at the University of Florida, the University of Tennessee, and Indiana University South Bend.

In May 2011, Katie will earn her doctorate in Education with a concentration in Literacy Studies. Her research interests focus on reading comprehension development, the teaching of struggling readers, teacher knowledge development, and literacy policy. In Fall 2011, Katie plans to be working as a Michael Pressley Research Fellow at Benchmark School in Media, Pennsylvania.