OPENING ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM THROUGH PERMEABLE READ-ALOUDS

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I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Rob, and my daughters, Breanna and Emily.
You are my happy memories of the past and my joyful moments of the present.
Breanna and Emily, you are the hope and promise of the future.
Chase your dreams. Be kind, be strong, be courageous; live, laugh, love –
and shatter glass ceilings.

In my daughter's eyes everyone is equal
Darkness turns to light, and the world is at peace
These miracles God gave to me, give me
strength when I am weak
I find reason to believe
In my daughters' eyes[1]

[1] McBride, M. (2003). In My Daughter's Eyes. On *Martina* [CD]. New York, NY: RCA Records.

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Jeannette E. Armstrong

OPENING ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM THROUGH PERMEABLE READ-ALOUDS

This research explored the ways that professional development can be designed to increase elementary school teachers' understandings of their students' literacies and lived experiences, opening spaces where they can enact read-alouds that are permeable to students' life-worlds and literacies. Informed by a sociocultural perspective on literacy (Street, 1984; Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983), this research explored the following three questions: Q1: In what ways can teachers use read-alouds to open their curriculum and connect to children's lived experiences? Q2: What elements of read-alouds show promise for engaging students in literacies that are grounded in *their* life-worlds and experiences? Q3: How can professional learning be designed to help teachers to know and understand their students' lives and literacies, informing read-aloud practices? Data, consisting primarily of interviews and conversations with first-grade teachers, classroom observations, and field notes were collected in one Midwestern public school district. This qualitative study led to deeper understandings of the ways that teachers can learn to open the space of their read-alouds to make room for the students' life-worlds. Findings reveal that professional learning can empower teachers to shift their read-aloud practices from *teaching to the curriculum* to *teaching to open the curriculum.*

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CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

I approached this research as a listener, as a one who grew up listening to others read aloud. In elementary school, read-alouds welcomed me in from recess; my teachers' voices took me to new places and unseen worlds. In middle school, I looked forward to the end of lunch recess, for it was followed by listening to my teacher, Miss Boerner, read aloud for 15-20 minutes each day. While she read, I laid my head on the desk in front of me as my body relaxed and cooled; often, I closed my eyes, but not for sleep. When my eyes were closed, I could see, hear, and smell the characters while experiencing their joys, fears, hopes, and sorrows, connecting with some of their experiences and curious about others. Through the mesmerizing books that Miss Boerner read aloud, I was able to experience things that were within and beyond what I knew – sleeping overnight in an orange grove, hanging out with Darry and Ponyboy, being locked in an attic with my siblings, swimming across the Rio Grande, or crossing the Staked Plains while hunting buffalo from the back of a horse named Wind. Her read-alouds were mindful of the experiences that her students were going through, the questions and interests that danced in our heads, and the community and social influences that weighed on our minds. Through her read-alouds, I was able to connect my life, my experiences, and those of my classmates to the curriculum; she opened the curriculum and invited us in.

Upon entering the teaching profession, I knew that I would read aloud to my students; surely, my students would love listening to me as much as I loved listening to Miss Boerner. But, like many first-year teaching dreams that fade too quickly, I never became a Miss Boerner. Instead, I became a teacher who beat books to death. In an earnest attempt to allow my students to relish in the known and expose them to the unfamiliar, I stopped reading, and I started

teaching the book. In the words of Gallagher (2009), I committed readicide by engaging my students in “the systematic killing of the love of reading, exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices” (p. 2). My assigned reading logs, book reports, pop-quizzes, and tiny dioramas stifled my students’ desires to read and frustrated my teaching.

As a new teacher, lured by expensive curriculum kits and book lists, I unintentionally gave attention to the books and curriculum while neglecting the lives of the young students who sat before me. It was a mistake that was avoidable, and that is what sparked my motivation for conducting this study. I hope that the findings of this research will contribute to developing more teachers like Miss Boerner, teachers who use read-alouds as a way to open their curriculum, build on students’ experiences, and expose them to the known and the unfamiliar.

Read-Alouds as Lenses on Students’ Lived Experiences

It was Miss Boerner, in the early 1980s, who used read-alouds to teach her students to use their strengths and their own experiences as the foundation for meaning-making and negotiating new understandings. Now, decades later, I hope to use the findings from this research to develop teachers who use read-alouds as a catalyst for opening their curriculum to students’ literacies and lived experiences.

Read-alouds bring students’ diverse lived experiences into the classroom and help them understand the world and to negotiate their place in it. They influence the ways that students shape their identities and construct knowledge and understanding, especially in an increasingly diverse, interconnected, and globalized world (Janks, 2012). Read-alouds help students understand that their experiences matter. They are the creators, the writers of their future; their lived experiences are essential to telling “their story,” combating oppression, and challenging

relationships of power based on differences of gender, language, culture and race, and sexual orientation (Van Sluys, Lewison & Flint, 2006; Janks, 2012; Luke, 2012; Canagarajah, 2013).

Research Questions

This research sheds new light on the ways that professional learning can help teachers to move within and beyond read-alouds to make room for their students' lives and lived experiences. The following three questions guided this study:

Q1: *In what ways can teachers use read-alouds to open their curriculum and connect to children's lived experiences?*

Q2*: What elements of read-alouds show promise for engaging students in literacies that are grounded in their life-worlds and experiences?*

Q3*: How can professional learning be designed to help teachers to know and understand their students' lives and literacies, informing read-aloud practice?*

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the ways that professional learning can be designed to increase elementary school teachers' understandings of their students' literacies and lived experiences, opening spaces where they can enact read-alouds that are permeable to students' life-worlds and literacies.

Participants were two first-grade teachers in a Midwestern school district that was experiencing rapid increases in student enrollment. In the year prior to this research, the community added nearly 700 new residential family homes, and enrollment in PK-12 schools reached unprecedented highs (City Administrator, personal communication, Nov. 20, 2019.) Classroom sizes were steadily increasing, and the number of students who spoke languages other than English was on the rise. For the first time in decades, the school was serving multiple

refugee families (City Administrator, personal communication, Nov. 20, 2019). Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids were taking place in several adjacent towns; as a result, many immigrant families were apprehensive about consistently sending their children to school (Conniff, 2019).

Due to the fast pace at which new and increasingly diverse families were moving into the area, schools were steadily becoming more diverse. Teachers were faced with new challenges as they sought ways to meet the needs of their students while preparing for projected larger and more diverse classroom populations.

This research provided an extraordinary opportunity for me to observe teaching practices in action, to work collaboratively with teachers to design personalized professional learning sessions, and to witness how their practices changed as they learned to open their read-alouds to students' lives and lived experiences. Findings provide valuable information about the potential of read-alouds and the promise that they have to create learning environments that welcome all students into the curriculum, where their experiences are recognized, valued, and used as the basis for meaning-making and negotiation of new knowledge – teaching them to live within and across diversity and to interact with others (Garcia, et al., 2018; Hawkins, 2014).

Local Context

The research took place in the town of Springfield (pseudonym), a Midwest town that, according to the US Census Bureau (2010), has an estimated population of almost 10,000 residents. The nearest city with a population exceeding 50,000 residents is 10 miles away, and the closest city exceeding 200,000 residents is approximately 100 miles away. Springfield is within a 25-mile radius of two state universities, two private colleges, and two technical colleges. The majority of jobs are in retail trade and manufacturing fields (City-Data, n.d.).

Roughly 30% of the residents are under 18 years of age, and almost 12 % are over 65 years of age. 91% of the town identified as “White alone, not Hispanic or Latino.” 6% of the population reports using a language other than English in the home. 3% of the population self-identified as having been born in a foreign country. State averages reflect that 81% of residents identify as “White alone, not Hispanic or Latino;” 8% report using a language other than English in the home, and 5% report having been born in a foreign country (US Census Bureau, 2018.). The communities with the largest Hmong and Somali populations in the United States are within relatively close proximity to Springfield (Pew Research Center, 2017). It is anticipated that diversity will increase as rapid growth takes place. Kolmar (2019) reports that the town adjacent to Springfield is in the top 45 most diverse cities in the state.

Median household income in Springfield is $74,000 per year as compared to $57,000 median household income for the state. As would be anticipated in a town with household incomes that exceeds that of the state average, the median home value is slightly higher than the state average, $176,000 compared to $169,000. Median rent payment is roughly $900, somewhat more than the $800 state average (US Census Bureau, 2018).

95% of Springfield residents have graduated high school, and 27% have a bachelor’s degree or higher. The state averages are 92% and 29%, respectively. As indicated, Springfield has a slightly greater high school graduation rate and a slightly lower number of adults with bachelor’s degrees (US Census Bureau, 2018).

Springfield covers roughly 5 square miles. Within this space, there are several dining establishments, one grocery store, one newly built public library and police station, several banks, one high school, one middle school, four elementary schools, and several small businesses. Public transportation is not readily available (City-Data, n.d.).

School attendance rates are consistent with the state average of 94%. Other data reveal that over the last five years, students in the district have outperformed state average scores on all required standardized tests, including the ACT (City-Data, n.d.).

Residents identifying as Catholic or Evangelical Protestants have decreased steadily over the last ten years, and residents identifying as having no religious affiliation have increased by nearly one-third. During the past six presidential elections, the majority of residents favored the Democratic Party candidate (City-Data, n.d.).

Because the closest city to Sweetwater is pinched between a major river and steep, mountainous bluffs, east-west expansion was limited, causing the city to run out of easily accessible, buildable land. Consequently, commercial and residential development was taking place north of the city, toward interstate highways and Sweetwater (City Administrator, personal communication, Nov. 20, 2019). As a result, Springfield was experiencing rapid growth. It was the fastest-growing community in the western area of the state (Springfield, 2019; City Administrator, personal communication, Nov. 20, 2019). The number of buildings in Springfield had doubled between 1997 and 2014 (Springfield, 2019), and the number of businesses, individuals, and families moving into town steadily increased.

Two global manufacturers, one a furniture manufacturer and the other a manufacturer of fresh and prepared poultry products, have national headquarters located within 30-miles of Springfield. To attract a broad spectrum of workers, beginning in late 2018, both of these facilities started offering free bus transportation to and from Springfield for first and second shift workers. According to human resources personnel at one of the plants, J. Gonzalez (pseudonym), up to 25% of their workers regularly take advantage of the bus service (personal communication, Dec. 6., 2019). For these reasons, Springfield is becoming a residential choice for full- and part-

time workers employed in manufacturing positions such as facilities and automotive maintenance, wastewater operators, poultry catchers, long-haul drivers, production, sales, accounting, groundskeepers, security, information technology, mill workers, upholsters, laboratory technicians, and more.

Springfield's city administrator states "the town should no longer be considered a bedroom town" (i.e., a commuter or suburban town that is a close drive to work and services available in a larger city or urban area) (City Administrator, personal communication, Nov. 20, 2019). He goes on to state that "Springfield is becoming a destination town. A destination for affordable housing, increasing employment opportunities and entrepreneurship, new schools, and easy access to state and interstate highways that quickly lead to metropolitan areas" (City Administrator, personal communication, Nov. 20, 2019).

The school district has built one new school and entirely renovated and increased the size of two others. The school district owns one additional lot that has been set aside for the building of a new middle school, with an anticipated construction start within the next five years (City Administrator, personal communication, Nov. 20, 2019). During the 2018 and 2019 years, the following new projects were under construction:

- 405 single-family residence homes,
- 125 duplex condominiums,
- 37 townhouses,
- several apartment communities,
- three industrial parks, including 17 lots and a 9-unit commercial space,
- a 12 acre/98,000 square-foot factory bringing over 200 new jobs,
- 5 street expansions and construction of one new bridge,

- 110 acres of land and three new boundary agreements,
- mixed-use subdivisions consisting of 103 acres of land, and
- 7-acres of parkland and green space (Springfield, 2019).

Rapid growth brought new housing options (e.g., family homes, duplexes, apartments), new businesses, factories, and commerce, attracting families and workers who were redefining the demographics of the town. Farm and local jobs gave way to skilled trade and service industry jobs (Springfield, 2019; City Administrator, personal communication, Nov. 20, 2019).

Due to the rapid increase in population size, changing demographics, and anticipation of continued growth over the next decade or more, it is essential that teachers know and understand that students bring their lived experiences with them as they move to geographically new areas. They must understand the importance of incorporating students' life-worlds into their classrooms and read-alouds, opening their curriculum, and inviting students into learning that is meaningful to them. They need to proactively prepare for the changes that are in progress and those that are yet to come, developing as skilled professional educators that open curriculum by using read-alouds to build on rather than against the literacies and experiences that their students bring to the classroom.

Definition of Relevant Terms

To provide a specific understanding of the critical and unique terms used in this research, the following are defined:

Read-aloud. The term "read-aloud" describes the block of time in which teachers read out loud to their students. According to the International Literacy Association (ILA), reading aloud to students is "undoubtedly one of the most important instructional activities to help children develop the fundamental skills and knowledge needed to become readers" (2018, p. 2).

During a read-aloud, teachers typically gather young children near, seated together as a community on a large classroom rug. Teachers read a chosen text (e.g., fictional, informational, picture book) out loud to their students while occasionally pausing to model thinking about the text or to provide students with other connections to it.

When a read-aloud is "interactive," teachers read a wide variety of genres while keeping an instructional purpose in mind. "[They] use this type of read-aloud to model comprehension strategies, such as making connections, activating prior knowledge, questioning, and so on" (Johnson & Keier, 2010, p. 73). Conversations that take place before, during, and after the read-aloud provide students with opportunities to share their thoughts, reactions, expectations, predictions, or concerns about the text (Fisher, et al., 2004).

Life-world/lived experience. The terms "life-world" and "lived experiences" define the everyday experiences that take place in one's life. These include the individual, social, and cultural experiences and surroundings that influence one's ways of knowing, being, and doing (Gee, 2009). "Life-world" and "lived experiences" both refer to human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge (Given, 2008).

What counts. For the purpose of this research, "what counts" refers to "what the dominant culture determines worth knowing." Owocki & Goodman (2002) point out that often what counts in school settings is that which can be studied in a predetermined static curriculum sequence and that which is measured on tests. What often does not count are the children's lived experiences, literacies, and their ability to negotiate within and across a variety of situations. What counts often emphasizes *teaching to the test* and *college and career readiness* that are grounded in Eurocentric practices of White, middle-class, English-only norms that privilege such practices as universal (Volk, 2017). Such practices deny those who differ from the dominant

culture the legitimacy of their own experiences and of using them to learn (Owocki & Goodman, 2003).

Neighborhood walk-through. "Neighborhood walk-through(s)" refers to the act of being fully present in the neighborhoods in which students live, walking through, observing, and spending time in neighborhood spaces. Walking through school neighborhoods allows teachers to see the abundant sociocultural, historical, and linguistic resources found in their students' neighborhoods (de la Silva Iddings & Reyes, 2017), revealing ways that students are developing their literacies, interacting with others, and experiencing life in social spaces (e.g., play spaces, restaurants, shopping malls, libraries, parks, places of worship, gathering places).

Permeable read-aloud. This term, introduced in Chapter 2, refers to read-alouds that reflect students' life-worlds, who they are inside and outside of the classroom, the experiences that they have had, and the local neighborhoods where they live. Permeable read-alouds recognize students for who they are, not just what they know: The term *permeable* means that something can pass through it or soak into it (Grove & Merriam-Webster, 2002). In the case of a read-aloud, it means that children – their ways of living, knowing, being, and doing – are not bracketed off and separated from the curriculum. Instead, they are free to pass in and through it, to permeate it, to soak into it. The term "permeable" is adopted from Dyson (1993), who coined the term "permeable curriculum" to describe "[the ways] in which the worlds of teachers and children come together in instructionally powerful ways" (p. 1).

Organization of the Study

This dissertation explored how professional learning can increase teachers' understandings of the rich diversity of the literacies and experiences that children have — thereby placing them in a better position to create and sustain rich educational contexts that build on, rather than against, the experiences that students bring with them to school each day.

Chapter 1 introduces the research questions and the significance of the research. Local context and definitions of relevant terms are provided.

Chapter 2 reviews the sociocultural framework and introduces the conceptual understandings that underlies this study: literacy development involves engaging students in literacies that (a) are grounded in *their* life-worlds and experiences, (b) connect to larger contexts, and (c) recognize that literacies and language are part of and inseparable from their social and cultural contexts (Van Sluys, et al., 2006; Compton-Lilly, 2013). The literature review foregrounds the sociocultural aspects of literacy and the potential that read-alouds have in opening the curriculum to students' lived experiences. This chapter also examines how professional learning can impact the ways that teachers can come to understand that a child's experiences are an extension of who they are and not just what they know.

Chapter 3 outlines the work that I completed as a researcher. It introduces the two elementary teacher participants, Kenslie and Oliver (pseudonyms). The research methodology is detailed and provides the rationale for the appropriateness of using qualitative research methods for conducting research that studies problems or issues in need of exploration and when an in-depth understanding of issues and contexts are needed. It describes the research site and participants in detail. Data collection procedures, analysis, and interpretation processes are thoroughly explained. The chapter concludes with an overview of the validity and credibility of the research, limitations, and ethical considerations.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 detail the events that occurred during all aspects of this study, providing a clear picture of the interactions that took place between the participants and their young students. Data collection procedures and the results of the analysis of interview transcripts, observations, and other artifacts collected as they pertain to this research are

provided. Each chapter contains an introduction, data collection procedures, findings, summary, and discussion. The meaning, importance, and relevance of the findings connect the three research questions and provide an overarching structure for discussion.

Chapter 7 provides insight into the design of future professional learning. Five sections comprise this chapter: 1) introduction, 2) professional learning framework, 3) expanding how teachers conceptualize read-alouds, 4) changing practices, and 5) grounding learning in students' life-worlds and literacies.

Chapter 8 provides final thoughts and concludes this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2:

Situating the Research

In this chapter, I position my work theoretically within a sociocultural perspective on literacy. From a sociocultural perspective, it is understood that children bring a wide range of skills and life experiences to school. “[Their] literacy practices include the ways written language is used and the beliefs, feelings, values, attitudes, and social relationships that accompany its use” (Compton-Lilly, 2013, p. 7). Teachers consider social, cultural, and historical contexts, including relationships between the social and the individual, the global and the local, the institutional, and the everyday. They provide opportunities for learners to engage with reading and literacies in ways that are meaningful and purposeful to them (Lewis, Encisco & Moje, 2007). Literature links readers to the broader sociocultural world in which they live. Therefore, it makes sense that read-alouds would offer opportunities for teachers to incorporate students’ lived experiences as a way to open their curriculum and invite students into learning that is important to them.

This chapter reviews literature as it pertains to the importance of choosing to read-aloud, opening read-alouds to the known and unfamiliar, and the value of professional learning in changing read-aloud practices. The literature review foregrounds the sociocultural aspects of literacy and the potential that read-alouds have in opening the curriculum to students' literacies and lived experiences.

A summary, emphasizing the notion that literacy development involves engaging students in literacies that are grounded in their life-worlds and experiences, concludes this chapter.

Theoretical Framework

A sociocultural view of learning recognizes learning as occurring "through situated social interactions, where learners encounter new ideas...as they acquire requisite knowledge and skills" (Hawkins, 2014, p. 95). Sociocultural views of learning emphasize the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Sociocultural perspectives on literacy grounded this research in the conceptualization that literacies are more than linguistic; they are ethical and sociocultural practices that limit or create possibilities for individuals to become literate (Street, 1995; Heath 1983; Gee, 1996). Underpinning this conceptualization is the foundational understanding that literacy development involves engaging students in literacies that are grounded in *their* life-worlds and experiences, connected to larger contexts, and recognizes that literacies and language are part of and inseparable from their social and cultural contexts (Van Sluys, Lewison & Flint, 2006; Compton-Lilly, 2013). Literacies exist within the experiences that people have, in "the relations between people and within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals" (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8).

Literacy is a social practice, "with its emphasis on purpose within context and the patterned interplay of particular skills, knowledge, and technologies – central to a plurality of literacies" (Hull & Schultz, 2001, p. 584). Literacy is multiple, rather than a unitary construct, "calling attention to the distinctive literacies that can exist beyond the schoolhouse door" (Hull & Schultz, 2001, p. 584).

As a social practice, literacies are always embedded in socially constructed knowledge (Gee, 1996; Street 1984, 1995, 2003; Heath, 1983; Barton, 1991). They are about the ways in

which people address reading and writing and are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being – of life (Street, 2003). "Literacy is about what people *do* with reading, writing, and texts in real-world contexts and why they do it: Barton and Hamilton (2000) note that 'in the simplest sense literacy practices are what people *do* with literacy' (p. 7)" (Perry, 2012, p. 54). Literacies are located within real, rational, and sociocultural transactions that give them meaning (Street, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Meaning-making is based on lived experiences that are socially and culturally constructed (Freebody & Luke, 1990).

"While linguistic processes, such as phonemic awareness and letter-sound relationships, decoding, and word recognition, are essential for reading to occur, reading is nevertheless embedded or situated in complex sociocultural systems that shape and support reading" (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013, p. 72). According to Perry (2012), there is usefulness in viewing literacy as a social practice:

> is [that] it shows that cognitive skills (e.g., the ability to decode) are only one part of what it takes to be literate. In addition, individuals must have a great deal of context-dependent knowledge to engage in a literacy practice (p. 57).

The act of reading "is always situated in a social environment where knowledge construction, language, motives, values, societies, and cultures interact" (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013, p. 72). As social practices, read-alouds include opportunities for discussions and social interactions (e.g., sharing ideas, experiences, understanding) that build on what learners know and what they bring to situations.

Review of Literature

A multipronged search strategy guided the literature review. A thorough review of the literature explored understandings of the current state of knowledge on the topics under study and sought to identify the strengths and deficiencies in this literature. I searched for articles and other sources by using keywords (e.g., elementary read-alouds, reading to children). Searching

the Indiana University Library and multiple databases (e.g., ERIC, Google Scholar, Academic Search Premier. ProQuest Education Journals, SAGE Education, SAGE Journals Online, Taylor & Francis Online) provided additional information. Through these databases, searches focused on peer-reviewed research studies and journal articles. I accessed supplemental resources from within my private, professional library and subscriptions to professional association journals such as the International Literacy Association journals and publications of the National Association of Young Children. The literature identified as having met any of the following criteria were considered for inclusion in the review: (a) contribution to understandings of the topic, (b) provided new ways to interpret prior research, (c) traced the intellectual progression of the field, and (d) revealed contradictions or gaps that exist in the literature (USC Research Guide, n.d.).

Review of literature brought to light the following four guiding principles that formed the foundation of this study: 1) teachers must choose to read aloud; 2) read-alouds open doors to known and unfamiliar worlds; 3) classrooms should be filled with student talk; and 4) changing instructional practices can make read-alouds permeable to students lives and literacies.

Choose to read-aloud. All teachers, regardless of content area or grade level, should read-aloud to their students on a daily basis (Trelease, 2013). Read-alouds are "powerful tools that support and encourage young children's learning" (Moffatt, Heydon & Iannacci, 2019, p. 151). During read-alouds, "children come together as a community and the teacher models for children what the language of books sounds like, what loving a book looks like, and what being lost in a story feels like" (Johnson & Keier, 2010, p. 73). Well-crafted stories, when read aloud, provide enjoyment and inspiration, allowing students to hear the language of books while honoring and encouraging the natural talk that grows from listening to them (Johnson & Keier,

2010; Varlas, 2018). Teachers model expressive, enthusiastic reading, and transmit the pleasure of reading, inviting listeners to become readers (Fisher, Frey & Lapp, 2008). During read-alouds, students are “turned on” to the joy of reading.

Read-alouds are a time for teachers and students to fall under the captivating spell of beautiful literature (Holdaway, 1982; Calkins, 1997; Fox, 2001). “It’s a time to weep, laugh, and hope in the context of a story; to inquire, marvel, and learn with a book; to chant and dance and feel with poems” (Calkins, 1997, p. 48). According to Fox (2001):

> The fire of literacy is created by the emotional sparks between a child, a book, and the person reading [aloud]. It isn’t achieved by the book alone, nor by the child alone, nor by the adult who’s reading aloud – it’s the relationship winding between all three, bringing them together in easy harmony (p. 10).

Teachers read to their students for a variety of purposes. These include the development of early literacy skills, building phonological process and phonics/orthographic skills, developing vocabulary and building schema, and developing new vocabulary and skill in reading comprehension (Cunningham & Zibulsky, 2014). “Listening to [read-alouds] provides the child with important tools for building bridges to new learning” (Dorn & Jones, 2012, p. 35), connecting the known to the unknown.

Classroom read-alouds should be interactive, meaning that “the teacher and the students are actively involved in thinking and talking about the text. This talk facilitates children’s literacy development in both early childhood and the elementary grades” (Wright, 2018, p. 4). Interactive read-alouds provide opportunities for teachers and students to interact with text and “create experiences and environments that introduce, nurture, or extend students' abilities to engage with the text and one another” (McClure & Fullerton, 2017, p. 57). “Read-alouds must be interactive, during which teachers briefly stop, model their thinking, ask and answer questions, and invite participation from students” (ILA, 2018, p. 4). “[They] capitalize on

students’ inquisitive nature by offering authentic and challenging learning opportunities driven by students’ interests and academic strengths and needs” (McClure & Fullerton, 2017, p. 57). Immersing students in new learning develops their vocabulary and their world and word knowledge (Bortnem, 2008).

During the purposeful and planned instruction of interactive read-alouds, “the teacher reads the text with a clear instructional purpose in mind, engaging children in conversation before, during, and after the read-aloud” (Johnson & Keier, 2010, p. 73). It is a time for teachers to teach students about the reading process, serving as a gateway to more advanced reading practices (Johnson & Keier, 2010). According to ILA (2018), “the teacher serves as an orchestra conductor, coordinating conversation among students, fostering aesthetic and efferent text responses, pushing students’ text reaction past surface-level responses, and weaving an intricate network of meaning” (p. 4). McClure & Fullerton (2017), on the other hand, describe the teacher’s role during interactive read-alouds as that of a sensitive coach or expert partner who takes what students know and guides them into more complex meanings.

Effective interactive read-alouds buzz with lively conversation, “providing critical opportunities to support children in building knowledge about the world” (Wright, 2018, p. 5). “[They] encourage children to verbally interact with the text, peers, and teacher. This approach to reading aloud provides a means of engaging students as they construct meaning and explore the reading process” (Barrentine, 1996, p. 36). The conversation often focuses on an introduction to the text, a discussion about the author and illustrator, discussion about new or unusual words, and children’s interactions with and during the reading (Bortnem, 2008). “The conversation that occurs throughout these read-alouds is rich with the potential of impacting student learning and making the interactive read-aloud an important teaching time” (Johnson & Keier, 2010, p. 103).

Conversations encourage students to connect to the information and details presented in the text, allowing them to engage with it and make connections to their own lives (Fisher, et al., 2004).

During interactive read-alouds, one of the teacher's roles is to invite and foster student interaction (McClure & Fullerton, 2017). According to Bortnem (2008), the dialogue that takes place during read-alouds promotes vocabulary development, supports students' developing ability to reason for themselves and with others, and allows them to experience social interaction as they share connections to the text. As students share their ideas and interpretations and actively listen to the thoughts and perceptions of others, they develop the ability to extend their understandings and come to understand the multiple perspectives and interpretations of others (McClure & Fullerton, 2017). "Readers can refine their thinking and understandings by negotiating meaning with others through discussions [when] they are engaged with one another and the teacher in meaningful activities where there is a great deal of talk" (McClure and Fullerton, 2017, p. 56).

McClure & Fullerton (2017) emphasize the necessity of text selection and understanding the demands of the text and the opportunities it provides for learning. "Strategically selecting materials and planning facilitative questions can encourage students to express their personal understandings and perspectives in ways that enrich the discussions and challenges the ideas of their peers" (p. 53). Strategic planning of texts that "evoke ideas, encourage diverse views, allow questions, support multiple interpretations, and promote collective responsibility" are vital to the success of interactive read-alouds (McClure & Fullerton, 2017, p. 55).

Open doors to known and unfamiliar worlds. When thinking about read-alouds, it is important for teachers to "[consider] how culture shapes the way students engage in literacy learning activities in their homes and communities and how the cultural climate of classrooms and schools can facilitate or stifle their literacy learning" (Duggins & Acosta, 2019, p. 258). Incorporating students' lived experiences into classroom read-alouds "can be both windows and mirrors into ourselves, our cultures, our life experiences, and our communities" (Johnson & Keier, 2012, p. 102). Bishop (1990) reminds us of the importance of opening curriculum and inviting students lived experiences in:

> Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books (in Harris, 2007, p. 153).

"Students who could never imagine everyday life outside of their own zip codes get to know characters in fiction and in subjects in nonfiction whose languages and lives may be not at all the same as theirs" (Culham, 2019, p. 509). Read-alouds create an opportunity for teachers to select texts that reflect the realities, interests, and priorities of students' lives (Culham, 2019; Fisher, Frey & Lapp, 2008). "When teachers purposefully read aloud from texts that capitalize on the students' interests and academic needs, students are more likely to embrace the authentic role, [reading for a variety of real purposes], of literacy" (ILA, 2018, p. 4).

To further their understandings of the world around them, students need opportunities to bring their life-worlds into the read-aloud (Quast & Bazemore-Bertrand, 2019). They need books that are not merely driven by recounting of historical firsts, rather books should "reflect the everyday beauty of being a little human..." (Miller, 2018, para. 9, in Culham, 2019, p. 511).

Students should see themselves and aspects of their life-worlds in texts (e.g., riding skateboards, squabbling with siblings, playing in the park, riding the bus or subway, shopping at the market) (Culham, 2019). Likewise, texts should offer an opportunity for students to consider the perspectives of those who are different from themselves (ILA, 2018).

Based on close observations of the children and their neighborhoods, the books that teachers choose to read aloud should provide an opportunity for their students to become involved in issues of social justice and equity, identifying as topics or issues those that pertain to and are of interest to the students (Vásquez, 2014; Comber 2013; Janks, 2014).

In the classroom, there should be a focus on the contexts of students' lives and lived experiences while connecting learning to the student's existing schema, experiences, and understandings (Hawkins, 2014). Text selections should include those that reflect "what is on the students' minds, their experiences, and what they are talking about" (Varlas, 2018, para 21). "Read-alouds should celebrate and honor ways of living and loving different from our students own" (Culham, 2019, p. 509). It is important that teachers question, "do the materials [that I] offer students reflect them – or us?" (Culham, 2019, p. 509). "Students, even young elementary ones (Sipe, 2000), are not passive consumers of text. Rather, they make sense of the story by connecting to, disconnecting from, and interacting with the narratives presented within the texts" (Quast & Bazemore-Bertrand, 2019).

Teachers read their students a variety of books for a variety of reasons. Their read-alouds serve multiple and overlapping purposes, making many quality books potential read-aloud candidates (Miller, 2013). Consideration of texts that appeal to both the teacher and the students is important (Dorn & Jones, 2012). A balance and breadth of a wide variety of texts, including

fiction and informational texts (Dorn & Jones, 2012; Johnson & Keier, 2010), is essential. Culham (2019) reinforces the importance of intentionally when selecting read-aloud:

> If we are striving to make literacy a priority in every student's life, when many (if not most) of our students come from cultural backgrounds different from our own, we must think deeply and critically about what [we are reading to students] (p. 509).

"Students deserve to fall in love with artfully crafted books that represent many worldviews...we want them to see themselves on the pages they read and to use books to broaden their thinking about the complex and increasingly heterogeneous world in which they live" (Culham, 2019, p. 511). Students need to use texts effectively, in their own individual and collective interests, across a range of discourses, texts, and tasks, to become truly literate (Leland, Harste & Huber, 2005). Children should hear a variety of texts; "[they] need to hear 'the song' of a wide range of texts" (Calkins, 1997, p. 39).

According to Trelease (2013), there are only two ways to educate the human heart: life experience and stories about life experiences. "Great preachers and teachers – Aesop, Socrates, Confucius, Moses, and Jesus – have traditionally used stories to get their lesson plans across, educating both the mind and the heart" (Trelease, 2013, p.45). Read-alouds that consider students' life experiences can offer them a broader understanding of the world, themselves, and others. Trelease (2013) narrows read-aloud selections into two broad categories of literature: fiction and nonfiction. This research, however, focuses on three forms of read-aloud texts that have shown promise for opening doors to the known and the unfamiliar: fiction, nonfiction, and picture books – which span both.

Use fictional texts. Fictional texts, primarily intended for entertainment purposes, contain imaginary events, people, and descriptions. A variety of sub-genres fall into the fictional category: science fiction, historical fiction, realistic fiction, mystery fiction, fantasy, poetry, folk

tales, myths, tall tales, and fairy tales. Fictional books dominate the reading experiences and read-aloud texts of young elementary students (Palinscar & Duke, 2004).

Of all the genres of literature, fiction is the genre that brings the reader closest to the human experience; fiction helps readers to discover clues as to how their life-stories might turn out (Trelease, 2013). Children experience their world and find meaning in their daily interactions in the world through fiction; Doiron (1994) claims:

> Fiction contains a magic that can enchant listeners and stretch their imaginations. The sound and rhythm of the language used in the narrative mode brings characters to life, enables children to visualize other settings and times, engages them in the lives of others, and touches familiar themes common to all people (p. 616).

Fiction is fundamentally human. Read-alouds of this genre can confront the feelings and issues that make students human: love, fear, jealousy, anger, delight, pride, discouragement, determination, and more.

When fiction is read aloud to students, they can be taken inside the minds and worlds of the characters, experiencing life through their eyes. They are introduced to experiences that are similar to or far different from their own, sparking imagination, opening doors to other worlds, and allowing them to explore perspectives that they have never considered before.

Include informational texts. Informational texts (e.g., non-fiction books, newspapers, maps, magazines, reference materials, some Internet sites) are texts that students read to learn about the real-world. They "provide students with the language of thought, foundational vocabulary that can be connected to other worlds, and technical content or subject-area understanding that frames how readers see themselves and the world" (Santoro et al., 2016, p. 282). Informational texts answer many of the questions that young children have every day (Duke, 2007). Duke (2003) defines informational texts as:

> text written with the primary purpose of conveying information about the natural and social world (typically from someone presumed to be more knowledgeable on the subject to someone presumed to be less so) and having particular text features to accomplish this purpose (p. 14).

Text features that convey factual information include graphic elements, photographs, diagrams, headings, cause/effect, compare/contrast, and academic vocabulary (Duke, 2003; Bortnem, 2008).

Santora et al. (2016) state, “fascinating and educationally important worlds are found in informational texts” (p. 282). Informational read-alouds support students’ growing understanding of their neighborhoods and the larger world, encouraging them to think about the world around them, to build on the background knowledge and vocabulary that they already have (Bortnem, 2008). They “provide an opportunity for many students to bring prior knowledge to the table and become contributors rather than ‘passively waiting to hear a story unfold’ (Stead, 2014, p. 488)” (in Layne, 2015, p. 61). Students develop new and deeper understandings of things close to them, like how water gets out of the faucet; other times, they may learn about things very far from them – what’s on the surface of the moon, life in the depth of the ocean – something they may never experience firsthand (Duke, 2007).

Because young children are inherently curious and fascinated by the world around them, the appeal of informational texts makes them ideal candidates for read-alouds. Taberski (n.d.) emphasizes the importance of non-fiction literature, stating that “children love learning about real things. It gives them an understanding of [their] world and the way things work” (para. 2). “Fascinating and educationally important words and worlds are found in [non-fiction texts]” (Santoro et al., 2016, p. 282).

Reading informational texts aloud introduces specialized vocabulary and concepts, contributing to the development of world knowledge (i.e., their knowledge base in science, social studies, history, health, and so on) (Duke, 2003). Given the ways that adults use informational texts in the real-world (e.g., newspapers, brochures, how-to-manuals, cookbooks, road maps, guides, schedules), nonfiction read-alouds will help students to see purpose and motivation for reading in authentic contexts (Taberski, 2001).

Embrace picture books. Picture books are staples in most early childhood read-alouds (Duke, 2003). These books are brief, and unlike most chapter books, the standard length is typically thirty-two pages (Galda, Liang & Cullinan, 2017). In picture books, a word-picture relationship conveys meaning on three different levels: 1) the words, 2) the pictures, and 3) both words and pictures together as one. Language is rich with interesting words and thoughtfully created illustrations, expanding the visual appeal without inhibiting understanding of the content (Galda, et al., 2017). Picture books use both visual and textual codes; therefore, "images contain information that is lacking in the texts, [as a result] these books can be well understood even by those students whose mother tongue is different from the language spoken in their context" (Tome-Fernandez, et al., 2019, p. 206).

Purcell-Gates, et al., (2011) suggest that picture books are not "just for fun." They are investments that provide shared experiences, shaping the classroom community and conversations all year long (in Ripp, 2015). Picture books are open to the imagination and promote meaningful thought and a capacity for deep reflection (Tome-Fernandez, et al., 2019). Teachers can use picture books to approach a variety of issues that are important in the lives of the students (e.g., economic diversity, intercultural experiences, inclusion). They can also use these books to speak back to assumptions and counter harmful discourses that circulate about

families of diverse backgrounds, offering counter-narratives to toxic stereotypes of others (Quast & Bazemore-Bertrand, 2019).

In picture books, text and complex imagery come together to serve as both windows and mirrors. Mirrors in which students' life-worlds are reflected, and windows through which they can see the lives, experiences, and struggles of others and explore their thoughts and emotions with increasing awareness, knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of oneself and others (Bishop, 1990; Tome-Fernandez, et al., 2019; Quast & Bazemore-Bertrand, 2019; Culham, 2019).

Picture books are one of the best means to promote values and open curriculum, requiring students to look at the world through different perspectives (Quast & Bazemore-Bertrand, 2019). They can transmit and reinforce intercultural values; "[they can] represent the values of help, friendship, and empathy, among others" (Tome-Fernandez, et al., 2019, p. 205; Quast & Bazemore-Bertrand, 2019). Books that show characters who have had similar or different lived experiences and who belong to different races, ethnicities, and cultures provide students with an opportunity to think critically about discrimination and social justice (Tome-Fernandez, et al., 2019).

Fill classrooms with talk. Talk is the representation of thinking (Fisher, Frey & Rothenberg, 2008). "As such, it seems reasonable that classrooms should be filled with talk, given that we want them filled with thinking!" (Fisher, et al., 2008, p. 5). Oracy, "the ability to express oneself coherently and to communicate freely with others by word of mouth," (Wilkinson, 1965, p. 4) leads to increased skill in reading and writing; it is the foundation of literacy (Fisher et al., 2008). Heath (2008) states:

> "[Talk] is life-giving when it extends through [all] that we can learn. Such language allows us to question, deliberate, negotiate, ponder, and imagine…this

kind of talk helps us to find our way in the world and humanity to make the world a better place" (in D. Fisher et al., 2008, p. xiii).

Talk breathes life into the classroom, and it helps children to find their way through life and learning. But, it is not the sheer volume of talk that is responsible for this, rather specific kinds of talk show more promise for leading students to engage with the world and with others. Specifically, student-centered talk has shown considerable promise to move students toward collaborative understandings of how and why they think, feel, or believe the ways that they do (Walsh & Sattes, 2015).

Encourage student-centered conversations. Student-centered conversations around texts are, according to Garas-York, Shanahan & Almasi (2013) "classroom events ['open' discussions] in which students and teachers are cognitively, socially, and effectively engaged in collaboratively constructing meaning or considering alternative interpretations of texts to arrive at new understandings" (p. 246). Conversations are not generally pre-planned, nor is there a predetermined conclusion to be reached; instead, they organically and authentically emerge from the ways that students respond to one another, leading them to reach new or more sophisticated understandings (Garas-York et al., 2013). According to Calkins (1997), "talking about books helps people to live and to read better" (p. 45).

Student-centered talk that emerges from read-alouds is authentic and filled with lively academic conversations that "honor students' culture and interests, as well as builds on background and vocabulary" (Varlas, 2018, para. 23). These allow students to engage with the text, make connections to their own lives, and make meaning of the information and details presented in it (Fisher, et al., 2004). They can create a "self-propelling" cycle of engagement where students not only want to learn more about the topic but where their new knowledge causes them to want to become involved in matters that are rooted in their real lives (Varlas,

2018). They provide safe spaces for all voices to be heard, building students' confidence, self-esteem, sense of belonging, and purpose.

According to Britton (1970), "reading and writing float on a sea of talk;" therefore, teachers must infuse student-centered discussions into their read-alouds, providing students with encouragement and ample time to reflect, wonder, and question (Stead, 2014, p. 492). Talking can "facilitate literal understanding of the text and inferential comprehension for students at all levels of language proficiency" (Garas-York, et al., 2013, p. 246). Multiple and conflicting interpretations of text often coexist as students wrestle with ideas and engage in dialogue around open-ended questions (Garas-York et al., 2013). Walsh & Sattes (2015) state:

> [Student-centered discussions] are divergent, not convergent; that is, they are open to different interpretations and conclusions, not closed to one "right" answer. They engage students in a higher-level processing of information, moving beyond the mere regurgitation of textbook or teacher answers (p. 7).

Gutierrez, Baquedane-Lopez &Turner (1997) state that "when teachers, students, and peers engage in [discussion] collaboratively, their knowledge and literacies become available to one another" (p. 370). Getting children to think about and talk about how their experiences connect to and influence their perspectives of what is going on in the story is vital for literacy growth, academic development, and critical thinking (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Miller, 2013). The goal of these conversations is not limited to reaching an agreement or consensus; rather, it is to move students toward collaborative understandings of how and why they and others think or feel the ways that they do (Walsh & Sattes, 2015). It is a time where all students are encouraged to share their lived experiences as they connect to text or topic.

According to Freire (1970), "Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no true education" (p. 65). Dialogue, in the form of

conversation, is important to creating a classroom environment where all voices are heard, and experiences are shared.

During the course of conversation, the teacher may choose to pose a question or a prompt and provide students with a few minutes to talk with a partner about their experiences and to share interpretations of the topic under discussion (Kelly, Ogden & Moses, 2019). Pairing students in classroom discussions, often referred to as "think-pair-share" or "partner talk," builds on students' literacies and lived experiences. It permits them to participate in a conversation, increasing their engagement, supporting oral language development, scaffolding instruction, and helping them take responsibility for their learning (Kelly et al., 2019). Pairing students serves a variety of purposes. According to Johnson & Keier (2010):

> It's a time for students to negotiate the meaning of text together; to share their thoughts, opinions, and connections; or to make predictions of what's to come. They support each other as they dig deep to construct meaning (p. 99).

When students pair together, it should always be a safe space for them to (a) consider one another's ideas, (b) share their experiences, (c) use their language repertoires, (d) connect to the text, and (e) to articulate their thinking in their ways (Johnson & Keier, 2010). It is a conversational "give and take" of thoughts that allow students to share their experiences, thinking, and wonderings with others (Johnson & Keier, 2010).

Make thinking visible. Conversation can be generated when teachers authentically make their thinking visible to their students by modeling how skilled readers construct meaning from a text by sharing their inner self-dialogue, self-questioning, or thinking process. When making their thinking visible, teachers reveal their thinking process about whatever they have decided, strategically or incidentally, to share with the students; they use language to make the metacognitive process (i.e., the internal thinking processes) visible and explicit (Johnson &

Keier, 2010; Ness, 2018). Johnson & Keier (2012) provide examples of what a teacher may choose to share or model:

> visualizing, questioning, inferring; searching for more information in the letters, pictures, or text; predicting a word based on what would make sense; connecting to prior knowledge; and so on (p. 44).

In the article titled "Making Thinking Visible," Perkins (2003) of the Harvard Graduate School of Education writes:

> Consider how often what we learn reflects what others are doing around us. We watch, we imitate, we adapt what we see to our own styles and interests, we build from there. Now imagine learning to dance when the dancers around you are all invisible. Imagine learning a sport when the players who already know the game can't be seen. Bizarre as this may sound, something close to it happens all the time in one very important area of learning: learning to think. Thinking is pretty much invisible. To be sure, sometimes people explain the thoughts behind a particular conclusion, but often they do not. Mostly, thinking happens under the hood, within the marvelous engine of our mind brain. Fortunately, neither others' thinking nor opportunities to think need to be as invisible as they often are. As educators, we can work to make thinking much more visible than it usually is in the classroom. When we do so, we are giving students more to build on and learn from. By making the dancers visible, we are making it much easier to learn and dance (in Miller, 2008, p. 60).

Teachers use "I" language (i.e., statements that include and focus on the thoughts or feelings of the individual teacher, the "I") when modeling their thinking and provide quick explanations of what is going on in their minds at periodic stopping points (Ness, 2018). For example, while reading out loud, a teacher might be heard making a statement such as, "I am not exactly sure, but I believe the most important idea here is that Yoon is homesick" (Ness, 2018). "I" language provides transparency of the authentic thinking process that the teacher is engaged in and increases the likelihood that students will internalize the strategies modeled and apply them to their reading (Ness, 2018).

While nearly all forms of texts are conducive for teachers to make their thinking visible, there should be some caution exercised, as it should not be a long detour. Instead, it should be

interwoven into teaching and learning throughout each day. Johnson & Keier (2012) caution, “Don’t overdo your thinking out loud by stopping too often. Make sure you keep the flow of the text and meaning intact” (p. 102).

Minimize reliance on teacher-centered conversations. Teacher-centered conversations are those in which the teacher is viewed as the expert, the keeper of knowledge. In teacher-centered approaches, the teacher is the sole supplier of knowledge, and the student is an empty vessel waiting to be filled. The purpose of these conversations is for the teacher to guide students through the learning process, modeling and demonstrating how to access and comprehend information accurately. In this form of discussion, the teacher asks students questions and lead them to the desired correct responses. Students' preferences or alternate interpretations do not have a presence in these conversations, there is only one correct answer or understanding, and it is that of the teacher.

Although teacher-centered conversations have had a continued presence in the classroom and are perpetuated by boxed curriculum kits that provide scripted lesson plans, this form of questioning does not allow students to express themselves, ask questions, or participate in their own learning. Having long been used in classrooms, this form of questioning has become a default that does not require the teacher to think through questioning or to consider the ways that the desired response may or may not be accessible to the students.

Acknowledging the presence of teacher-centered conversations and having spent many of my early years of teaching relying on this form of questioning as my “go-to”, this study seeks not to eradicate these forms of questions, but rather to lead teachers in minimizing reliance on them. By their very nature, they exclude students’ life-worlds, who they are inside and outside of the

classroom, the experiences that they have had, and the local neighborhoods where they live; permeable read-alouds are not conducive to an abundance of teacher-centered conversations.

Invite opportunity to rethink practices and perceptions. Teachers are the most important element in the classroom. “Good teachers, effective teachers, matter much more than particular curriculum materials, pedagogical approaches, or ‘proven programs’” (Allington, 2002, p. 742). According to Duke, Cervetti, & Wise (2015):

> It is the quality of the individual teacher’s practices, more than the specific materials or general approach the teacher uses, that influences students’ reading growth. The quality of a surgeon is not determined by the surgeon’s scalpel, nor is the quality of a carpenter determined by the carpenter’s tools. The tools matter, but they do not a surgeon or carpenter make (p. 35).

Deviating from the old norms and models of workshops, institutes, *preservice* (i.e., prior to employment as a teacher) and *in-service* (i.e., while employed as a teacher) training, Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (2011) argue “[professional learning] cannot be prepackaged or conveyed by traditional top-down ‘teacher training’ strategies” (p. 81). Unlike workshops and institutes, a collaborative approach to job-embedded professional learning leads teachers to deeper understandings and potential changes in their practices. This approach “is practical for teachers [and] personalized to their learning needs, relevant to their instructional and classroom practices” (Campbell, Liebermann & Yashkina, 2016, p. 221). According to Croft et al., (2010), “adults learn best when they are self-directed, building new knowledge upon existing knowledge, and aware of the relevance and personal significance of what they are learning – grounding theoretical knowledge in actual events” (p. 8).

Teachers learn by doing (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). Professional learning that focuses on embedding learning in the context of teacher’s work lives and allows for practice, discussion, and feedback has potential to translate into transformed approaches to instructional practices (Dennis & Hemmings, 2018; Gallucci et al., 2010; Birman et al., 2000).

Increasing teachers' understandings of the rich diversity of practices that characterize students' learning puts them in a better position to create and sustain rich educational contexts that build on, rather than against, the experiences that students bring with them to school each day (Cairney, 2016; Moje, 2004). This makes it possible for educators to lead students in the development of a deep understanding of content through the use of powerful texts that use their everyday world and its textual practices as its focus for inquiry (Comber, 2013).

Recognition that an individual's experiences are an extension of who they are and not just what they know is essential to working with students. When teachers look at and plan for read-alouds, they need to see the lives that their students are living and the people that their students wish to be, and consider "am I opening my read-alouds to reflect these lives?"

In this study, professional learning sessions focused on the concept of *permeable read-alouds* providing teachers with a new lens from which to approach the above question. The term, "permeable read-aloud," refers to the ways that teachers open their read-alouds to make space for students' life-worlds and their ways of *doing* (i.e., producing and consuming) literacies. Students' ways of living, knowing, being, and doing are not excluded or bracketed off from the read-alouds; instead, they permeate it.

This study focused on preparing Kenslie and Oliver to re-envision their read-aloud practices and perceptions. Preparation, in the form of professional learning, enabled them to develop a permeable read-aloud tool kit. Building the toolkits required knowledge of the following three topics: (a) contemporary youth culture, (b) expanding what counts as literacy, and (c) the necessity of focusing on students' realities.

Walk through school neighborhoods. The ways that children and families are using and doing literacies in out-of-school spaces are revealed to teachers who have an intentional presence

in the local neighborhoods that surround their schools. Neighborhood walk-throughs (i.e., the act of walking through, observing, and spending time in students' neighborhood spaces) provide teachers with the opportunity to be present in the places where students are developing and using their literacies, interacting with others, and experiencing life in social spaces (e.g., restaurants, markets, retail establishments, parks, bus stops, libraries, healthcare facilities, community centers).

An observant eye may notice how children experience their social environments and the interactions between children, friends, and families – how they communicate, play, use text, solve problems, create, engage – and live (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013; Heath, 1983). These are all "skills that are not dispensed to children but are passed on through scaffolded activities, becoming a memorable aspect of children's histories" (Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 22).

Walking through neighborhoods and reframing what was previously unknown or perceived as unfamiliar, ugly, lacking, or insufficient allows teachers to see the strengths and beauty in the students' neighborhoods, leading to asset-based thinking and teaching (Quast & Bazemore-Bertrand, 2019). Coming to know and better understand the neighborhoods' experiences can lead to change in teacher's ideologies towards an asset-based perspective of what is available to children (da la Silva-Iddings & Reyes, 2017). Neighborhood walk-throughs instill cultural pride in students; when they see teachers in their neighborhoods, there is validation that they and their neighborhoods have value (Safir, 2017). "The message that this sends to families is profound: You matter, and you are welcome here" (Culham, 2019, p. 509).

Reaching carefully into the children's worlds increases teachers' consciousness. It provides them with a more informed and holistic view of their students in their worlds – "to know each child as a person unique in all the world" (O'Keefe, 1996, in Owocki & Goodman,

2002, p. 7). This leads to valuable insight that will aid teachers in enacting permeable read-alouds in which the worlds of teachers and children come together in powerful ways, connecting the known to the unknown, and expanding their ways of constructing and expressing knowledge (Owocki & Goodman, 2002).

It is important to consider local neighborhoods and to think about home/school relationships, including ways to blur out-of-school and in-school literacies to create classroom environments where students' literacies and lived experiences are valued (Cairney, 2016). Building on the experiences of students' daily lives and literacies helps to bridge their understandings (Purcell-Gates, et al., 2011) and honors the many strengths that they bring with them to formal education (Heath, 1983).

The fact is that students are never simply in-school or out-of-school; they carry their practices and experiences with them across contexts (Cairney, 2016). The experiences and literacies that they develop within their homes and neighborhoods should not be sealed tight or bordered off from school (Hull & Schultz, 2001). On the contrary, pedagogical orientations should combine immersion in authentic practices (i.e., students lived experiences, the ways they are doing literacies in their lives), overt instruction, situated practice, and critical understanding as a basis for connecting the known to the unknown and developing new meanings and understandings (Serrafini & Gee, 2017).

By establishing an environment where students are encouraged to use their known literacies during read-alouds, teachers can make space for students' life-worlds and the ways that they are doing literacies. Thus, allowing their experiences to transverse institutional boundaries, "seeping across and at times collapsing the boundaries between in-school and out-of-school literacies" (Jewitt, 2008).

Neighborhood walk-throughs provide teachers with the opportunity to see firsthand that neighborhoods and children are diverse, leading them to question, "are my instructional practices as diverse as are my students and their experiences?" (Volk, 2017). Perhaps creating the potential to fracture existing curriculum – opening spaces for change.

Expand what counts as literacy. Sadly, many students' experiences and literacies are trivialized, rather than valued and expanded in school settings. According to Owocki & Goodman (2002),

> What counts [in] politics and institutions is often what can be measured on tests, that which can be studied in prepackaged sequence, and/or that which has been defined by the dominant culture as worth knowing. What often does not count is children's ability to negotiate [within] and across a variety of situations and to interpret and construct whole texts within meaningful social settings (p. 25).

Literacies are plural and multiple (New London Group (NLG), 1996; Cope, Kalantz & Abrams, 2017), "embedded in the [lived experiences] of individuals and groups" (Duggins & Acosta, 2019, p. 258). They are not confined to schooled practices that limit them to that which the dominant culture has defined as worth knowing. Teachers must consider and respond to students' lived experiences and the complexity and change that takes place in their lives both in-school and out-of-school. It is essential to understand that students lived experiences and literacies are socially-contextualized practices that differ across neighborhoods and contexts (Duggins & Acosta, 2019).

Multiliteracies emphasize linguistic diversity and multimodal forms of expression and representation, meaning that text is no longer confined by pen and paper. Text is multimodal; it includes audio, images, graphics, sound, video, and other forms of technology (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Multiliteracies involve a heightened awareness of culture and transverse across homes, classrooms, neighborhoods, and global spaces; literacies are in the everything (Medina &

Wohlwend, 2014; Cervetti, Daminco & Pearson, 2006; Kress, 2010). In real-world contexts, children are doing (producing and consuming) multiliteracies in the forms of multimodal engagement with physical and virtual others: texting, blogging, creating, publishing, designing, writing, re-writing, playing, gaming, YouTube-ing, etc. Recognizing and including the ways that students are using these technologies in their lives is essential. According to Teal (2018), "technology is critically important because it has literally redefined what it means to be literate these days" (in Turner, 2018, p. 180).

As society becomes more culturally and linguistically diverse, written-linguistic modes of meaning frequently interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile, and spatial patterns of meaning (Kalantzis, et al., 2016; Cope & Kalantzis, 2015). The definition of text now extends to include animation, video, music, websites, drama, play, apps, digital texts, and other multimodal forms of meaning-making (Wohlwend, 2017; Wang, et al., 2019). As a result of students' authentic, real-world experiences with literacies, read-alouds should encompass the ways that children are experiencing and doing literacies in their own live-worlds. "…what counts as reading and writing at home, [should] count as reading and writing at school…[otherwise] children are denied the legitimacy of their own experiences and of using them to learn" (Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 25, 26). Multimodal texts, those that combine two or more communication modes (e.g., image, gesture, audio, spoken language, written language), enable students to engage in read-alouds that move beyond the written word and closely connect to the ways that they do doing literacies in their lives.

If teachers do not expand their conceptions of what counts and open their curriculum to students lived experiences and literacies, some students could be left feeling like outsiders looking in, as is articulated Woodson (2008) in the following statement:

> Lastly, I'd been feeling like I was standing outside watching everything and everybody. Wishing I would take part of me that was over there and the part of me that was over here and push them together—make myself into one whole person like everybody else (p. 37).

When read-alouds incorporate texts that are more than linguistic, they "connect to, and are shaped by values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships" (Perry, 2012, p. 54). They become a space to share, convey, and make meaning of cultural information that blurs the in-school/out-of-school boundaries and reflects the lived experiences of the students (Jewitt, 2008). Multimodal read-alouds that consider the ways that children experience and do literacies have the potential to connect the local and the global, allowing students to use their literacies within and across diversity and to interact with others.

Focus on students' realities. As teachers read more and talk less, and students talk more, they will share their passions, interests, and real-world concerns. "Student [talk] is the antithesis of depersonalization, standardization, and homogenized educational experiences because it begins and ends with the thoughts, feelings, visions, and actions of the students themselves" (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012, p.23). When teachers encourage students to talk with one another, they are sending the message that "you are important; what impacts your life matters to others."

Teachers can empower their students by focusing on real-world interests, problems, and solutions that are relevant to the students' lives by incorporating the students' experiences as resources for learning (Harste, Burke & Woodward, 1982; Noddings, 2016). Inquiry into common interests and questions encourages teachers and students to mutually negotiate curriculum so that students' lives and experiences with literacy and the world are celebrated and expanded on (Van Sluys et al., 2006).

Cultivating student voice involves establishing an environment in which all have a chance to be heard. Teachers can begin creating space for students to become involved in both

class, school, community, and global events by making space in the curriculum for students' interests, passions, and curiosities to flourish. Using read-alouds to encourage students to talk about the value of their lived experiences and the multiple ways that they do literacies enables them to view the possibilities that are created for becoming involved in topics and issues that are of concern to them.

It is essential to provide opportunities for students to share issues that are important to them and to bring these into the school environment. For example, they can start a blog where they discuss school issues (e.g., longer recess breaks, uniforms, backpacks in classrooms) or social awareness campaigns (e.g., clean water access, animal rights, warming shelters, single-use water bottles). Perhaps, they can text their principal or local representative expressing concern for a current issue or cause, design a website that shares their knowledge with others, or create a meme, rap, or musical that targets an area of concern or interest. When students teach others, or voice their knowledge about issues that affect their lives, they build confidence, champion others, find purpose, and develop as leaders in their schools and neighborhoods – all things that teachers hope to instill in students.

Summary of Literature Review

This chapter explores read-alouds through a sociocultural lens. Sociocultural perspectives on literacy take into consideration the notion that literacies are more than linguistic; they are ethical and sociocultural practices that limit or create possibilities for individuals to become literate (Street, 1995; Heath 1983; Gee, 1996). Literacy development involves engaging students in literacies that are grounded in their life-worlds and experiences, connected to larger contexts, and recognizes that literacies and language are part of and inseparable from their social and cultural contexts (Van Sluys, et al., 2006; Compton-Lilly, 2013).

Children's participation in the social and cultural contexts of their everyday lives (e.g., families, neighborhoods, schools) form their lived experiences, comprised of the individual, social, and cultural experiences and surroundings that influence one's ways of knowing, being, and doing (Gee, 2009). These lived experiences are the backbone of the child's literacy development. With that vital understanding, teachers can develop holistic understandings of their students and open their curriculum to invite them into meaningful learning that is grounded in their life-worlds.

Read-alouds can serve as windows into the larger, global world, building on the lived experiences that students have had and offering them experiences that they have never had, taking them to places they have been and to places that they will never go. Students need to see themselves reflected in read-alouds, providing them with opportunity for exploring who they are, who they might be, or who they might become—to explore, negotiate, and re-negotiate the world through their experiences and different perspectives (Johnson & Keier, 2012).

The concept of *permeable read-alouds*, referring to the ways that teachers open their read-alouds to make space for students' life-worlds and their ways of doing literacies, was introduced in this chapter. Permeable read-alouds reflect students' life-worlds, who they are inside and outside of the classroom, the experiences that they have had, and the local neighborhoods where they live.

In addition to exploring the connections of sociocultural perspectives on literacy and teacher read-alouds, this chapter defines the concept of a read-aloud, emphasizes the significance of text selection, and provides an overview of conversational methods and strategies that have promise for inviting students and their life-worlds into the classroom environment. Furthermore, this chapter explores ways of providing teachers with relevant professional learning

opportunities that have the potential to expand their understanding of methods and approaches to opening their read-alouds. Professional learning centered around neighborhood walk-throughs, expanding what counts as literacy, and focusing on students’ lives.

CHAPTER 3:

Researching First-Grade Read-Alouds

This chapter lays out the research context, rationale, and procedures used in this study. I elaborate on the appropriateness of the research design and methodology, confront my own positionality entering into this study, and describe the participants, site settings, and data collection and analysis procedures. Validity, credibility, and limitations are discussed, as are the ethical considerations of this study. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a summary of research methodology and key points.

Researcher Positionality

Entering this research, I understood that although I have nearly two decades of experience teaching PK-4, I was coming to the sites as an outsider – having been out of the classroom for over eight years and taking on the role of a researcher made me an outsider. It is not uncommon, however, for researchers like myself to assume that because they are working amongst their "own" people (e.g., teachers) and sharing a similar background, culture, or faith, that they are insiders. Likewise, researchers may assume that it will be easy to build rapport with a community with which they have commonalities; nevertheless, it is essential to keep in mind that the *person* may be an insider, but the *researcher* may not have this same status.

The fact of being a researcher makes one different, regardless of the commonalities that are shared. It was vital for me to understand that I was distinctively one of "them" (a researcher) as opposed to one of "us" (a teacher) (Gregory & Ruby, 2010). This was not to say that I did not become an "insider" to some degree. Nevertheless, to have assumed this status, regardless of the rationale, would have been wrong. Assuming common beliefs across cultures or insider status could have led to difficulties or impacted the scope or nature of this research.

I approached this study as an opportunity to learn with and from experienced teachers. I was open to what they were doing, and I did not imply that I "had all of the answers." A collaborative approach to learning with and learning from one another drove all interactions that took place during this study.

Research Design and Appropriateness

According to Creswell & Poth (2018), it is appropriate to conduct qualitative research when a problem or issue needs exploration or when detailed understandings of the issue and contexts or settings are needed. Creswell & Poth (2018) go on to state that, "qualitative research [is conducted] when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants of the study" (p. 45). Yin (2016) writes:

> Qualitative research, most of all involves studying the meanings of people's lives, as experienced under real-world conditions...it embraces the contextual conditions – that is, the social, institutional, cultural, and environmental conditions…[with] a desire to explain social behavior and thinking, through existing or emerging concepts" (p. 3).

According to Yin (2016), this study warranted a qualitative research design because it sought to

- explore people's lives within a real-world context,
- represent the views and perspectives of the participants,
- explicitly attend to and account for real-world conditions,
- recognize contributing insights from existing or new concepts that may help to explain social behavior and thinking, and
- acknowledge the potential relevance of multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone.

The exploratory nature of this research was grounded in the field of qualitative research. Denzin & Lincoln (2011) define qualitative research as:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

The design was intended to explore how professional learning can be developed to increase elementary school teachers' understandings of their students' literacies and lived experiences, opening spaces where they can enact read-alouds that are permeable to students' life-worlds and literacies. Teachers expressed ideas, beliefs, and patterns of behavior were observed and documented. Data revealed how, after engagement in professional learning, teachers used read-alouds as a catalyst for opening the curriculum and incorporating students' lived experiences in the read-aloud environment.

Research Setting

This study was conducted in the town of Springfield, located at the intersection of two Midwestern states and a great American waterway. Springfield is the home of Oak Hill and Valley Vista Elementary schools (pseudonyms). Both are in the same school district, located in a Midwestern state geographically defined, according to the United States Census Bureau (1995), as located in the east north-central region of the United States of America.

At the time of this study, Oak Hill and Valley Vista served students in grades pre-kindergarten through grade five. District enrollment was close to 4,000 total students. According to the most recent data reports (2014), the district was

- 68% white/non-Hispanic,

- 10% Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanic,
- 8% Black not Hispanic, and
- 5% of other reported categories of race/ethnicity.

Of the 815 combined students served by this district, greater than 55% resided in households that met the criteria of low socioeconomic status (SES). In this state, "Low SES [was] defined as students receiving free and reduced lunch and/or families, women, and children living at least 100% of the poverty level" (Healthy Schools Project, 2008). In schools where greater than 40% of the students' households were considered low SES, the school receives a school-wide Title 1 designation. As a result of this designation, school-wide literacy programs served all students, with the ultimate goal of providing academic support and learning opportunities to help low-achieving students master challenging curricula and meet state standards in reading (USDE, n.d.).

Oak Hill Elementary School. The first of two elementary schools that served as sites for this research was Oak Hill Elementary. Kenslie, introduced later in this chapter, spent the last twenty years teaching kindergarten and first grade at Oak Hill. This 1950's brick school was surrounded by wooded hills that were the home to a variety of birds, squirrels, and deer. Bird feeders hung outside of several classroom windows, and deer trails zig-zagged the nearby hills. Brightly colored swings, slides, and climbing apparatus adorned the large grassy area in front of the school. Tennis courts and baseball diamonds checkered the adjacent public play park.

Upon initial arrival, I had to park my vehicle two blocks away from the school in a dirt field adjacent to the public park; this was designated overflow parking for both the school and the park. As I made the long trek to the school, I heard the sound of students' play and laughter far before I saw them running, talking, playing, and taking full advantage of the freedoms that

come with recess. Balls bounced, and jump ropes flew in all directions; swing sets and climbing structures buzzed with movement and play. Several young girls crawled around and made animal noises; a young boy stomped around with his arms crossed, and several children ran around with no apparent purpose. Young children clamored in and out of the school doors.

A community garden greeted students and visitors as they approached the main entrance to the school; Brussel sprouts, tomatoes, kohlrabi, and a variety of squash shone brightly in the early morning sun on the first day that I visited the school. Near the garden sat a handcrafted Peace Pole, proudly proclaiming, “May peace prevail on earth” in several different languages (see Figure 1). Concrete benches were surrounded by rustic tan bricks, providing a space for reflection, contemplation, or rest.

As I approached the entrance, a young boy held the first of the two glass doors open for me to enter. He showed me the security buzzer on the wall near the second set of glass doors. He held the security buzzer and shoved his face into the camera. I am reasonably sure that the person at the other end of the camera saw nothing but a giant eye-ball staring through the lens. Almost immediately, a tanned tousle-haired girl pushed open the second glass door, motioning for me to enter. It appeared that the students were not at all phased by the security precautions that had been put in place to keep them safe; children greeted me with trust and provided immediate access to the interior of the building.

I went to the office, greeted the administrative assistant and principal, signed into the aged cardboard binder that logged the entrance and exit of guests, put on a visitor's badge, and headed to Kenslie’s first-grade classroom.

Figure 1. The Peace Pole. This figure shows the Peace Pole that was situated near the main entrance to Oak Hill Elementary School.

A long, tiled hallway housed the kindergarten and first-grade classrooms. Built slightly below ground level, these classrooms did not have interior or exterior windows. The bright fluorescent ceiling lights were covered with pale blue fabric, giving them an appearance of a calm blue-sky. In the square-shaped classroom, tiny tables and desks were clustered into the center, allowing just the right amount of space to squeeze the reading-rug between the Smartboard and the bookshelves near the back of the class. Kenslie's desk, chair, and file cabinets provided an artificial wall, making the reading-rug a defined space.

A large construction paper tree adorned one wall of the classroom. This paper tree contained a cardboard treehouse and was decorated with numerous book-covers from a variety of

The Magic Treehouse books (see Figure 2). Kenslie informed me that her overarching class theme for the fall semester centers around *The Magic Treehouse* book series by Mary Pope Osborne. She stated that these chapter books capture the children's interest and take them on adventures that they would otherwise never have, such as chasing dinosaurs or eating dinner with dingoes. Kenslie continued, "they build children's reading stamina, requiring them to remember what was read in earlier chapters, and teaching them to think critically about a variety of different situations."

Figure 2. The Magic Treehouse. In Kenslie's classroom, a construction paper treehouse is adorned with book covers from *The Magic Treehouse* book series by Mary Pope Osborne.

Valley Vista Elementary School. The second of the two elementary schools, Valley Vista Elementary, was the site location for all interactions with Oliver, introduced later in this

chapter. He has taught first-grade for nearly ten years at Valley Vista Elementary School, a newer school nestled between a sand prairie and maple bluffs.

After driving through the brisk, windy, and uncharacteristically chilly day, I pulled into the vast parking lot. Whipping winds made it seem like a long cold walk to the school office. Slightly obscured from visitors, small fenced playgrounds peered from behind three sides of the building. Young children peddled tricycles and played alongside one another in a small area that was off-set from the rest – perhaps a kindergarten play area. Their laughter and shrills echoed through the crisp air. Nearing the office entrance, I noticed an immaculately groomed spruce tree that harbored a Free Little Public Library (see Figure 3). Surrounding the lush spruce that sheltered the library were several painted rocks. I am not sure of their meaning, but I am confident that the students must have felt pride in their creations that were displayed for all visitors to see. The original bell that rang over the first Springfield one-room school-house sat atop a brick pillar, surrounded by park benches and fall foliage.

The secure entrance led directly to the glass-enclosed school office that served as a hub; shining, tiled halls veered off in multiple directions, like the spokes in a wheel. Once granted access, I greeted the office staff who awaited my arrival and welcomed me by name. I signed in, put on my visitor's badge, and headed down the hallway leading to Oliver’s classroom. Student artwork peeked from behind handmade Hmong story cloths, colorful embroidered cloths that portray everyday life in Laos (see Figure 4).

Figure 3. Valley Vista Elementary School. This figure shows the Free Little Public Library and student-created stone paintings that greet visitors to the school.

Figure 4. Hmong Story Cloth. Hmong story cloths adorn the walls in Valley Vista Elementary School.

The honeycomb type of layout of the interior of the school was somewhat confusing, and I walked around, feeling slightly uncomfortable, knowing that I had become lost in a place that 5-year-olds were capable of navigating. Student art-work, uplifting messages, and posters encouraging students to “snuggle up and read” adorned the walls.

Oliver must have figured out that I was roaming around lost, as he was waiting in the hall and called out to me as I peered sheepishly around the corner. Upon entering his class, tiny chairs and pint-sized desks, an interactive Promethean board, and a multitude of fall-themed books created a familiar environment.

Oliver’s spacious, rectangular-shaped classroom was bright with natural light flowing in from the many windows that ran along the length of the room. Clusters of small triangular desks came together to create geometric tables where 3-5 students sat together, facing one another. Oliver’s reading rug, situated in the front of the class, was in an open area, making it a comfortable, roomy gathering space for reading aloud.

Participants

In preparation for research, I met with school principals to discuss the proposed study and sought permission to interact with teachers and observe students within classroom spaces. Once the principals granted permission to conduct research (see Appendix A), an information sheet regarding the research study was shared with prospective teacher participants. They were invited to join the study based on their self-identification as early childhood professions who read aloud to their students daily. The teachers did not have to meet any specific criteria (e.g., educational level, gender, years of service) to participate.

Four elementary school teachers expressed interest in the research. I met with them to explain it, and I distributed a study information sheet (see Appendix B) to each. During the

explanation and discussion of the research study, ample time was allowed for the prospective participants to ask questions. Two of the four teachers agreed to participate. Both signed an informed consent form (see Appendix C). Because this research did not involve direct interaction, interviewing, recording, or collecting work samples of students, parents and caregivers did not have to provide informed consent.

Both teachers who agreed to participate taught first-grade. Kenslie taught at Oak Hill Elementary, and Oliver taught at Valley Vista Elementary. Table 3.1 provides an overview of each participant.

Table 3. 1

Overview of Participants

Teacher	Site Location	Grade Level	Teaching Experience
Kenslie	Oak Hill Elementary	1st	20 years of teaching; Master's degree; licensed to teach students ranging from birth to age eight.
Oliver	Valley Vista Elementary	1st	10 years of teaching; Bachelor's degree; licensed to teach students ranging from birth to age eight

Access to Sites

Prior to seeking access to the schools, I consulted with the school principals to discuss preferences for access. We discussed hours of school and parking lot access, preferred entrance doors, visitor security codes, and sign-in requirements. I was issued a daily visitor pass that allowed access to the building facilities during scheduled observation and interview times. I met the security guards and the administrative assistants who greet all visitors to the schools. Finally,

I learned of the emergency protocols and procedures for school cancellation, fire-drills, tornado drills, lockdown, and evacuation.

Data Sources

Multiple sources of data were collected first-hand, specifically for the purpose of this research. All phases of research took place in the classrooms where Kenslie and Oliver teach. Data were original in nature and directly related to the research topic. Sources included teacher interview and observation transcripts, conversational and observational field notes, audio recordings, reflective journals, and artifacts associated with professional learning sessions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Primary sources of data included a total of:

- two in-depth interviews,
- four informal conversations,
- six professional learning sessions, including transcriptions of teacher-researcher conversations and analysis of learning artifacts, and
- four read-aloud observations.

These data sources were collected and systematically analyzed to obtain findings. Each data set was analyzed for each individual teacher (interviews, professional learning, associated artifacts, and classroom observations) and then analyzed again across and combining sources to consider possible connections within the data.

Data Collection Procedures

As a qualitative researcher, I used multiple methods, including observations, interviews, and collection of professional learning artifacts to gather information and promote the credibility of the research findings. The collection of data took place in three phases: 1) the initial practices and perceptions, 2) developing a permeable read-aloud toolkit, and 3) re-envisioning practices

and perceptions. Analysis of data from the initial phase informed the development of the toolkit. Analysis of data collected during the final two phases resulted in the key findings of this research (see Figure 5).

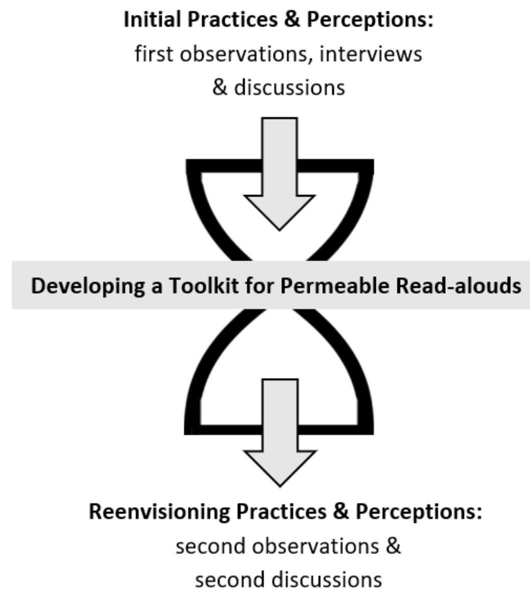

Figure 5. Data Collection Stages. This figure illustrates how the phases of this study were sequenced in relation to one another.

Within each of the three phases of this research, strategic, purposeful, and organized data collection took place (see Table 3.2), allowing for later comparison of findings within, between, and across the phases.

Table 3. 2

Data Collection Overview

Phase	Event	Data collection	Purpose
Initial Practices and Perceptions: How are teachers using read-alouds? How do they open their curriculum? What elements of a permeable read-aloud were used?	First observation First interview/discussion	Observation transcripts; detailed field notes Interview & discussion transcripts; detailed field notes Member checks	Findings informed professional learning activities, referred to as the "developing a toolkit for permeable read-alouds" phase.
Developing a Toolkit for Permeable Read-Alouds	Contemporary youth culture simulation lab Photo journal Doing a permeable read-aloud	Notes of teacher responses; detailed conversational notes Photos of journals; detailed conversational notes Member checks	Introduced teachers to permeable read-alouds and the elements that define them
Re-envisioning Practices and Perceptions: How are teachers using read-alouds? How do they open their curriculum? What elements of a permeable read-aloud were used?	Second observation Second discussion	Observation transcripts; detailed field notes Interview transcripts; detailed field notes Member checks	Compared/contrasted the findings of the initial practices phase and the transforming practices phase. Note changes in practices and understandings after professional learning

Data Analysis Procedures

"[Qualitative research] is an inductive science: that is, it works from empirical evidence toward theory, not the other way around" (Blommaert, 2006, p.14). Inductive data analysis featured spiraling, ongoing, recursive, and multiple cycles of coding, allowing research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes and categories of the raw data. Findings are the result of multiple interpretations of the data. Based on the research questions

and objectives, I made decisions about what was more important and what was less important, as revealed through the data.

This research consisted of simultaneous data collection and analysis. A holistic approach to analysis took place in a spiraling fashion (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Analysis featured ongoing, recursive, and numerous cycles of analysis of multiple sources of data, (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018), creating codes, grouping codes into categories, and collapsing them into themes (also referred to as rationale), leading to the development of end conclusions about the overall meaning, patterns, and explanations presented by the data.

I entered transcripts and notes from interviews, conversations, observations, and professional learning sessions into the cloud-based qualitative data analysis tool, Atlas.ti-Cloud, to assist with the process of disassembling and organizing data, coding, recoding and refining data, and retrieval and analytic manipulation of coded items. I also used Atlas.ti to organize operational definitions of codes, articulating the distinctive boundaries for each code and reflecting the analysis of individual documents (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data sources associated with the first phase of this research, the initial practices and perceptions phase, consisted of that collected from the first observation and first individual interview/discussion with Kenslie and Oliver. Analysis of data reveled the ways that they were initially using selecting, using, and opening their read-alouds; findings from this phase informed professional learning sessions.

Table 3.3 provides an overview of data collection and analysis of the first phase.

Table 3. 3

Initial Practice: Data Collection and Analysis Overview

Phase	Event	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Purpose
Initial practices and perceptions	First observation:	Observation transcripts; detailed field notes	Ways teachers were opening curriculum	Analysis of data informed the development of a permeable read-aloud toolkit
	First interview/ discussion:	Interview transcripts; detailed field notes Member checks	Teachers use of a variety of methods and strategies when reading aloud	

Data collected during the professional learning sessions sought to shed light on the ways that Kenslie and Oliver were re-envisioning their read-aloud practices and planning to do a permeable read-aloud. Table 3.4 provides an overview of the data collection and analysis of the professional learning phase.

Table 3. 4

Developing a Toolkit: Data Collection and Analysis Overview

Phase	Learning Session	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Purpose
Developing a Permeable Read-aloud Toolkit	1. Expanding what counts through a contemporary youth culture simulation lab	Notes of teacher responses; detailed conversational notes	Ways teachers were expanding what counts	Analysis of data led to the creation of a permeable read-aloud toolkit and shed light on the ways that teachers were thinking about and planning for permeable read-alouds
	2. Photo journaling various literacies	Pictures of photo journals; detailed conversational notes	How teachers were thinking about the five elements of permeable read-alouds	
	3. Doing a permeable read-aloud	Detailed conversational notes; photos of the sticky notes placed in books	Ways that teachers were planning for permeable read-alouds	
		Member checks		

Data associated with the final phase focused on the second teacher observation and the second unstructured conversation. Data sources consisted of that collected from the second read-aloud observation and the following informal teacher discussion (see Table 3.5). Data were analyzed and used to increase my understandings of how professional learning can lead teachers to change their read-aloud practices. Data collected were used to answer the three research questions:

Q1: *In what ways can teachers use read-alouds to open their curriculum and connect to children's lived experiences?*

Q2*: What elements of read-alouds show promise for engaging students in literacies that are grounded in their life-worlds and experiences?*

Q3*: How can professional learning be designed to help teachers to know and understand their students' lives and literacies, informing read-aloud practice?*

Table 3. 5

Re-envisioning Practices and Perceptions: Data Collection and Analysis Overview

Phase & RQ	Event	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Purpose
Re-envisioning Practices and Perceptions	Second observation	Observation transcripts; detailed field notes	Ways teachers were opening curriculum	Analysis of data revealed changes in teacher practices after engaging in professional learning
RQ 1; RQ 2; RQ 3	Second discussion	Interview transcripts; detailed field notes	Teachers use of a variety of read-aloud elements	
		Member checks		

Reading and rereading transcripts, conversational and observational field notes, and reflective journals increased my understanding of the "big picture" of classroom literacy practices and the use of read-aloud texts, allowing me to initiate the first round of analysis. During the first round of analysis, I stated the facts as I had recorded them; this called for a narrative description (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During this first cycle of the open coding process, a descriptive first impression code was assigned to groups of words, phrases, or sentences that carried similar meaning. After assigning initial codes to text, I used Atlas.ti-Cloud to check and recheck the coded materials and to retrieve, manipulate, and group them according to common features (Yin, 2016).

From these descriptions and ongoing analysis, codes (e.g., open, axial, selective) and categories were developed, using evidence for the code or category from multiple sources (Flick, 2015). Both the first and second cycles of coding examined interview transcripts, conversational

and observational notes, field notes, and artifacts from professional learning sessions. Specifically, I looked for patterns in the emerging codes and re-examined previous codes. Within those patterns, I looked for "families" of codes that shared some characteristics, leading to themes (i.e., common ideas) that developed as a result of collapsing existing codes (Saldana, 2016) and describing the end conclusions about the overall meaning, patterns, or explanations presented by the data.

By studying the data and following the leads that it revealed, I was able to make the fundamental process of coding explicit, revealing hidden assumptions, and discovering new insights. I revealed the familiar, routine, and almost mundane teacher read-aloud through a new, unfamiliar light (Charmaz, 2014). Observing classroom spaces with a fresh eye and refreshed perspective provided acuity and perspicacity about how texts are being selected and used. Thick descriptions, the intelligible descriptions of cultural interpretations and context beyond the obvious and superficial, evoked emotion and feelings as the voices, emotions, actions, and meanings of interactions were heard (Geertz, 1973; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interview transcripts, conversational and observational notes, audio recordings, detailed field notes, thick descriptions, and analytic memos were referenced to confirm, contradict, or complicate the emergence of codes and categories and to gauge the continued direction and development of additional codes or categories (Saldana, 2016). Interview transcripts and conversation notes were maintained and reviewed immediately upon the conclusion of each interaction. Participants received a copy of transcripts and detailed field notes, and they had the opportunity to check for accuracy of content and interpretation of meanings and events. Participants were encouraged to provide clarification or corrections to the transcripts and field notes; they also had the opportunity to redact information that they felt could jeopardize the well-

being or confidentiality of their students. Although participants had the opportunity to provide clarification or correction, neither chose to do so. Both participants confirmed that the transcripts and field notes were thorough, complete, and accurate.

Validity and Credibility of Research

Throughout the study, validity was strengthened through the choices that I made to conduct credible research. Repeated observations and interviews allowed me to develop in-depth understandings of field situations. Rich, detailed, and varied data were collected and analyzed. Interviews and classroom observations were electronically audio-recorded and transcribed on the same day, eliminating the loss of data.

According to Yin (2016), "A credible study is one that provides assurance that you have properly collected and interpreted data, so that the findings and conclusions accurately reflect and represent the world that was studied" (p. 85). Yin (2016) suggests that the most desirable approach to dealing with credibility is to make choices during the design of the study that strengthens credibility. Throughout the research process, I followed the suggestions of Yin (2016) and Creswell (2014) to establish the credibility of findings, including:

- Member-checks: to determine the credibility of findings and to lessen the opportunity for misinterpretation of participants actions, behaviors, and views, participants were offered the opportunity to check for the accuracy of transcripts, conversational notes, and other detailed field notes. Participant feedback and suggested revisions in cases of inaccuracies or misunderstandings were encouraged. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this is the most critical technique for establishing credibility (in Creswell & Poth, 2018).
- Triangulation of data: triangulation of data was achieved through collection, comparison, and convergence of information from multiple sources (e.g., interview transcripts,

conversational notes, observational notes, detailed field notes, memos) and used the information to build coherent justification for themes (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2016). “If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201).

- Thick, rich descriptions with detailed, realistic depictions of the settings and the participants: generated an element of shared experiences, enabling readers to make decisions regarding transferability to other settings. As a result, others (e.g., teachers, administrators, teacher-educators) may acquire knowledge or information regarding why and how it is possible to open read-alouds to students’ literacies and lived experiences, and the findings will be transferrable to their settings.

Limitations

This portion of the chapter aims to make known the limitations of this research, to reflect on those, and to provide insight as to how I negotiated research within these limitations. There were few limitations in this study; those included my positionality, my potential bias, and the lack of diversity among teacher participants.

The first limitation of this research was that of my own positionality. Although I have already mentioned my insider-outsider position earlier in this chapter, I feel that it needs to be mentioned again as a limitation of this research. In terms of positionality, I have worked with elementary school students in a variety of educational capacities for nearly 19-years. This situates me in an insider-outsider position. I was “one of them” (i.e., a teacher); yet, I was also an outsider (e.g., older than the participants, removed from the classroom, a researcher). I taught in several states encompassing districts from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and I have experienced

first-hand the diversities and discrepancies that exist in schools and neighborhoods across the United States. My lived experiences have served as windows through which to see and sliding glass doors through which to walk, allowing me to immerse myself in urban and rural neighborhoods, and to come to better understand the larger human experiences of the peoples, cultures, and families that comprise them. The lived experiences I brought to this research provided me a lens on teaching and learning that differs from that of the participants. As much as this was a limitation, I diligently attempted to follow the research methods as defined in this chapter and conducted this research with integrity.

The second limitation was that of my own potential bias. "No lens is free of bias" (Yin, 2016, p. 286); the intrusion of bias was inevitable. I pushed back against biases imposed by my values and personal beliefs by remaining continuously reflective about my actions, words, and interactions when working with participants and data. Self-reflection, triangulation of data, member checking, organization of data, and thorough analysis of data helped to ensure that I minimized the likelihood of researcher bias influencing this study.

Finally, a limitation of this research was the lack of diversity among the teacher participants. This research was limited to two first-grade participants who taught in the same school district. Although Kenslie and Oliver differed in age, gender, and earned academic degrees, both identified as Caucasian; both lived in the same state of their birth; and based on the school district salary framework, it was fair to assume that both had similar annual salaries and benefits. It may be possible that if more diverse teachers from different parts of the state or region participated in the study, additional insight and answers to the research questions could have been obtained.

In conclusion, although there were limitations to this research, I was very aware of these limitations. Following the advice of Yin (2016), I confronted these limitations and planned sound research methodology during the design of this study, allowing me to conduct quality research with *methodic-ness*. According to Yin (2016), studies conducted with methodic-ness:

- allow adequate room for discovery and allowance for unanticipated events,
- follow an orderly set of research procedures, minimizing whimsical or careless work,
- are based on explicitly defined research design,
- avoid unexplained bias or deliberate distortion in carrying our research, and
- bring a sense of completeness to a research effort.

This research was conducted with methodic-ness. Limitations were acknowledged, planned for during the design of the study, and continually reflected upon throughout it.

Ethical Considerations

Carrying out this study necessitated obtaining informed consent from both participants (see Appendix C). Participants had the opportunity to think about their involvement and to ask questions prior to agreeing. I considered how to explain the research in ways that participants could comprehend – using language, visual images, and other supports when necessary. Sensitive thought and careful negotiation were critical. Although participants were required to provide legal consent, it was also important for me to continue to renegotiate informed verbal consent through each stage of research.

Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and of their opportunity to withdraw from participation at any point without consequence. This approach recognized and respected the participants' worth as human beings, and it empowered them to make decisions regarding their person.

The use of pseudonyms for all participants and site location(s) helped to assure privacy and confidentiality, safeguarding participants from judgment or possible retaliation for actions or statements made during the research.

Although unlikely, there was potential that participants could divulge sensitive issues that raise concern. Therefore, I disclosed my role as a mandated reporter before they agreed to participate in this research study. As a mandated reporter, I had an obligation to report issues pertaining to a child's physical, sexual, or emotional health to the local child protection agency and emergency personnel. Likewise, I was also required to report any threats of suicide to local social services agencies and emergency personnel.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I provided rationale explaining how a qualitative study design is appropriate to accomplish the goals of the research: 1) to explore the ways in which elementary school teachers use read-alouds as a way to open their curriculum, building on students' lived experiences, and 2) to create professional learning opportunities that expand teachers' understandings of how read-alouds can be designed to reflect their students lives and literacies.

Two first-grade teachers who taught in one of the most rapidly growing towns in a Midwest state were observed reading aloud to their students, both were interviewed in person, and both engaged in informal dialogue with me on several occasions. Data were collected from all of these interactions. All interactions took place during times that were convenient for the participants; thus, limiting the perception of intrusion, minimizing distractions, and creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and professionalism. Multiple data were collected, then coded and analyzed through a holistic approach that featured ongoing, recursive, and numerous cycles of analysis of multiple sources of data (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018), creating codes, grouping codes into categories, and collapsing them into themes. This led to the

development of end conclusions about the overall meaning, patterns, or explanations presented by the data.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present data collection procedures and the results of the analysis of interview transcripts, observations, and other artifacts collected as they pertain to this research. These chapters are divided into the following three phases: 1) initial practices and perceptions, 2) developing a permeable read aloud toolkit, and 3) re-envisioning practices and perceptions. An introduction, data collection procedures, findings, summary, and discussion comprise each chapter.

The events described in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 showcase my interpretation of the findings by representing analysis from multiple data sources. Between these three chapters, I present the main findings from two in-depth interviews; six professional learning sessions, including learning artifacts and transcriptions of discussions; and four classroom observations. I systematically analyzed the data collected from these resources to reveal findings that are the results of an organized analysis of data. Data sets consisting of interview transcripts, observations, and professional learning artifacts were analyzed for each teacher individually and then again across and combining data sources to consider possible connections within the data. Through this process, I uncovered findings that illuminate how two first-grade teachers, Kenslie and Oliver's, use of read-alouds developed and changed as a result of professional learning opportunities that supported the concept of a permeable read-aloud.

CHAPTER 4:

Initial Practices and Perceptions

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to share my initial observations of two first-grade teachers, Kenslie and Oliver, reading aloud and to share details of our first conversations together. Data sets consisting of observations, interviews, and conversations were analyzed for each teacher individually and then again across and combining data sources to consider possible connections within the data. Findings informed professional learning and the development of a permeable read-aloud toolkit. This chapter is divided into four sections: observations, interviews/ conversations, summary, and discussion. The first two sections are further divided into sub-sections specific to each individual teacher.

Reading Aloud: The First Observation

The first observation of teachers took place in person, individually, and in each teachers' own classroom.

Kenslie and *The Magic Treehouse*. Walking down the hallway toward Kenslie's classroom, I observed 18 first-grade students bustling around the hall, some hanging up their coats on three-pronged hooks that were attached to the wall. It looked as though a couple of the students had pulled their arms out of their coats, leaving them hanging from their heads in an imaginative superhero, cape-like fashion. Running in small circles, they tried to make their coat-capes flap in the breeze that was created by their rapidly moving bodies. Like a misplaced melody, Kenslie's voice floated into the hallway, "First-grade friends, thank you for quietly hanging up your coats and heading to the reading rug." On hearing this, students froze, silently exchanging glances; quickly, they hung their coats on the hooks, and with straight legs, like those of a Christmas nutcracker, they rushed to the classroom door. Gaining immediate control

of their bodies, they walked to the reading rug and plopped down in somewhat of a sitting posture.

During the first observation, Kenslie, clad in a tie-dye T-shirt and fedora, navigated tiny chairs, tables, and desks as she wound her way to the reading rug (see Figure 6). It seemed as though her 18 students were simultaneously delighting in her attire, as they gleefully laughed and squealed. Many of the students also sported a variety of tie-dyed garments in celebration of spirit week: tie-dyed shirts, hair ribbons, skirts, and butterfly-shaped bow ties.

Figure 6. Kenslie's Read-Aloud Space. This figure shows the back of Kenslie's classroom, the space that she has designated for read-alouds.

In preparation for the pending read-aloud, girls squeezed up close to the antique-style, dark wooden chair where Kenslie sat. They clustered in groups of twos and threes, some braiding one another's hair and others sprawling their warm, post-recess bodies bowed-legged on the powder grey rug. Chatty boys quieted as they found their preferred places to sit. Around the perimeter of the rectangular-shaped rug, boys huddled in singles and doubles, some daring to sit

on their knees, apparently beckoning Kenslie to remind them to “sit on their pockets.” As Kenslie began to read in a dramatic, crescendo type of voice, she immediately caught the attention of her students. They settled down and leaned forward, directing their gaze toward her, cocking their heads to get their ears even closer to her. With all eyes and ears on Kenslie, she began to read one chapter from a popular fictional children’s book series, *The Magic Treehouse*.

While reading the day’s chapter, Kenslie engaged students in four teacher-centered discussions that she initiated and led. Each discussion sought one correct answer and was intended to guide students into deeper understandings of specific concepts (see Table 4.1). On one occurrence, she paused momentarily to engage students in a discussion in which she explained a difficult to understand concept as it appeared in the text (i.e., understanding that it can be dark outside even though it is morning). To assist students with comprehension of the text, she informed them,

> Well, it's not actually night time because it's still dark out. It's actually really, really early morning. When the morning is just beginning, it can still be dark outside. Boys and girls, why are they getting up so early in the dark morning to head to the treehouse? Darlene (pseudonym) can you share your thoughts?

Kenslie listened to a child provide the expected answer to her question, and then she returned to reading. Although this could have been an ideal opportunity to pair students for discussion, Kenslie did not take the opportunity to do so. Instead, she chose one student sitting near her to provide the answer. This appeared to be a familiar read-aloud occurrence, as all of the talk that took place during the read-aloud was teacher directed. Kenslie asked a question and certain students were chosen to provide the one correct answer to it.

Table 4. 1

Kenslie: Promoting Student Talk – First Observation

Promoting student talk	Number of times observed	Exemplar statements
Student-centered conversation	0	
Teacher-centered conversation	4	Boys and girls, why are they getting up so early in the dark morning to head to the treehouse?
Total number	**4**	

Oliver's fall leaves. Children burst through the classroom door in what appeared to be some kind of first-grade speed-walking race; they headed directly to the rug, using their hips to nudge one another in attempts to negotiate for prime seating near the teacher's rocking chair. They half-sat and half-collapsed on the midnight-blue alphabet rug, giggling as they righted themselves. Oliver, with a dampened smile, leaned forward in his rocking chair, and silently waited for his 16 students to take their places on the rug (see Figure 7).

Without a peep, he extended his arms toward the students, revealing the book that was about to be read aloud. A brief buzz ensued from the students, "He's ready, shhh! Listen." A few students crab-crawled, scooting their bodies to new positions in which they could see better than from their prior spots. In an animated, high-pitched voice, Oliver began to read *Fall Leaves.* It aligned with the first grade them of the week and was designed for students who are starting to read on their own; it contains high-frequency sight words, simple plot dialogue, and the familiar topic of fall.

Figure 7. Oliver's Read-Aloud Space. This image shows the area that Oliver has designated for reading aloud to his students.

While reading, Oliver engaged students in a total of eleven conversations in which eight teacher-centered and three were student-centered (see Figure 4.2). On one occasion, he initiated a discussion by asking a deliberate question that was intentionally designed to guide the students into deeper understandings of the concept under study:

Oliver	Do the leaves in our area change color in the fall?
Several students	Yes!
Student A	Not my leaves at my old house, they stayed the same.
Oliver	I find that so interesting, Jama (pseudonym). Shall we talk more about this? Has anyone else lived in a place where the leaves do not change color? Let's talk about that.

A couple of students raised their hands, seeking permission to participate in the discussion. Oliver called on each of these students and commended their voluntary participation with praise such as: “I find that interesting; thank you for choosing to share with us.”

Table 4. 2

Oliver: Promoting Student Talk – First Observation

Promoting student talk	Number of times observed	Exemplar statements
Student-centered conversation	3	I find that so interesting, Jama (pseudonym). Shall we talk more about this? Has anyone else lived in a place where the leaves do not change color? Let’s talk about that.
Teacher-centered conversation	8	Do the leaves in our area change color in the fall?
Total number	**11**	

Insights into Read-Alouds

The first individual semi-structured interview (see Appendix D) and unstructured conversation were both conducted in person with each teacher in their classroom. I sought to find out what Kenslie and Oliver knew about their students and how they connected read-alouds to their students’ lives. We discussed their perspectives about reading-aloud and what had been observed during their previous read-aloud; this increased my understanding of the myriad ways that they were planning for read-alouds.

I sought to uncover the ways that they were intentionally bringing their students’ literacies and lived experiences into read-alouds. Instead, though, it appeared that Kenslie unknowingly walled-off her students’ life-worlds. For example, she stated that she occasionally allows students to use iPads to enhance reading instruction. At first, I interpreted this as a

positive attempt to bring in students' literacies. However, as Kenslie continued, it became apparent that she had some reservations about opening read-alouds to the ways that students are doing literacies:

> I strongly feel, though, that children get enough technology at home. School should be a place to read real books, to learn to turn pages, and to hold actual books. I just prefer that they learn to feel, smell, and love real books.

As a result of this and other similar responses, professional learning was later designed to lead Kenslie and Oliver in reconceptualizing what counts as literacy.

The scenarios, detailed below, detail the individual interviews that took place with Kenslie and Oliver. Findings are the result of the analysis of data from these.

Kenslie: Squeezing in reading. While snacking on fresh purple grapes, Kenslie, sat across from me at a small crescent-shaped table. She jumped right into our discussion and began talking about curriculum, learning themes, and read-alouds.

> So, when I read-aloud, I choose my chapter books, our Magic Treehouse books, that I find important. Or I choose a book that goes with the theme. Next week is fire safety week and it falls in the mystery-genre week. So, it's going to have to be a book that combines mystery and fire safety. We have book lists, though. They help us know what books to read to meet requirements. That really helps.

After much discussion about the challenges of finding time to read-aloud each day (e.g., inflexible scheduling, fidelity to curriculum, required book lists), Kenslie shared how she often squeezes read-aloud time into *the edge* (i.e., small time-frames that serve as brief transitions between events such as waiting in line for lunch or waiting outside of the computer lab).

> I read aloud while we are lined up in the hall waiting for lunch or access to the computer lab, library, or art room. I read during our 5-minute snack time in the afternoon, and any other time that I can. There are so many skills to teach; I don't have any time to spare or waste.

Revealing potential fallibility, Kenslie tapped her pink mechanical pencil on the table and shifted her small frame in her chair as she brought up the stress she is experiencing as a result of the limited time that she is allotted for teaching curricular requirements. Directing her gaze downward toward the table, she stated,

> I'll tell you, Jeannette, the kids have gotten really good, and we have practiced how to do read-alouds. But, sometimes students are like this [Kenslie sat still with square shoulders; eyes big, wide-open, and staring straight ahead]; and sometimes they are like [she flailed arms in the air and pantomimed talking and laughing gestures with her fully open mouth]. That is when I have to stop, and the kids know this. They know we just have too much to do and that if they can't just sit still and listen, then we will move on to something else. There is just too much to cover.

When asked about the lasting impact that she hopes to have on her students, Kenslie raised her chin, revealing her perfectly straight, white teeth, smiling as she replied,

> Ya know, the one thing that I want them to take away from me is, if nothing more, that all you have to do is love reading, because you can learn so much. You can go anywhere you want to. You can learn anything by picking up a book. It's just fun!

Conversation with Kenslie continued for another 20 minutes, interrupted only twice by other teachers entering the room to briefly discuss something with her. After apologizing for each interruption, Kenslie provided a variety of responses and insights into her thoughts specific to read-alouds.

> I know what our curriculum is and what our theme books are, and I know how students' reading skills will be built as we go along. So, I try to get it all in. Most of the time I use the Lucy Calkins books and our theme books. But our Jack and Annie [The Magic Treehouse] books are important to me, and I know they can teach a lot, too. So, I try to read these, at least during the fall semester before I have to give more time to teaching skills. I want the kiddos to learn to read for pleasure because it's an important life skill. But I feel like we have so many requirements to meet that it's just really hard.

From the entirety of her responses, three initial codes were identified: 1) selecting texts, 2); using texts, and 3) opening read-alouds. These codes were expanded to provide a common

vision of what each code means and which units of data best fit with each code. Similar codes were then grouped into final categories; from this grouping, themes (Kenslie's rationale for using read-alouds) emerged. This data suggested that that Kenslie had seven reasons that constituted her rationale for using read-alouds, as summarized below in Table 4.3

Table 4. 3

Kenslie: Initial Rationale for Reading Aloud

Read-Aloud Practices	**Rationale** (Reasons)	**Exemplar statements**
Selecting Texts. Kenslie was selecting read-aloud literature that…	1. supported the curriculum requirements (e.g., Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Reading K-5)	It's all about fidelity. We have to teach with fidelity, so that means using the Lucy [Calkins] read-aloud books.
	2. reinforced the grade-level theme(s)	So, if we didn't quite dive into the firefighters' theme, I might bring back a firefighter book later.
	3. primarily consisted of picture books	They love picture books, and I think my Els [English Learners] get a lot out of the pictures even when they don't quite understand all of the words.
Using Texts. Kenslie was using read-aloud texts that…	4. aid in developing students' reading skills (e.g., fluency, comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary; may include additional skills such as skimming and scanning, re-reading, comparing and contrasting).	So, by the middle of the year, we have already taught kids how to solve hard words.
	5. teach character traits	So, the books teach about things like being friendly and working hard and important character traits like that.
	6. built students reading/listening stamina	When I read chapter books, it increases their ability to listen and remember what was read. It also increases their stamina and ability to listen for a longer period of time.
Opening Read-Alouds. Kenslie was opening read-alouds that…	7. provided a purpose for reading – out of school (e.g., recreational, life skill, pleasure)	You can learn anything by picking up a book. One thing that I really stress is that reading can take you on an adventure.

Each theme was further analyzed into supporting sub-themes. For example, focusing specifically on the first theme, "determined by curriculum," I analyzed data in four steps (see Figure 8):

1. identification of an initial code: text selection,
2. identification of expanded sub-codes,

3. clustering similar sub-codes, resulting in 2 final categories: reading curriculum kits and grade level content themes, and
4. emergence of the theme, or rationale for selecting texts: determined by the curriculum.

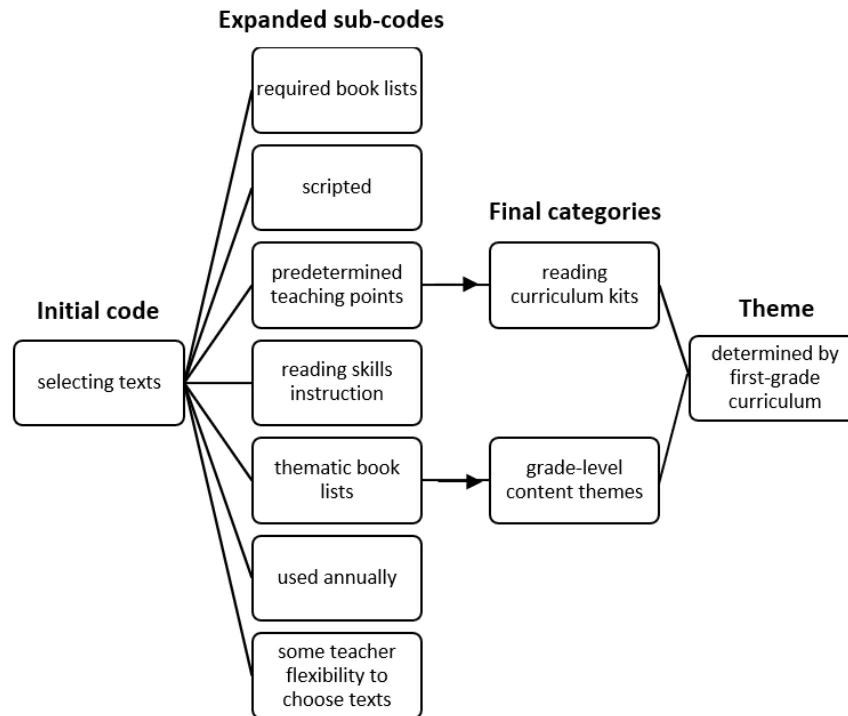

Figure 8. Data Analysis: Selecting Texts. Analysis of data indicated that Kenslie was selecting read-aloud texts that were determined by the curriculum.

Oliver: There's not a lot I can do about that. "Zip, snap…out you go," Oliver sent his last lingering student off to play outside for recess. This allowed us uninterrupted time to talk about his approaches to read-alouds and his beliefs surrounding students' literacies and life-worlds. Oliver and I sat together at a small pentagon-shaped table; his long legs seemed to engulf his body, knees nearly wrapped around ears, as the wee chair appeared to sag under his adult-size frame. With his elbows on the table, Oliver leaned in toward me, bringing attention to the ways that he uses read-alouds; he offered the following:

> We really have to follow the curriculum and themes or else the worksheets and things won't align. We just can't get around that – and fidelity. Everything has to

> be done with fidelity exactly like it says in the teacher's manuals. That is not a problem, though. I have been teaching for so long that I have memorized what students will be studying when and what comes next. So, it is easy for me to collect books and add them to theme lists where I can. I added a few last year.

As he continued, Oliver spoke about how he makes it a point to connect with donors, usually parents or grandparents, who will contribute to purchasing one Scholastic paperback book per month per student. Oliver chooses the books based on the monthly first-grade learning themes. When asked to explain more about the book purchases, he stated,

> Each day or over the duration of a week, we read theme books in class [i.e., books that are specific to a predetermined topic such as fire safety, holidays, or friendship]. So once a month, students receive their own copy of one of the theme books. They read it multiple times in class, and then on Friday, they get to take it home. They are encouraged to read it to family or friends – to tell them all about it and share their learnings. The theme topics are a big part of what they are expected to know in first-grade.

Throughout our conversation, Oliver mentioned several times that there is not enough time in the day to teach all of the things that the curriculum requires. Science, social studies, and health are relegated to being taught through leveled readers (i.e., books that align with the child's reading ability) that are specifically designed to focus on subject matter content. However, due to time constraints, these books are often just placed in the classroom library, not used with intent or purpose.

During our first discussion, Oliver provided a variety of responses and insights into his thoughts about read-alouds. His responses, not unlike those of Kenslie, suggested that district curriculum and themes directed the way that he selected and used read-alouds. From the entirety of his responses, three initial codes emerged: 1) selecting texts, 2) using texts, and 3) opening read-alouds, and mirrored those identified in Kenslie's data analysis. These codes were expanded to provide a common vision of what they mean and which units of data best fit with each code. Similar codes were then grouped into final categories; from this grouping, Oliver's rationale for

using read-alouds was revealed. Data suggested that he had four reasons for using read-alouds, as summarized in Table 4.4.

Table 4. 4

Oliver: Initial Rationale for Reading Aloud

Read-Aloud Practice	**Rationale** (reasons)	**Exemplar statements**
Selecting Texts. Oliver was selecting read-aloud literature that…	1. based on curriculum requirements (e.g., Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Reading K-5) 2. supports the grade-level theme(s)	When choosing texts, I pretty much follow the read-aloud books that are provided with our Lucy Calkins reading curriculum. I choose books that support our themes, but sometimes I just can squeeze these in.
Using Texts. Oliver was using read-aloud texts that…	3. develop students' reading skills (e.g., fluency, comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary; may include additional skills such as skimming and scanning, re-reading, comparing and contrasting).	It is easier to use Lucy [Calkins] because the worksheets and things just align well. It makes sense to the students.
Opening Read-Alouds. Oliver was opening read-alouds by…	4. providing a purpose for reading – out of school (e.g., recreational, life skill, pleasure)	I sometimes read a book that aligns with our theme but is not on the list. I have memorized all of the themes, so I know what to read and when. It lets the kids just hear the message and the sound of fluent and voiced reading. They like it and will hopefully learn to read for pleasure outside of assigned readings.

Each theme was further analyzed into supporting sub-themes (see Figure 9).

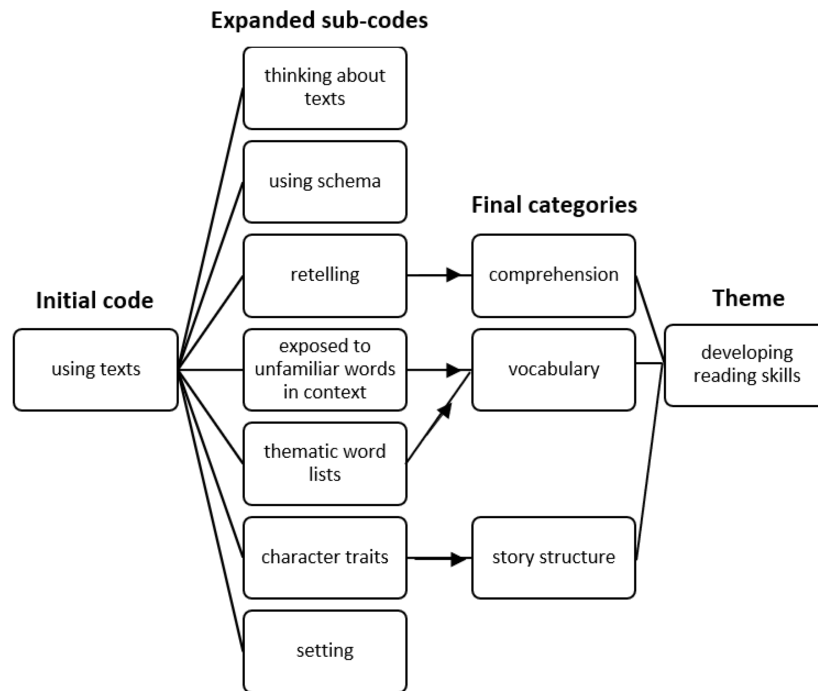

Figure 9. Data Analysis: Using Texts. Analysis of data indicated that Oliver was using read-aloud texts that aid in developing students' reading skills.

Summary

The information gleaned from findings of the initial phase, based on the first interview/discussion with teachers, suggest that Kenslie and Oliver were intentionally selecting read-aloud texts for a variety of purposes, using them to develop students' reading skills, and providing students with some purposes for reading outside of school (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4). Although interviewed separately, similarities in the content of Kenslie and Oliver's conversations are noteworthy. For example, both emphasized the fact that curriculum and thematic requirements were the primary drivers of text selection. This does raise some concern, though, as according to Vásquez (2014; 2017), it is essential for teachers to intentionally and purposefully plan and select books that focus on the students' lives and the issues and topics that are of interest to them as they learn to participate in the world around them. Although Kenslie

and Oliver were selecting read-alouds for a variety of purposes, data reveal that those purposes were primarily pre-determined by curriculum requirements and grade-level content themes (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4).

Data also suggest that Kenslie and Oliver were using read-alouds to (a) to teach foundational reading skills, (b) to teach vocabulary and reading comprehension, and (c) to teach elements of story structure (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4). However, evidence was not present to support the notion that they were using read-alouds to build on the strengths that their students developed outside of the classroom. Reliance on reading specifically for the purpose of skill-based, curricular, and thematic driven instruction ignores the fact that literacies are more than linguistic. Literacy development involves engaging students in literacies that are grounded in *their* life-worlds and experiences, connected to larger contexts, and recognizes that literacies and language are part of and inseparable from their social and cultural contexts (Street, 1995; Heath 1983; Gee, 1996; Van Sluys, Lewison & Flint, 2006; Compton-Lilly, 2013).

Finally, data indicate that Kenslie and Oliver were aware that reading should have a purpose outside of the classroom (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4). Both expressed a desire to lead their students toward a love of reading, for practical and recreational purposes. However, neither identified literacies that engage their students in the social and cultural spaces outside of formal education. As stated by Kenslie,

> [Students] vary. Some kiddos are coming in [to first-grade] reading chapter books. You have some kiddos coming in, and you know they read every single day; you can just hear it in their expression already. Then you have some kiddos who find Level A books to be too hard.

Oliver echoed similar statements, saying that:

> Some families don't speak English; some are "illiterate," others don't read or write at all; one student doesn't even speak, and as of yet, has no diagnosis – so, it's really a hodgepodge of reading skills when students start first grade. There's not a lot that I can do about that.

Although both statements mentioned the variety of skills that students already have when entering first grade, both imply that literacies that count, those worth knowing, are those that are directly associated with schooled ways of speaking, reading, and writing.

Similarities in Kenslie and Oliver's read-aloud practices were evident. For example, both led conversations that sought to guide students in understanding specific concepts or vocabulary. As a result, both teachers controlled the discussion that took place, opening the discussion to only those students who presumably knew the correct answer or desired response. Reliance on teacher-controlled conversations may have served to exclude or shut out students who did not immediately have a firm understanding of the topic or concept under discussion.

Based on the findings of Q1 *In what ways can teachers use read-alouds to open their curriculum and connect to children's lived experiences?*, I next planned to design professional learning activities that emphasized and built on Kenslie and Oliver's strengths – the things that they were already doing: (a) selecting read-aloud literature with intent, (b) using read-alouds for specific purposes, and (c) providing some purpose for reading outside of school.

Based on the findings of Q2 *What elements of read-alouds show promise for engaging students in literacies that are grounded in their life-worlds and experiences?*, I planned professional learning that sought to increase Kenslie and Oliver's repertoire of methods to include students' literacies and life-worlds that are grounded in their students' realities, as described in Chapter 2, and to provide opportunities for them to practice (i.e., rehearse) their new skills.

Discussion

In the initial phase, I gathered data that revealed teachers' practices and ways of planning for and carrying out read-alouds. This phase relied on classroom observations, semi-structured

interviews, and unstructured conversations. Analysis of data suggested that both Kenslie and Oliver demonstrated familiarity with read-alouds and selected text based primarily on curricular and thematic learning requirements. They demonstrated an awareness that reading should provide a purpose outside of school. However, as data indicated, they may have been constrained by their commitment to curriculum requirements and thematic book lists. Both expressed their dedication to reading aloud to their students, but they felt an obligation to use read-alouds that had an academic purpose (i.e., teaching foundational reading strategies and skills).

Diving deeper into this analysis, I attended to three findings of the initial phase. These findings reveal the ways that Kenslie and Oliver initially approached read-alouds, before professional learning, suggesting that they:

1. primarily selected read-aloud texts based on curriculum requirements and themes,
2. used read-aloud texts to develop students reading skills and stamina, and
3. somewhat opened read-alouds to their students' literacies and lived experiences by providing some purpose for reading outside of class (e.g., recreational, life-skill, pleasure).

What is most noticeable about these findings, in particular the first and second findings, is that they favored curriculum-driven or schooled approaches to read-alouds. In the first observations, interviews, and discussions there were no indications that Kenslie made attempts to include the contexts of students' literacies and lived experiences or that they attempted to connect learning to the students' existing schema, experiences, or understandings developed outside of the classroom (Hawkins, 2014). Oliver, on the other hand, made one attempt to include students' life worlds when he invited students to talk about the color of fall leaves at their homes. With the exception of Oliver's attempt to open conversation to students, neither

Kenslie nor Oliver provided their students with multiple opportunities to see *their* realities, interests, and priorities reflected in the texts (Culham, 2019; Fisher, et al., 2008).

Interviews and informal conversations suggested that Kenslie and Oliver had yet to conceptualize literacies as plural and multiple; they did not indicate that they were aware of what expanded literacies look like or how they are used in social spaces outside of the classroom (Hull & Schultz, 2001). While they did identify some reasons that students should read outside of school, the reasons were nonspecific and almost generic in nature (e.g., recreational, life skills, for pleasure). These findings supported my decision to raise awareness by including a contemporary youth culture simulation lab in their professional learning sessions, as described in Chapter Five. The simulation lab provided an opportunity to use picture cards to "take Kenslie and Oliver out of the classroom and into the neighborhoods" so that they could see, firsthand, the literacy-related activities (i.e., those that take place out of school, diverse in function, form, and purpose) and communicative events (i.e., components that characterize language use – setting, participants, norms, and genres) that take place out of school (Hull & Schultz, 2001).

Neither Kenslie nor Oliver reported engaging in strategic pre-planning or preparation for their read-alouds. Kenslie read a book from the *Magic Treehouse* series, a series that she reads to her first-grade students every year. Oliver read a book that was, according to the thematic book list, a required first-grade text. However, strategic pre-planning and preparation on the part of the teacher are essential for quality read-alouds to take place (McCaffery & Hisrich, 2017; Calkins, 1997). It is important that teachers intentionally and purposefully plan and select books that focus on the students' lives and the issues and topics that are of interest to them as they learn to participate in the world around them and construct and negotiate understandings of who they are and who they want to be (Vásquez, 2014; 2017).

Although not the focus of this research, it is worth noting that a lack of strategic planning or preparation for read-alouds may be the result of the district mandates requiring that their reading program is taught with "fidelity" (i.e., faithfully implemented as intended by the program's developer without deviation or change by the teacher; having blind faith in published materials). On several occasions, Kenslie and Oliver made statements referring to the constraints and challenges associated with the limited time that the school schedule allotted for read-alouds, emphasizing that the reading curriculum was time-consuming and required absolute fidelity to the program. According to Oliver, "We have fidelity checks where observers come into our class to observe reading activities. They make sure that we are not deviating from what is scripted in the teachers' guides." The issues of time and fidelity made it a challenge for Kenslie and Oliver to select their own read-aloud texts and to plan or prepare for read-alouds that were not a part of the mandated curriculum. When a prepackaged curriculum, such as the reading curriculum prescribed by this school district, is viewed as the most important element in the classroom, it stands in direct opposition to the work of Allington. According to Allington (2002), the teacher is the most important element in the classroom; "Good teachers, effective teachers, matter much more than particular curriculum materials, pedagogical approaches, or 'proven programs'" (p. 742).

The first observation revealed that both Kenslie and Oliver primarily used teacher-centered conversations during their read-alouds (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). In these common forms of schooled-discussion, teachers ask questions that have one desired answer or response that guides students' learning, clarifies misunderstandings, or allows them to make connections to the text while it is unfolding (Routman, 2003). This pattern positions teachers as the authority figures who pour their knowledge onto students, who are passive recipients of it (Rodriguez,

2012). On multiple occasions, I observed Kenslie and Oliver prompting students to provide one specific correct answer or response that was intended to lead them to the desired interpretations of events or to clarify potential misunderstandings.

In these schooled forms of discussion, control of the conversation and the direction(s) it takes were in the hands of the teacher. As noted by Oliver,

> I think that most of the time, I use questions that have only one right or wrong answer because it gives me the control that I need to actually finish a book or chapter. Otherwise, the kids just talk so much that we can't actually finish.

The prevalence of teacher-controlled discussions in Kenslie and Oliver's classrooms created an environment where only schooled discussions were present. As a result, read-alouds that reflected students' life-worlds, who they are inside and outside of the classroom, and the experiences that they have had in their homes and neighborhoods were walled-off and prevented from permeating the read-aloud environment.

As a result of the baseline data analyzed in the initial phase, the professional learning, as described in Chapter 5, worked to build on what Kenslie and Oliver were already doing and to expand their knowledge and understanding that their students' experiences are an extension of who they are and not just what they know.

CHAPTER 5:

Developing a Toolkit for Permeable Read-Alouds

As described in the previous chapter, I observed two first grade teachers, Kenslie and Oliver, reading aloud to their students. Following their read-alouds, we engaged in a semi-structured interview and informal conversation regarding their read-aloud practices and perceptions. The findings from these informed professional learning and led to the development of a permeable read-aloud toolkit. In this chapter, I explain the three sessions that, when combined, comprise a permeable read-aloud toolkit: (1) expanding what counts through participation in a contemporary youth culture simulation lab, (2) photo journaling various literacies that were portrayed on picture cards, and (3) preparing to do a permeable read-aloud. This chapter concludes with a summary of the professional learning sessions and a discussion of the findings uncovered during this phase of the study.

Phase two of this study, developing a permeable read-aloud toolkit, was strategically designed to increase Kenslie and Oliver's understandings that "rather than a single continuum or level of literacy, we should imagine a variety of configurations or a plurality of literacies" (Hull & Schultz, 2001, p. 579). This phase introduced them to some of the rich diversity of practices that characterize students' learning, allowing them to be in a better position to create and sustain rich educational contexts that build on, rather than against, the experiences that students bring with them to school each day.

This phase was divided into three smaller sessions that focused on specific topics (see Table 5.1), each designed to incrementally increase Kenslie and Oliver's understandings of their students' literacies and lived experiences. To accomplish this, developing a permeable read-aloud toolkit began with participation in a contemporary youth culture simulation lab, followed

with the creation of a photo journal that captured various literacies, and concluded with doing a permeable read-aloud.

Table 5. 1

Professional Learning Sessions

	Topic		
Session	1. Expand What Counts (through participation in a contemporary youth culture simulation lab)	2. Photo Journaling Various Literacies	3. Doing a Permeable Read-Aloud

During each session, I worked with Kenslie and Oliver in their own classrooms during the time that their school district had designated as staff development time. In their schools, 16 hours per academic year were designated as staff development days in which teachers participate in specialized training or advanced practice professional learning. Our time together met this requirement.

The process for professional development was similar for each teacher. We worked side-by-side in their classrooms as we walked, talked, paced, took notes, and conversed with one another. I tried to create a climate that felt safe for questioning, agreement, and disagreement.

The three professional learning sessions, described below, allowed me to collect and analyze data, uncovering the ways that Kenslie and Oliver were expanding their knowledge, thinking about, and planning for permeable read-alouds.

Expanding What Counts Through Participation in a Contemporary Youth Culture Simulation Lab

The purpose of this session was to provide Kenslie and Oliver with the opportunity to study literacy where it happens (Cervetti et al., 2006), in the social and cultural interactions that take place in their students' lives. Throughout this session, they were able to expand their

conceptions of what counts as they examined 33 picture cards that portrayed the various ways that students were doing literacies in a variety of neighborhoods that extended beyond the town of Springfield.

The literacies that students were doing outside of school, those that take place in *their* (i.e., the students') sociocultural worlds, were brought into this session via a contemporary youth culture simulation lab. Initially, I had intended on actually walking through school neighborhoods with Kenslie and Oliver to look for literacies that were taking place in Springfield. However, it came to my attention that walking during the school day, when children are in school rather than present in their neighborhoods, could limit the number of social and cultural interactions that were observable. Therefore, I designed a contemporary youth culture simulation lab that used 33 pictures to capture various literacies that were not limited to the local Springfield area. Similar to a nursing simulation lab, this experience allowed for a variety of situations to be accessible to Kenslie and Oliver – especially those situations that may be difficult to access during an actual walk in surrounding neighborhoods.

To begin this learning session, Kenslie, Oliver, and I discussed the foundational understanding that children are *doing* (i.e., producing and consuming) literacies in their neighborhoods and other spaces beyond school. Thirty-three picture cards, each showing a youth(s) engaged in a literacy practice (see Figure 10), were used to guide Kenslie and Oliver in developing an understanding that literacies are plural and multiple, rather than unitary constructs, "calling attention to the distinctive literacies that can exist beyond the schoolhouse door" (Hull & Schultz, 2001, p. 584).

The 33 pictures were displayed, one at a time, on a projector screen for Kenslie and Oliver to view. As they examined the picture cards, we discussed and negotiated scenes on the

cards – what was implied, what was assumed, and how literacies and experiences find their way into the classroom.

Figure 10. Picture Cards. This is a sample of the picture cards that were used for the contemporary youth culture simulation lab and the photo journal.

My emphasis was on the notion that students' literacies "look" different depending on the experiences of those involved. For example, Kenslie and Oliver examined the possible literacies present in a picture of a young child shown sitting on a sofa, pointing at what appears to be either a tablet computer or an e-reader (i.e., an electronic device used for reading books, magazines, periodicals, and multimedia materials), and laughing alongside an adult woman who is interacting with the child (see Figure 11). In this example, the literacies in the photo diverge somewhat from the traditional or schooled-view of print-and-paper literacies. Recognizing the literacies represented in this photo required Kenslie and Oliver to develop an understanding of literacy as sets of personal, social, and cultural practices where there is a broad conception of what counts –where meaning-making moves beyond print-based text (Cervetti et al., 2006).

Figure 11. Moving Beyond Print-Based Text. This photo card prompted discussion of the ways that literacies can diverge from the traditional, schooled-view of print-based literacies.

The simulation lab brought to light the multiple ways that children and families experience and use literacies in their neighborhoods. It allowed Kenslie and Oliver to reach carefully into the children's worlds, as revealed on the cards, to elicit a more holistic and informed view of the experiences and literacies that comprise their students' life-worlds.

Oliver viewed a photo of a group of youth taking a selfie (i.e., a photo taken by extending arms, reversing a camera or cell phone, and photographing oneself) (see Figure 12). Staring at this photo and repeatedly tapping his right foot on the floor, Oliver nodded his head up and down, in what appeared to be a gesture of agreement; he sat silent for several seconds. Finally, he uttered:

> Wow, I see that all of the time. In fact, I take selfies with my friends, and we post them to social media almost every weekend. How come I never thought of how to include that in my classroom? Look in the halls, we make art to hang in the hallways, and we hang some writing assignments. As a grade-level team, we decide what to hang up – usually, it's what that we think looks pretty or sets a good example. But, I don't believe we've ever hung up something that truly conveys what is important to the students, according to the students. Maybe at

least part of the hall could be dedicated to displaying things that are important to them. I bet I could make that happen.

Figure 12. Photo Card of a Selfie. This card simulated a contemporary youth literacy scene.

This example indicates that Oliver was beginning to understand that what counts as literacies outside of school can find a place inside of school. Oliver's responses suggest that he was aware that children are experiencing and doing literacies in their own live-worlds, and understanding that "what counts as reading and writing at home, [should] count as reading and writing at school" (Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 25, 26).

Data collected during the contemporary youth culture simulation lab consisted of: response notes (i.e., notes of teachers' verbal responses to the images shown on each card) (see Appendix E) and detailed conversational notes. Upon the conclusion of this session, detailed conversational notes and notes of Kenslie and Oliver's combined responses were thoroughly analyzed. Two initial codes and numerous expanded codes began the analysis. Expanded codes were grouped by similar characteristics, leading to final categories; from this grouping, a total of four themes emerged. The four themes, or four specific ways that children are doing literacies as

represented on the picture cards , were identified as: (a) art, (b) digital/virtual, (c) play, and (d) action – becoming involved in topics or issues that are important to *them*. Each them was further analyzed into supporting sub-themes. For example, focusing specifically on the theme "arts," I analyzed data in four steps (see Figure 13):

1. identification of 2 initial codes: producing and consuming literacies,
2. identification of expanded sub-codes,
3. clustering similar sub-codes, resulting in 2 final categories: visual and performance, and
4. emergence of the theme, or expanding what counts as literacy: arts.

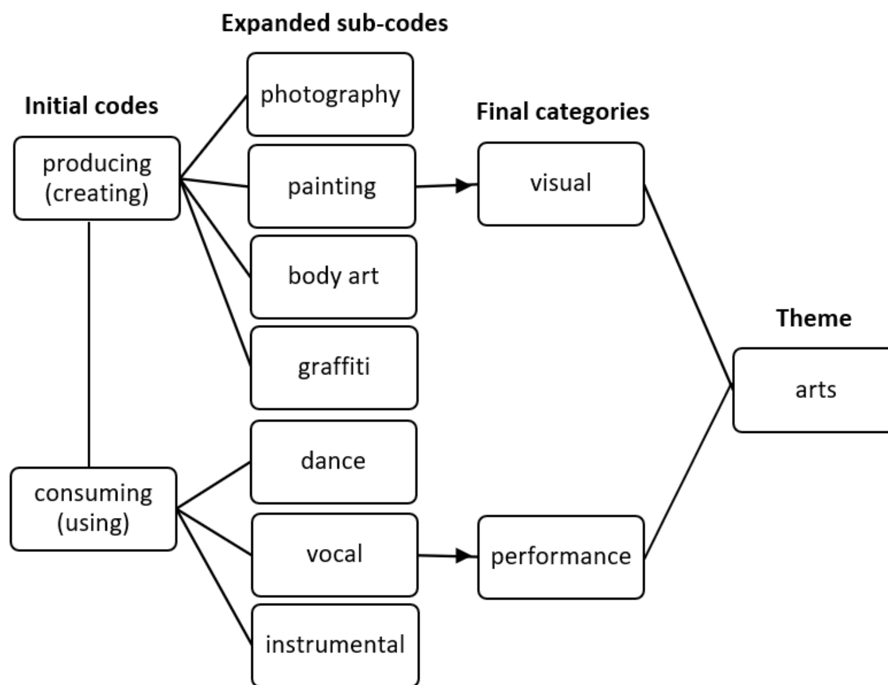

Figure 13. Example of Data Analysis: Expanding What Counts – Art. The analysis of data suggests that Kenslie and Oliver are expanding their conceptions of what counts to include the visual and performing arts.

In this example, the production and consumption of visual and performance literacies led to the theme of "arts," suggesting that Kenslie and Oliver' expanded their conceptions of what counts. This is noteworthy, as looking back to the initial practice phase, both had made statements implying that literacies that count are those directly associated with schooled ways of

speaking, reading, and writing. After participation in the contemporary youth culture simulation lab, both teachers began to change their conceptions of what counts to include (as represented in the list of expanded codes): photography, painting, body art, graffiti, dance, and vocal and instrumental music (see Figure 13).

In this learning session, Kenslie and Oliver interacted with literacies that were plural and multiple, embedded in the lived experiences of individuals and groups. The session expanded their definition of what counts as literacy and provided them with myriad ways of seeing their students' various literacies.

Photo Journaling Various Literacies

As a precursor to the photo journal activity, Kenslie, Oliver, and I discussed the four guiding principles that formed the foundation of this study: 1) read aloud on a daily basis; 2) select texts that open doors to known and unfamiliar worlds; 3) fill classrooms with student talk; and 4) invite opportunity to rethink practices and perceptions. We discussed the notion that permeable read-alouds are inspired by and expand on these guiding principles. During our discussions, Kenslie and Oliver both expressed concern with finding enough time to allow students to talk with one another. According to Oliver,

> We only have such a small amount of time to read to our students, and I know I am not hitting all of the things that I should. But, at least I know that I am reading to them – a lot of teachers are just skipping this altogether. I am reading Lucy [Calkins] or theme books. I try to fit in more, but it doesn't always work. I think I use teacher-led discussions most of the time because it gives me the control that I need to actually get through the book.

Discussion ensued, focusing on freeing oneself from the notion that all picture books must be read in one sitting or that one chapter must be read per day in other books. This notion was revisited during discussion two, described later in this chapter.

Following the discussion of the guiding principles, we embarked on the photo journal session. This session sought to show Kenslie and Oliver ways to use the understandings that they gleaned during their participation in the simulation lab. The photo journal provided a space to carefully record the various literacies in students' everyday lives, as portrayed on the picture cards. In the photo journals, Kenslie and Oliver documented their observations while attempting to connect the ways that students are doing literacies to (a) methods of facilitating student talk, (b) moving beyond the written word, (c) encouraging students to become involved in issues that are important to them, and (d) selecting texts that open doors to the familiar and the unknown (see Figures 14 and 15). It also provided space for Kenslie and Oliver to move from observing to planning for the use of permeable read-alouds. They explored ways to (a) increase student talk, (b) expand their conceptions of what counts, and (c) focus on student realities.

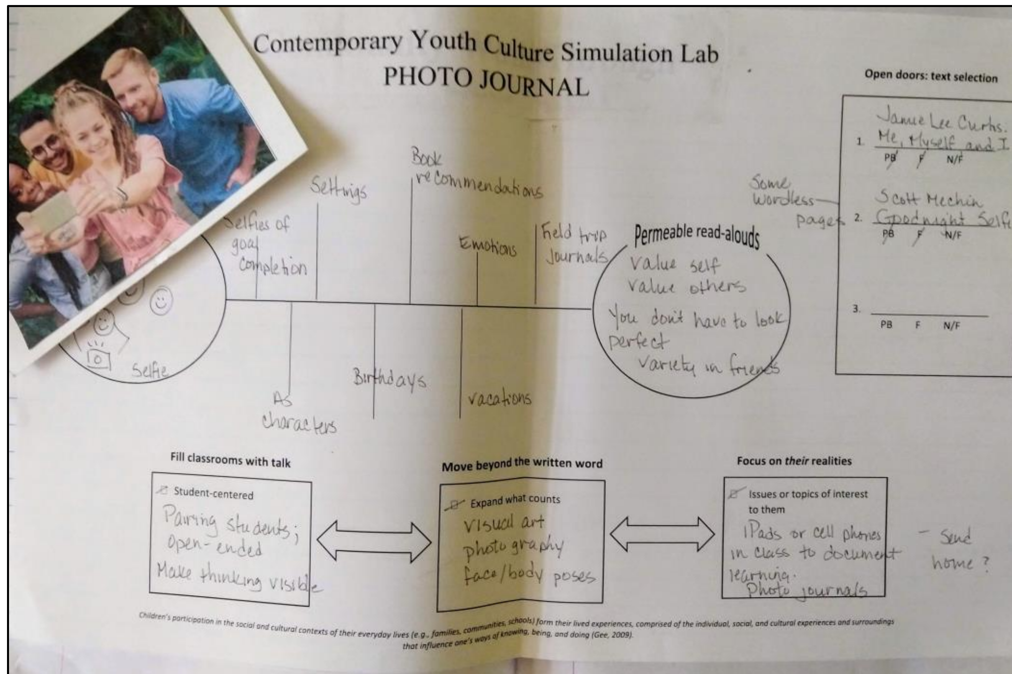

Figure 14. Photo Journal – Selfie. This figure provides an example of how the photos cards connected students' literacies, eventually leading to the development of a permeable read-aloud plan.

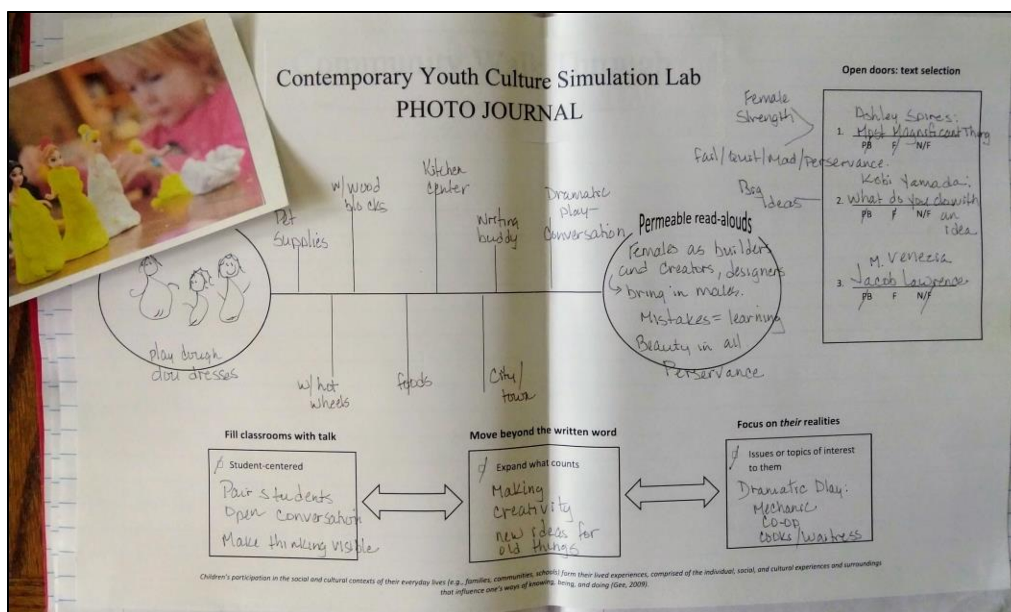

Figure 15. Photo Journal – Creative Play. This figure shows how the scene of a young child designing play-dough dresses for figurines was used to plan for a permeable read-aloud.

During this learning session, one unanticipated concern came to light. While planning for text selection, both Kenslie and Oliver brought up the fact that they have a limited number of books readily accessible to them. Their classroom libraries are limited to theme books and books that they have personally purchased and included in their libraries. Although both teachers had a wide variety of books to choose from (i.e., quantity), many of the books were uninteresting, flimsy early-readers or books that were far older than the age of the students in their classes.

To compensate for Kenslie and Oliver’s limited access to books during this activity, I encouraged them to use Amazon or Google to search for children’s books. As a result, all of the books listed in the photo journals (see Appendix F) are the result of Internet searches; these books were not physically present in the teachers’ classrooms.

After working with Kenslie and Oliver to search the Internet for books, unexpected positive results came about. First, as they searched the Internet for books, they were able to see that there are many new books that focus on current issues or topics that are important to children. Second, they learned how to use the advanced search features of Amazon Books to

locate books based on key words, authors, languages, or subjects. Finally, as they found books, they added them to the online “wish lists” to quickly locate them for future use. As demonstrated during this session, using Internet searches could be a viable addition to future professional learning sessions.

Data collected during the photo journaling activity captured the elements that went into teachers’ planning of three permeable read-alouds. Conversational notes recorded Kenslie and Oliver’s verbal interactions during this activity. These data were assembled into a data analysis sheet that I created specifically for this purpose (see Appendix G). One analysis sheet was completed for each journal entry, revealing how Kenslie and Oliver were thinking about the various literacies and lived experiences observed during the simulation lab. Each entry provided evidence that both teachers included the five elements of a permeable read-aloud (see Table 5.2).

- moving beyond the written word
- knowing students’ life-worlds
- opening doors to known and unfamiliar worlds
- planning to fill their classrooms with student talk
- focusing on students’ realities and issues that are relevant to their lives.

Table 5. 2

Data Analysis Sheet: Photo Journal

Data Analysis Sheet Photo Journal - Entry #3		
Image on card	Kenslie: Card #4: young boy squatting down appearing to turn a radio dial - outside (see Figure 16).	Oliver: Card #22; young girl wearing a ballet dress, sitting cross-legged on the dance floor, reaching left arm upward (see Figure 16).
Moving beyond the written word	Songs; Lyrics; Rhythm; Beat	Performance arts; Movement as language; Expression; Body language
Knowing students' life- worlds	Sound in everything – heard in home, neighborhood, parks, sports, animals; cultural events, places of worship, etc.; Meanings of sound(s).	Expressing self; feelings; experiences; communicating without words - solo; with other; dance; performance
Open doors to familiar and unknown worlds	PB – F: Because PB – F: Drum Dream Girl PB – I: Tito Puente-Mambo King	PB – F: Firebird PB – F: Bowwow Powwow PB – I: Jose-Born to Dance
Fill classrooms with student talk	Let students talk about the ways that they use music or sound – what their interest are, what they do well, what they want to learn	Encourage students to talk about ways that they dance or perform in their homes or during cultural events – or how others dance or perform in these events
Focus on their realities	Music or lyrics as story starters. Interactive writing- create a class song. Invite parents or community members to perform songs or help write lyrics.	Communicate with the principal, advocating for a student-family-community dance night (like family math night).

* Picture book (PB); Fiction (F); Informational (I)

Figure 16. Photos Used for Third Journal Entry. The images shown on these photo cards are mentioned in Data Analysis Sheet for the third journal entry. They provided Kenslie and Oliver with a simulated youth culture scene that allowed them to practice planning for a permeable read-aloud.

After the toolkit activities, Kenslie and Oliver were planning to incorporate student-centered talk into their read-alouds, opening space for students to share their own experiences, preferences, and ways of using literacies. They were beginning to expand their conceptions of what counts as literacy, and they were starting to think about ways to engage students in issues that are important to them. Both teachers were also choosing texts that support or highlight the literacies and lives that they observed during the contemporary youth culture simulation lab.

Planning a Permeable Read-Aloud

As a culminating activity, this session built on the new knowledge and understanding that Kenslie and Oliver developed as they participated in the simulation lab and maintained photo

journals of various literacies. This session required them to demonstrate an understanding of the five elements that underlie the concept of a permeable read-aloud (see Figure 17). They needed to dig into the concept, deconstruct and reconstruct it, play with it, and mold it until it made sense for them. The end goal of the professional learning session was for each of them to plan for doing a permeable read-aloud.

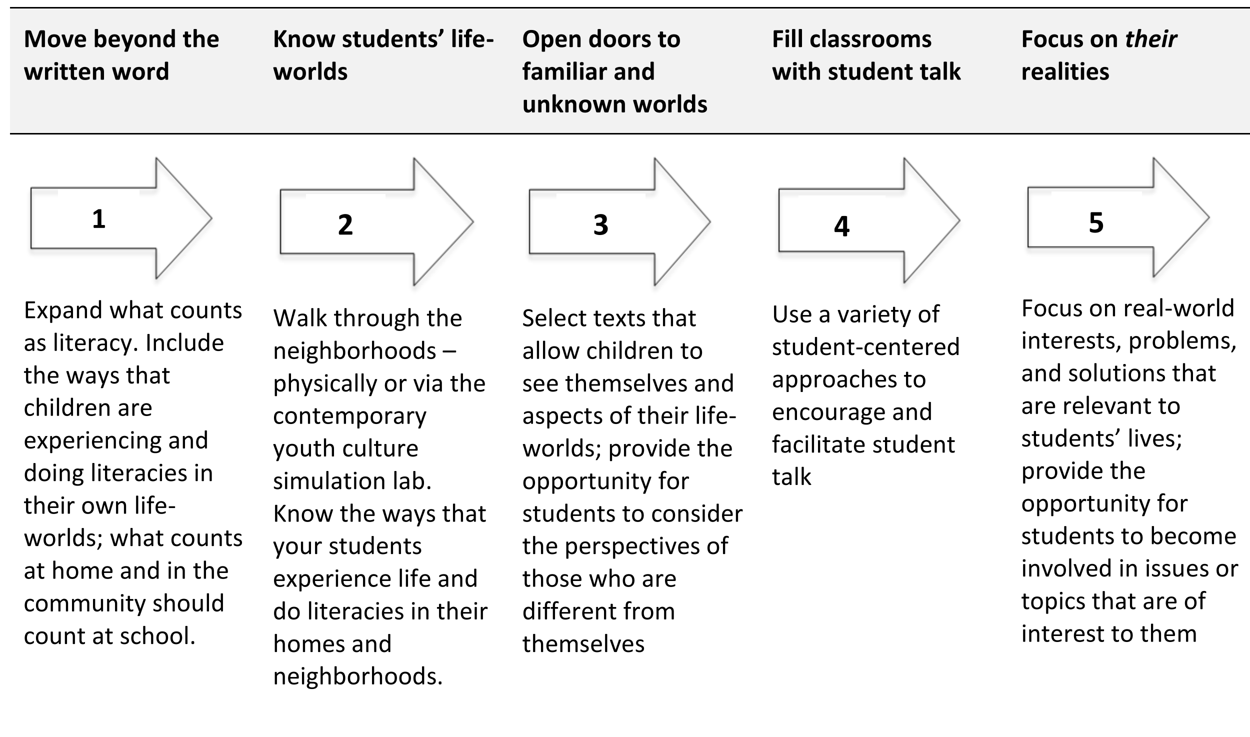

Figure 17. Elements of a Permeable Read-Aloud. This figure provides an overview of the five elements that comprise a permeable read-aloud. Arrows represent the progression, or sequential steps, that lead to its development.

Both Kenslie and Oliver chose to begin planning for permeable read-alouds by sorting through texts to identify one they thought had the potential to blur the boundaries of in- and out-of-school literacies. Each chose one text that they identified as having the potential to connect to students' lived experiences. This text would serve as the read-aloud book used during their subsequent observations.

Kenslie chose *What Does it Mean to be American* (DiOrio & Yoran, 2019), a picture

book focusing on the notion that Americans are proud of who they are, regardless of their differences, where they came from, or how they came to be American. Kenslie's selection left me somewhat perplexed, as the interplay of illustrations and words seemed to perpetuate a one-size-fits-all portrayal of Americans. I made the decision not to discuss my concerns with Kenslie, as I wanted to observe the ways that she used the book with her students.

Oliver chose *Stella Diaz Has Something to Say* (Dominguez, 2018) a chapter book about a Mexican-American child, Stella, who loves her betta fish, her mother, brother, and best friend; but, she does not love being pulled out of her class to go to the English Language Learner classroom, nor does she like accidentally speaking Spanish instead of English or pronouncing words wrong. Leading up to reading this book, Oliver spoke in Spanish while welcoming students to class. His attempts at speaking and reading Spanish caught me off-guard, as I had not seen him practice this approach. Students, keenly aware that he was speaking in a language other than English, provided him with undivided attention. "Hey, hey, why is he talking like that? Shush, I want to hear," they exclaimed.

After selecting a book, each teacher read it multiple times while placing sticky notes in it to remind themselves to include opportunities for student-centered conversation. Kenslie's sticky note, referring to the desire to intentionally pair students for a think-pair-share conversation (see Figure 18) and Oliver's sticky note, referring to his intent to make his thinking visible (see Figure 19) represent their intentions to incorporate student-centered conversation. These sticky-note reminders were tools to aid them in the use of purposeful conversations during their next read-aloud, helping to ensure that they moved beyond reliance on teacher-centered conversation, as had been indicated during their first observations.

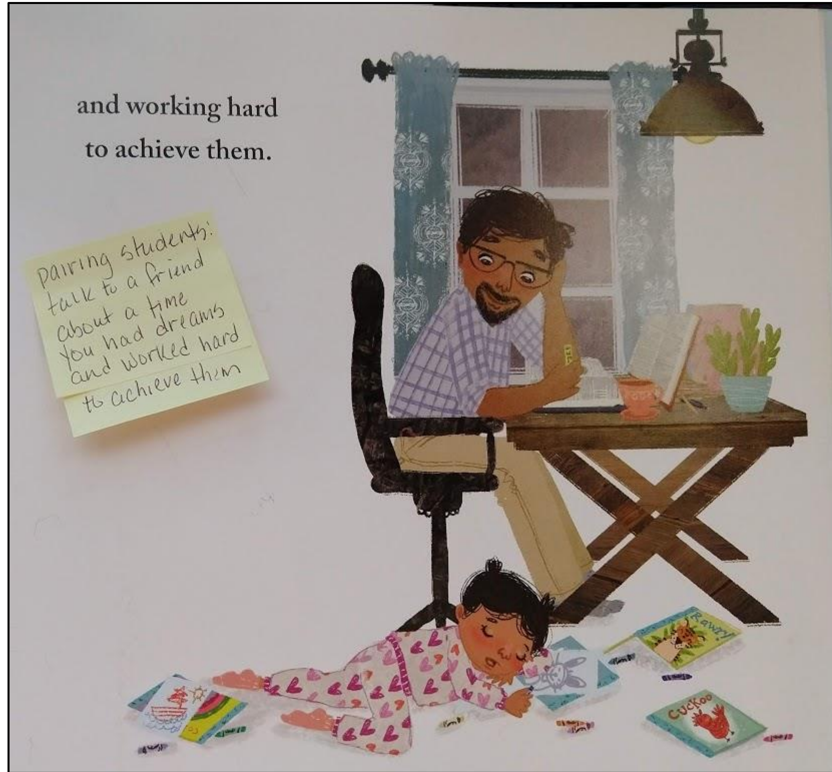

Figure 18. Kenslie's Use of Sticky Notes to Plan for a Permeable Read-Aloud. This figure shows an example of the sticky note that Kenslie placed in the text as a reminder to pair students for conversation.

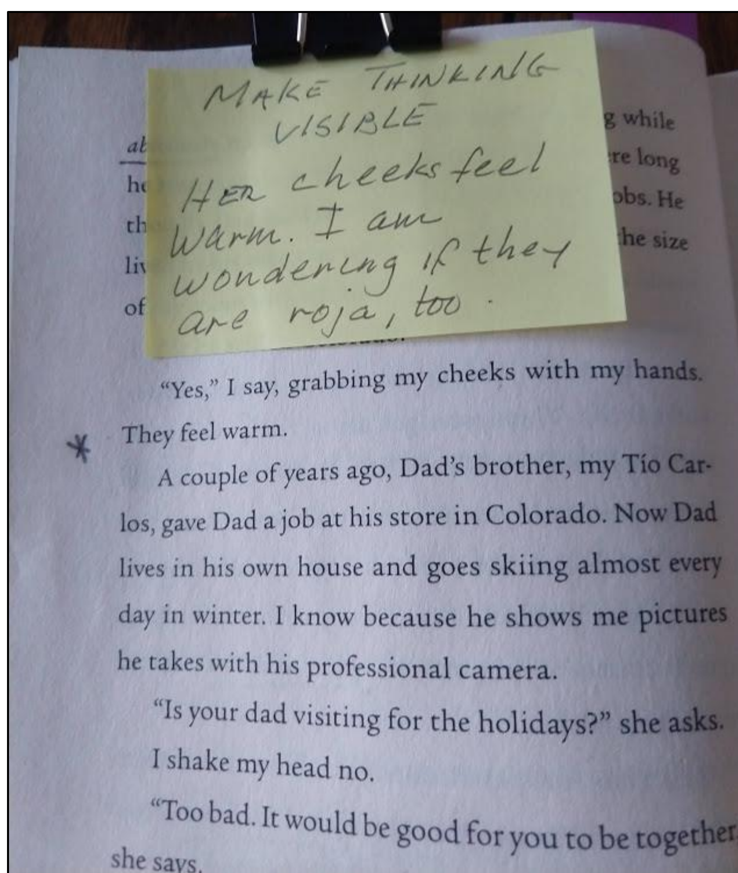

Figure 19. Oliver's Use of Sticky Notes to Plan for a Permeable Read-Aloud. In this example, Oliver placed a sticky note in the book to remind himself to share his thinking with his students, modeling the thought process that he went through as he considered why the main character's cheeks were warm. The concept of warm, red [rojá] cheeks is central to understanding how the main character often inserts Spanish words into English sentences when she is under stress.

After placing numerous sticky note reminders in their texts, both Kenslie and Oliver practiced reading aloud, enabling them to develop familiarity referencing the notes with minimal interruption to reading.

In the same fashion as the photo journal analysis, Kenslie and Oliver's conversational statements were entered into the analysis sheet (see Table 5.3). One analysis sheet was used per teacher, revealing how they were thinking about the literacies and lived experiences that influence students' life-worlds outside of the classroom. To analyze the data, I looked at each entry for evidence that they had included the five elements of a permeable read-aloud, previously

defined in Figure 17. The analysis of planning sheets suggested that they were incorporating all elements of a permeable read-aloud.

Table 5. 3

Data Analysis Sheet: Planning for Permeable Read-Alouds

Data Analysis Sheet Planning Permeable Read-alouds		
Open doors to familiar and unknown worlds (text selection)	Kenslie: *What does it mean to be an American?* PB – I *	Oliver: *Stella Diaz has something to say*. Chapter 6 C – F *
Moving beyond the written word	Reading a map; cheering for others; reading; coloring; singing; dancing; photography; talking with others; imaginative play; computer programming.	Speaking Spanish and English; having a family that speaks only Spanish; having an accent.
Knowing students' life-worlds	"Lots of talk on TV and in the community about Americans, closing borders, Muslim bans, family separation, deportation, etc. It is important to let students know that being an American is more than residency."	"Many students' parents speak their native language or speak English with an accent. Several students receive EL services – and I want them to know that it is OK. Also, lots of families are non-traditional, and this book includes that as well."
Fill classrooms with student talk	Used sticky notes to plan for: 1 open-ended class discussion; 3 turn-and-talks; 2 attempts to make thinking visible	Used sticky notes to plan for: 2 turn-and-talks; 2 attempts to make thinking visible
Focus on their realities	We are all American: create paper flags showing how we are American. Place photos and words on the flag that represent us. No parameters – open-ended. Wave flags in the upcoming neighborhood parade.	Talk about how to be accepting to those entering our groups – practice ways to welcome people into our groups. Practice ways to enter into new groups.

* Picture book (PB); Chapter book (C); Fiction (F); Informational (I)

Analysis of data (see Table 5.3) indicated that Kenslie and Oliver were planning multiple attempts to make their thinking visible and to use open-ended discussions and turn-and-talks. They were moving beyond the written word and expanding their conceptions of what counts as literacy (e.g., singing, dancing, bilingual conversations, imaginative play, reading maps). Finally,

they were starting to think about ways to provide opportunities for students to be actively involved in issues that are important to them (e.g., joining social groups, participating in a neighborhood parade, developing a sense of belonging). Both were thoughtfully choosing texts that built on, supported, and highlighted the literacies and lives of their students.

Summary

This activity continued to expand Kenslie and Oliver's conceptions of what counts as literacy, and it showed them how to plan for doing permeable read-alouds. It highlighted the notion that read-alouds need to incorporate texts that are more than linguistic; they must include literacies that connect to and are shaped by values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships of those who are doing them – the children.

Summative findings from the professional learning phase indicate that Kenslie and Oliver were:

1. demonstrating an awareness that literacies are plural and multiple – embedded in the lived experiences of the individuals and groups who are doing them;
2. planning to fill their read-alouds with student talk;
3. expanding their conceptions of what counts as literacy and incorporating texts that are more than linguistic;
4. thinking about ways to empower students to be actively involved in issues that are important to them; and
5. choosing picture books, fictional, informational, and non-print-based texts that support or highlight the literacies and lives that they observed in the contemporary youth culture simulation lab.

Discussion

The professional learning phase provided an opportunity for Kenslie and Oliver to work collaboratively with me during the learning sessions. The overarching goals of these sessions were to expand their conceptions of what counts as literacy and to increase their knowledge and understanding of the notion that literacies are plural and multiple, grounded in students' life-worlds and experiences. Secondary goals included working with Kenslie and Oliver to further develop their ability to intentionally and purposefully:

- select texts that reflect the realities, interests, and priorities of students' lives (Culham, 2019; Fisher, Frey & Lapp, 2008), focusing on the issues and topics that are of interest to them as they learn to participate in the world around them and construct and negotiate understandings of who they are and who they want to be (Vásquez, 2014; 2017).
- use texts to provide students with opportunity for exploring who they are, who they might be, or who they might become—to explore, negotiate, and re-negotiate the world through their experiences and different perspectives (Johnson & Keier, 2012; Fisher, et al., 2004).
- open read-alouds to reflect students' life-worlds and experiences – their ways of living, knowing, being, and doing.

Three professional learning sessions comprised this phase of the research: 1) participation in a contemporary youth culture simulation lab, 2) creation of a photo journal that captured various literacies, and 3) planning to *do* a permeable read-aloud. Data were collected via conversational notes, notes detailing Kenslie and Oliver's responses to each specific photo, photos of journals and sticky-notes, and member checks. Data analysis sheets (see Table 5.3 and 5.4) provided a way to track their thinking as they revised their approaches to opening read-alouds.

As was introduced in Chapter 2 and further explained in Figure 17, I developed the concept of a permeable read-aloud based on the work of Anne Haas Dyson (1993), who coined the term “permeable curriculum” to describe “[the ways] in which the worlds of teachers and children come together in instructionally powerful ways” (p. 1). When referring to permeable read-alouds, it means that children – their ways of living, knowing, being, and doing – are not sealed tight, boarded off or separated from the curriculum; instead, they are free to pass in and through the curriculum, to permeate it, to soak into it, allowing their life-worlds and literacies to find place. Planning for a permeable read-aloud was the overarching goal of the professional learning phase; doing a permeable read-aloud was the goal of the culminating phase of this research.

Throughout all of the learning sessions, Kenslie and Oliver were encouraged to articulate responses to the following: “When I look at and plan for read-alouds, I need to see the lives that my students are living and the people that they wish to be. Am I using permeable read-alouds to open my curriculum and reflect these lives?” As they repeatedly contemplated this question, they made entries and necessary edits in their photo journals (see Figures 14 and 15).

Their ability to interact with possible and imagined literacies in preparation for permeable read-alouds were suggested in the findings. Findings indicate that, in the context of the professional learning sessions, they were planning for permeable read-alouds that showed potential to open the curriculum. They were beginning to make connections (see Figures 14 and 15), following a path from an observed literacy-related activity to the resources that students bring to school, and imagining changing their pedagogy and curriculum instead of making assumptions that all students would fit into the schooled read-aloud (Hull & Schultz, 2001).

After professional learning, Kenslie and Oliver began to use vocabulary that mirrored the vocabulary that I used in conversation with them (see Table 5.4). This unforeseen change in vocabulary may indicate that they were internalizing these processes and beginning to take ownership of re-envisioning their read-alouds; at least, they were now talking about them in ways that considered students lived experiences and the ways that they do literacies outside of school.

Table 5. 4

Comparison of Vocabulary

Initial Practices and Perceptions	curriculum requirements	thematic requirements	booklists	reading skills development	predetermined teaching points
Re-envisioned Practices and Perceptions	lived experiences	expanding what counts	choice in text selection	literacies beyond print	filling classrooms with student-centered talk

CHAPTER 6:

Re-envisioning Practices and Perceptions

The previous chapter describes the interactions that took place between Kenslie, Oliver (two first-grade teachers), and I as we worked to build permeable read-aloud toolkits. Building the toolkits required that I work individually with each teacher to: (1) expand what counts through participation in a contemporary youth culture simulation lab, (2) photo journal various literacies, and (3) plan to do a permeable read-aloud.

Chapter 6, describes how both teachers used their toolkits to do (i.e., conduct) a permeable read-aloud. I observed their read-alouds and engaged in subsequent conversation with each of them. Data sets consisting of observations, interviews, and conversations were analyzed for each teacher individually and then again across and combining data sources to consider possible connections within the data. Findings from this phase of the study reveal the ways that the Kenslie and Oliver's read-aloud practices changed after professional learning. This chapter is divided into four sections: observations, conversations, summary, and discussion. The first two sections are further divided into sub-sections specific to each individual teacher.

Orchestrating a Permeable Read-Aloud: The Second Observation

During this phase of the study, I observed Kenslie and Oliver reading aloud to their first-grade students, after participation in the professional learning sessions.

Kenslie and *What it Means to Be an American*. During the second observation, 16 students scampered into Kenslie's classroom after their recess break and headed directly to the reading rug at the front of the classroom. Several girls, holding hands, skipped toward the rug. "And, you, my three friends, may return to the door and walk safely into our classroom," echoed Kenslie's voice almost out of nowhere. With some shuffling and repositioning of over-heated

bodies, students settled into their chosen places on the rug. Hair-braiding girls squeezed in close to the teacher's chair, while others sat cross-legged with their knees moving up and down in motions that appeared to mimic those of a bird's wings. Boys with sweaty, spiky-gelled hair sat on the shiny floor tiles, just slightly beyond the boundary of the rug. Their eyes locked with Kenslie's eyes; with no words spoken, her gaze clearly conveyed the message, "that's far enough." After praising students for their quick and quiet entry, Kenslie chose to read *What Does it Mean to Be an American* (DiOrio & Yoran, 2019), the book that she had planned to read "permeable read-aloud style."

While reading, Kenslie engaged her students in conversation on seven separate occasions (see Table 6.1). Four conversations were student-centered, and three were teacher-centered. In one instance, Kenslie made her thinking visible while combining voice, gestures, and a vocalized sound. She paused momentarily to point at an illustration of two adults and a child standing before a large plaque with two American flags on either side of it. "Two American flags." She pointed at the flags, raised her shoulders, and sighed, "Hmmm, interesting, this reminds me of the two flags that we have on either side of our own school stage," and she continued to read. This example is notable because it shows that she was making her thinking visible and that she was consciously considering how to provide additional support (e.g., sounds, gestures) to help all of her students to comprehend her thinking process.

Table 6. 1

Kenslie: Promoting Student Talk – Second Observation

Promoting student talk	Number of times observed	Exemplar statements
Student-centered conversation	4	Following your dreams and working hard. Who has dreams and works hard to make them come true? Turn to a neighbor and talk about that. Look at the uniform that she is wearing, it's camouflage. And she is using her right hand to salute [Kenslie salutes]. Why is she wearing this uniform?
Teacher-centered conversation	3	Oh, I remember when we studied about leadership. I know what leadership means. It means…[she continued].
Total number	**7**	

Although Kenslie's text selection did not demonstrate her new learnings to the degree that I had hoped for, her choice did reflect growth. During the initial phases of this study, Kenslie had stated that she chose texts that were listed on curriculum and thematic reading lists, or she read her favorite *The Magic Treehouse* books. By choosing *What Does it Mean to be an American*, she ventured beyond the required books lists, attempting to select a text that appeared multicultural and relevant to neighborhood happenings (e.g., an upcoming neighborhood parade).

Oliver has something to say. During the second observation, Oliver was observed reading-aloud to 17 first-grade students during their regularly scheduled 15-minute read-aloud time. "¡Hola! Buenos días, mis amigos. How are you today?" Oliver warbled off-key as students rushed into the classroom, veering off toward the left or right side of the rug. Stopping on the rug and then crawling to desired locations, students chatted and repeated "Buenos días" in a variety of voices: deep, cartoon-like, gravely, shrill, giggly. As Oliver approached his rocking chair, his

lanky, angular body seemed to tower over the small shapes of his first-grade students. “Buenos días, mis amigos...Stella Diaz…” Oliver chose to read *Stella Diaz Has Something to Say* (Dominguez, 2018), a fictional chapter book. This is the book that Oliver had planned to read “permeable read-aloud style.”

While reading *Stella Diaz,* Oliver engaged his students in seven conversations, all of which were student-centered (see Table 6.2). During one specific conversation, Oliver pointed to the only full-page illustration in the chapter, that of a teacher sitting at a kidney-shaped table with three young students. He used his index finger to tap on the illustrations of each of the three students sitting at the table, asking, “Do you think it would be fun to be in a class with only a few kids? [tap-tap-tap]. Stella likes being in her class with only a few kids. Turn to a friend and talk about what it might be like to have just a couple of kids in your class.” This was an important illustration to bring to the students’ attention, as it provided a visual explanation of the meaning of the word “few,” included a synonym for the word, and encouraged students to talk with one another to confirm their understanding of the word and how it connected to their own actual or perceived experiences.

Table 6. 2

Oliver: Promoting Student Talk – Second Observation

Promoting student talk	Number of times observed	Exemplar statements
Student-centered conversation	7	Stella didn't win. Has there ever been a time when you thought that you would win something and you didn't? Why don't you talk to a friend about that experience? Stella's cheeks feel rojá. What do your think is making her cheeks feel red?
Teacher-centered conversation	0	He speaks with a lisp. I think that means that he speaks like this [Oliver makes lisp sound while saying 'lisp'].
Total number	**7**	

Through a Lens of Possibility

Following the second observations, described in the previous section of this chapter, Kenslie, Oliver, and I came together for the final unstructured conversation that allowed us to discuss the professional learning sessions, the second read-aloud observations, and to compare/contrast the observations that took place before and after professional learning. The purpose of these discussions was to discover the ways that professional learning led them to know and understand their students' lives and literacies, leading to permeable read-aloud practices.

Kenslie: Confronting and overcoming tensions. Sitting directly across the table from me, Kenslie sat, arms resting on the table and a deflated posture emphasizing her petite frame. With tears in her eyes and emotion in her voice, she stated that she had an epiphany as she made the following statement regarding new learnings derived from the contemporary youth culture simulation lab:

> And that is where the simulation lab really hit home with me. I live in this neighborhood, and now after looking at your picture cards, it makes me wonder how many of these similar situations and literacies I have just walked right past without ever taking note as to how they might connect to classroom learning – and that is on me.

When questioned about her prior concerns that there is not enough time in the day to always read-aloud to students, she stated:

> You know, our schedule is tight, and there is no denying that. But, I think part of it is that I was exhausted because I controlled everything. I did all of the talking and all of the teaching. Now that I have developed my permeable read-aloud toolkit and I know how to use permeable read-alouds, I can let the students do more of the thinking, talking, and teaching. They have a lot to contribute, and I recognize that now.

During the discussion, Kenslie provided specific insights into her new perspectives on students' literacies and lived experiences. Analysis of this information began with using the three initial codes that emerged during the initial phase of this study: 1) selecting text, 2) using texts, and 3) opening read-alouds to students' lived experiences. This led to numerous expanded codes. Similar codes were then grouped into final categories; from these, eight themes (rationale for reading aloud) emerged (see Table 6.3).

Table 6. 3

Grouping Codes into Categories: Kenslie's Second Discussion

Read-Aloud Practices	**Rationale** (reasons)	**Exemplar statements**
Selecting Texts Kenslie was selecting texts that…	1. reflected students' interests and what students are doing outside of the classroom	Expanding my understandings of what students are interested in and how they are doing things out of school is important. This will help me to choose books that appeal to *them*.
	2. blurred the boundaries between in-school and out of school literacies and experiences	I don't need to rely so much on the curriculum or the things that I have always done. But, I do need to make sure that I follow the district requirements. Honestly, I think that if I plan for it, I think I can learn to combine the district requirements and permeable read-alouds.
Using Texts Kenslie was using texts that…	3. extended beyond print	Kids are reading and doing things in different ways now and at younger ages. So, I need to let go of my preference for print texts and look at all of the great things that they are doing that use literacy skills and bring those into my read-alouds. I had not considered this before.
	4. presented children and neighborhoods in different ways	It is good to read books that present kids differently. This allows me to see newness in them – and I hope it allows them to see others from new and different perspectives.
	5. offered different perspectives	The photo journal really taught me how to plan for read-alouds that complement or conflict with one another.
Opening Read-Alouds Kenslie was opening read-alouds by…	6. using a variety of permeable read-aloud strategies	You can learn anything by picking up a book.
	7. inviting family and community to participate in the classroom	One thing that I really stress is that reading can take you on an adventure.
	8. encouraging students to become involved in issues that are important to them	It is super important to teach our students to stand up for or against certain things. We have to help them practice this if they are going to learn how to take a stand.

Each theme was further analyzed into supporting sub-themes. For example, focusing specifically on the theme, "blurring boundaries," I analyzed data in four steps (see Figure 20).

- identification of two initial codes: text selection and using read-alouds
- identification of expanded sub-codes
- clustering similar sub-codes, resulting in two final categories: in-school and out-of-school
- emergence of the theme, or rationale for reading aloud: blurring boundaries.

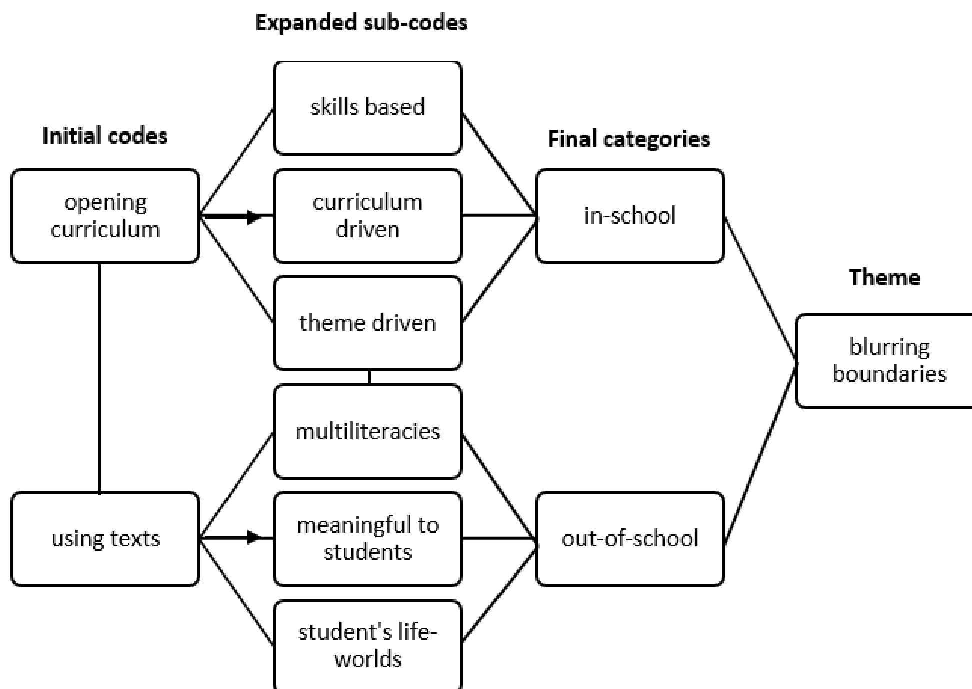

Figure 20. Data Analysis: Selecting and Using Texts. Analysis of data indicates that Kenslie selected and used read-aloud texts to blur the boundaries between in-school and out-of-school purposes for reading aloud to her students.

Data represented above, in totality, suggest that Kenslie was beginning to open her read-alouds to students' lived experiences by blurring boundaries between in-school and out-of-school literacies. She was selecting and using text that aligns with school district curriculum and thematic requirements; and, she was starting to select and using texts that consider the students' life-worlds, multiple literacies, and that which is meaningful to them. In this example, Kenslie

brought her students' ways of doing literacies into the read-aloud, creating bridges to students' out-of-school literacies and life-worlds (Cervetti et al., 2006).

As indicated by the analysis of data, Kenslie changed her read-aloud practices after participation in professional learning sessions. Prior to professional learning, she had stated: (a) the literacies that count are those that the school has determined necessary for reading and writing, (b) that she was reading aloud to students, but there was not enough time to engage them, and (c) that curriculum and themes drive read-aloud selection. Data suggest that Kenslie transformed the ways that she selects and uses read-aloud texts. She showed progress toward expanding her conceptions of what counts, and she made a conscious effort to blur the boundaries between in-school requirements and out-of-school experiences of her students. Data suggest that she changed her initial read-aloud practices to those of a permeable read-aloud.

Oliver: I can take down the wall. Over spicy, deli meat sub-sandwiches and pickles that Oliver graciously provided, we discussed the noticings of his first and second observations. Although the conversation was free-flowing and uninhibited, there was a palpable feeling of tension. Oliver often looked down at his sandwich, avoiding direct eye contact with me; he spoke more quietly than usual, and his right foot repeatedly tapped on the floor in a way in which it had not during past interactions. Near the end of our discussion, he brought up the following:

> Here is the thing. I have heard people say that teachers need to help students connect the things from their lives to classroom learning. It almost always seems to be called "making learning authentic." But my thoughts have always leaned in the direction that: neighborhoods, homes, lives…they can all be pretty tough places for some students. So, when they come to school, I have tried to block all of that out – to make school a safe place where students are loved, warm, safe, and have full stomachs and friends for at least 7-hours per day. I have put a fortress wall around my classroom. You stated that walking neighborhoods with an eye for intrigue, strengths, and possibilities could change my perspective, and you were right. I have always seen through a lens of protection. Now I am trying to see through a lens of possibility. Understanding that strengths can lie in play, music, and art, making and creating things, shopping, riding bikes with friends,

> barbecuing with Dad. I just really feel that this awareness is going to change my perspective of my students and their families, maybe I have a lot to learn, but I think this will change more than just my read-alouds.

During this moment of vulnerability, Oliver acknowledged and confronted tensions that he experienced during this study. He expressed unanticipated concern about opening the curriculum, conveying in his apprehension of bringing students' lived experiences into the classroom. However, in this instant, he also revealed moments of profound learning – learning to see students' lives outside of school through the lens of possibility.

During this second discussion, Oliver provided a variety of responses and insights into his thoughts and instructional practices. Analysis of data mirrored the approach to that of Kenslie's data, beginning with the three initial codes that emerged during the initial practice phase: 1) selecting text, 2) using texts, and 3) opening read-alouds to students lived experiences. From Oliver's responses, numerous expanded codes were brought forward. Similar codes were then grouped in final categories; from these groupings, seven themes (rationale for reading aloud) emerged (see Table 6.4).

Table 6. 4

Grouping Codes into Categories: Oliver's Second Discussion

Read-Aloud Practices	Rationale (reasons)	Exemplar Statements
Selecting Texts **Oliver was selecting read-aloud texts that…**	1. reflected students' lived experiences	Students are doing a lot of things when they leave school. Their learning does not just stop at our doors.
	2. included a variety of texts that he chose	It would be an idea to look at newer books that maybe our library doesn't have. Probably many are available on eReaders from public libraries or low costs on Kindle.
	3. extended beyond print	Stella Diaz was actually recommended by the Global Read-aloud. I would like to do more with that at some point.
Using Texts **Oliver was using texts that…**	4. presented children and neighborhoods in different ways	You said windows and mirrors- children need to see themselves and others, and I need to remember that
Opening Read-Alouds **Oliver was opening read-alouds by…**	5. using the elements of a permeable read-aloud	I will definitely fill in more pages of the photo journal. This will become a journal that I continue to use.
	6. inviting family and community to participate in the classroom	I think that the more I know about the families and neighborhoods, the more that I can find ways to bring them into the classroom and make it a place of welcome.
	7. encouraging students to become involved in issues that are important to them	When I think about action, I think that maybe starting small, like in the classroom or school, is a good place to start – and then move out into the world. But, maybe I need to let the kids lead the way on that.

Each theme was further analyzed into supporting sub-themes (see Figure 21).

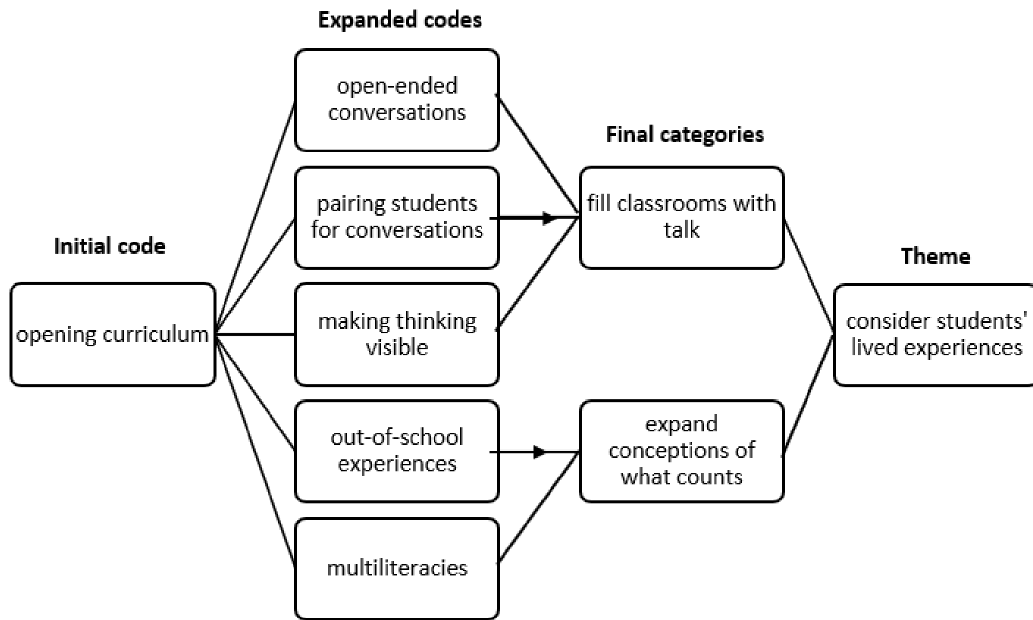

Figure 21. Data Analysis: Opening the Curriculum. In this example, analysis of data indicates that Oliver is opening the curriculum through the consideration of students' lived experiences.

Data suggest that Oliver was beginning to expand his conceptions of what counts and filling his classroom with student-centered talk. He demonstrated an increasing awareness that consideration of students' lived experiences is necessary in order to open the curriculum (see Figure 21). This example indicates a change in Oliver's read-aloud practices after participation in professional learning sessions. Before our professional learning sessions, he stated that some families don't speak English and others are "illiterate;" students come to first grade with a hodgepodge of reading skills, and "there is not a lot that I can do about that." As the example above indicates, though, Oliver was beginning to opens his read-alouds to students' literacies and lived experiences. He discovered "what he can do about that" – he filled his classroom with student-centered conversation and began to expand his conceptions of what counts.

The data, as presented in the examples above, combined with Oliver's statements during the second discussion, indicate that professional learning sessions (i.e., developing a permeable

read-aloud toolkit) helped Oliver to change his read-aloud practices and perceptions, possibly leading continued use of permeable read-alouds.

Summary

The information gleaned from findings of this phase, based on the second read-aloud observation and discussion, suggest that Kenslie and Oliver are starting to open their read-alouds to make room for students' literacies and lived experiences. They were beginning to select their own texts based on students' lives and interests, and they were starting to decrease their dependence on a predetermined curriculum or thematic book lists. They demonstrated an understanding of the importance of reaching into the local neighborhoods to know their students' life-worlds, and they were identifying the multiple literacies that encompass children's lives outside of school. Finally, both Kenslie and Oliver were *doing* permeable read-alouds that invite students' literacies and lived experiences into the classroom.

In response to Q3: *How can professional learning be designed to help teachers to know and understand their students' lives and literacies, informing read-aloud practice?* Table 6.5 provides a comprehensive comparison of the findings before and after professional learning, demonstrating that professional learning can be designed to help teachers to know and understand their students' lives and literacies, informing read-aloud practices.

Table 6. 5

A Comparison of Practices

Before Professional Learning		After Professional Learning	
Teachers were selecting read-aloud texts that…			
Rationale 1	were determined by curriculum	Rationale 1	Reflect student interests and what they are doing outside of the classroom
Rationale 2	support grade-level themes	Rationale 2	Blur boundaries between in-school and out-of-school experiences
		Rationale 3	Extend beyond print
		Rationale 4	Selecting their own texts – not relying solely on the curriculum or thematic booklists
Finding 1: read-alouds were selected based on curriculum and themes.		Finding 1: teachers selected read-aloud texts that blurred in-school and out-of-school boundaries and reflected students' interests and what was relevant to them	
Teachers were using read-aloud texts…			
Rationale 1	that develop reading skills	Rationale 1	to present children and neighborhoods in different ways
Rationale 2	that build reading and listening stamina	Rationale 2	to show different perspectives of issues that are of interest to the students
Finding 2: read-alouds were used to develop student' reading skills and stamina		Finding 2: read-alouds reflect children and neighborhoods in different ways and show different perspectives on issues that are important to the students	
Teachers were opening read-alouds by…			
Rationale 1	providing limited purpose for reading outside of school	Rationale 1	using a variety of the elements of a permeable read-aloud
Rationale 2	were encouraging student-talk through the use of teacher-centered approaches	Rationale 2	encouraging students to become involved in issues and topics that were relevant to their lives
		Rationale 3	expanding their conceptions of what counts
		Subthemes of Rationale 3	the arts; play; digital/virtual interactions; involvement in topics and issues of concern or interest
Finding 3: teachers open read-alouds by using some elements of permeable read-alouds and by providing some purpose for reading outside of class		Finding 3: teachers have expanded their conceptions of what counts as literacy, use permeable read-alouds, and encourage student involvement in real-world issues	

Discussion

Relying on Kenslie and Oliver's second observation and informal conversation, findings suggested that professional learning that focused on embedding learning in the context of Kenslie and Oliver's work lives, allowing opportunities to practice, discuss, and receive feedback translated into re-envisioned practices and perceptions of read-alouds.

It is important to keep in mind that professional learning was designed to guide Kenslie and Oliver in developing a permeable read-aloud toolkit. While assembling their toolkits, they immersed themselves in the five elements of a permeable read-aloud and demonstrated the use of each:

1. moving beyond the written word to expand conceptions of what counts as literacy,
2. knowing students' life-worlds and the ways that their students experienced life and literacies in their homes and neighborhoods,
3. opening doors to familiar and unknown worlds through the selection of texts that allowed students to see themselves and aspects of their life-worlds and provided the opportunity for students to consider the perspectives of those who are different from themselves,
4. filling classrooms with student-talk by using a variety of student-centered conversations,
5. focusing on *their* realities and providing the opportunity for students to become involved in issues or topics that are of interest to them.

Professional learning was not intended to imply that they should entirely supplant their initial approaches to read-alouds. Instead, professional learning was designed to encourage them to reconsider what they had grown accustomed to and to expand their understandings of how students are doing literacies in their social lives. To explain this further, I offer the following example provided by Kenslie:

> I will continue to use read-alouds to model a variety of reading skills, as my school district curriculum requires that I do this. But, I will also select and use read-alouds that reflect the children and the local neighborhoods that are represented in my class. And I will also expose students to different perspectives on topics and issues that are important to them.

This example suggests that Kenslie has found a way to use read-alouds for the combined purpose of teaching reading skills and incorporating students' life-worlds. Moreover, she was cognizant of the notion that she needed to make text selections that reflect "what is on the students' minds, their experiences, and what they are talking about" (Varlas, 2018, para 21). Her read-alouds are beginning to "celebrate and honor ways of living and loving that are different from [hers']" (Culham, 2019, p. 509).

Although Kenslie committed to opening her read-alouds to students' life-worlds, in the following statement, she acknowledged and confronted tensions that emerged as the district-mandated curriculum intersected with the concept of permeable read-alouds:

> With each breath, I feel I need to be teaching them skills. But during read-aloud time, maybe I need to teach skills some days and then use permeable read-alouds on the other days. I know that this needs to happen, and I know there is a way forward. I think I need to spend some time doing this.

With her new understanding of permeable read-alouds, Kenslie was attempting to weave her existing practices and her new knowledge together to open read-alouds to her students. She understood the necessity of opening her read-alouds, and she was trying to situate this within the context of mandated curricular requirements.

Oliver also acknowledged and confronted tensions that he experienced during this research. He expressed unanticipated concern about opening the curriculum, conveying his apprehension of bringing students' lived experiences into the classroom. To paraphrase, Oliver expressed that some students have pretty tough home lives, and school should be a safe place where they can block out the experiences of their lives. I found his perspective quite impressive,

as it could shed light on why some teachers may experience a dilemma in welcoming students' life-worlds into classroom spaces. Through professional learning, he appeared to realize that he had put a fortress wall around his classroom in an attempt to protect his students from outside influences. This may indicate that he is beginning to see his students' literacies and lived experiences through the lens of possibility, recognizing the many strengths that they bring to school with them each day. He indicated that he still feels a need to protect his students, but that he also feels the need to get to know and understand the whole child: "to truly love them, I need to truly know them and all that they are." In this example, Oliver's deeply held beliefs were challenged, and he confronted those, moving from a deficit-based perception of out-of-school experiences to a strength-based perception of these.

The findings associated with this phase support the argument that professional learning can be designed to help teachers to know and understand their students' lives and literacies, informing read-aloud practices. Also, this phase revealed tensions that both Kenslie and Oliver experienced as they moved toward the doing permeable read-alouds. A more in-depth exploration of tensions and strategies to overcome them may be an avenue worthy of future study.

CHAPTER 7

Where to from Here?

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the ways that professional learning can be designed to increase elementary school teachers' understandings of their students' literacies and lived experiences, opening spaces where teachers can enact read-alouds that are permeable to students' life-worlds and literacies. Throughout this research, I sought to learn about the potential that professional learning has in exposing teachers to new and different ways of using read-alouds to open their curriculum to their students' lived experiences and ways of doing literacies.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I presented the key findings and illuminated how professional learning can be designed to help teachers to know and understand their students' lives and literacies, informing permeable read-aloud practice. Participants' perceptions and experiences were conveyed in the data from classroom observations, individual interviews, and professional learning. Analyzing within and across the data, I identified what Kenslie and Oliver were already doing well; this approach allowed me to build on their strengths as I introduced them to the concept of a permeable read-aloud. In response to their needs, professional learning sessions were designed to expand their understandings of the ways that children are doing literacies in their life-worlds. Finally, data analyzed after professional learning suggest that Kenslie and Oliver are beginning to re-envision their read-aloud practices and perceptions.

In the following chapter, I provide insight as to how the design of future professional learning can show teachers how to use permeable read-alouds to open their curriculum to the lived experiences and literacies of their students. I discuss constraints and challenges to

designing professional learning for this purpose. Implications of this dissertation research and future research directions are also discussed.

With the understanding that professional learning has the potential to transform elementary read-alouds, the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to the development of a professional learning model. The model, as proposed in Figure 22, is the result of the events and findings of this study, as detailed in Chapters 4-6.

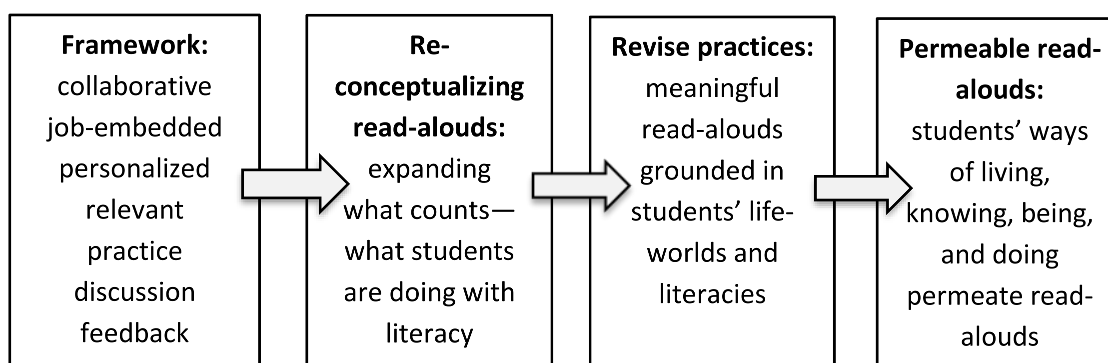

Figure 22. Model for Professional Learning: Permeable Read-Alouds. This figure shows the process of moving educators through a professional learning sequence that leads to permeable read-aloud practices.

Take Professional Learning into School Neighborhoods

To lead teachers to deeper understandings and preparation for permeable read-alouds, it is essential to recognize that teaching and learning are contextually situated, meaning that the focus cannot be on specific activities, processes, or programs in isolation from the complex teaching and learning environments where teachers spend their time (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Embedding professional learning in teachers' work lives and conditions provides a foundation for building job-embedded, collaborative, and personalized approaches to learning (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Campbell et al., 2016). These approaches "[are] practical for teachers [and] personalized to their learning needs, relevant to their instructional and classroom practices" (Campbell, et al., 2016, p. 221). According to Croft, et al., (2010), "adults learn best when they

are self-directed, building new knowledge upon existing knowledge, and aware of the relevance and personal significance of what they are learning – grounding theoretical knowledge in actual events" (p. 8). Teachers learn by doing (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011).

As findings suggested, professional learning in which the focus is on embedding relevant learning in the context of teacher's work lives and allowing for practice, discussion, and feedback has potential to change classroom read-aloud practices (Dennis & Hemmings, 2018; Gallucci, et al., 2010; Birman, et al., 2000). Kenslie and Oliver learned by doing. They "walked through" their school neighborhood, albeit via a contemporary youth culture simulation lab, gathered authentic and relevant information, and applied their new knowledge to designing and using a permeable read-aloud with their own students, in their own classrooms.

Although physically walking through the neighborhood did not actually take place during this research, in future instances of professional learning, I would encourage teachers to actually go outside and walk through surrounding neighborhoods, journaling their observations and findings. An walk in the neighborhood would allow teachers to see, firsthand, the literacies that their students are using in the spaces outside of school. The authenticity in this cannot be diminished; however, limitations also exist. Teachers may be limited to seeing only what is directly in front of them, obscuring events that take place beyond the direct line of vision. For example, the following may be difficult for teachers to see: events in homes, events that take after dark, some cultural activities, weekend activities, events that take place off-the-beaten-path, etc. A contemporary youth culture simulation lab, on the other hand, has the potential to provide a simulation of literacy events that may take place in neighborhoods or broader areas, breaking down the barriers of actual physical presence.

Reconceptualize Read-Alouds

As society becomes more culturally and linguistically diverse, written-linguistic modes of meaning interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile, and spatial patterns of meaning (Kalantzis et al., 2016; Cope & Kalantzis, 2015). The definition of text has been reconceptualized to include animation, video, music, websites, drama, play, apps, digital texts, and other multimodal forms of meaning-making (Wohlwend, 2017; Wang et al., 2019). Reconceptualization of text (i.e., the moving beyond print-based conceptions) is necessary to provide students with authentic experiences with literacies.

This research worked to expand Kenslie and Oliver's conceptions of what counts. Owocki & Goodman (2002) point out, and as suggested by Kenslie and Oliver's initial practices, that what counts in school settings is often that which can be studied in a predetermined static curriculum sequence and that which can be measured on tests; what often does not count are the children's lived experiences, literacies, and their ability to negotiate within and across a variety of situations.

The contemporary youth culture simulation lab, described earlier in this chapter, served the vital role of providing Kenslie and Oliver with the opportunity to wander and wonder. Viewing the picture cards and the various literacies portrayed on them allowed Kenslie and Oliver to "wander" through a variety of simulated neighborhoods, seeing the literacies that children and youth were doing; this provided critical time for them to "wonder" about (i.e., curiously ponder) the literacies, life-worlds, and the sociocultural thread that ran through these. Their wanderings and wondering came together to help Kenslie and Oliver to reconceptualize what counts. Findings indicate that they came to the realization that, as Owocki & Goodman state, "…what counts as reading and writing at home, should count as reading and writing at

school…[otherwise] children are denied the legitimacy of their own experiences and of using them to learn. (p. 25-26).

In future efforts to lead teachers in the reconceptualization of what counts, actual walks through neighborhoods or contemporary youth culture simulation labs can serve the purpose of getting them into the spaces outside of school where learning and literacies are taking place, to provide them with a new lens from which to wander and wonder, and to see firsthand the way that their students are knowing, being, and doing.

Revise Read-Aloud Practices

The art (i.e., the application of knowledge and skills to bring about a desired result) of revising read-aloud practice, begins with the foundational understanding that literacy development involves engaging students in literacies that are grounded in their life-worlds and experiences, connected to larger contexts, and recognizes that literacies and language are part of and inseparable from their social and cultural contexts (Van Sluys et al., 2006; Compton-Lilly, 2013). Literacies exist within the experiences that people have, in "the relations between people and within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals" (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8).

As a social practice, literacy is always embedded in socially constructed knowledge (Gee, 1996; Street 1984, 1995, 2003; Heath, 1983). It is about the ways in which people address reading and writing and are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being – of life (Street, 2003). "Literacy is about what people *do* with reading, writing, and texts in real-world contexts and why they do it. Barton and Hamilton (2000) note that 'in the simplest sense literacy practices are what people *do* with literacy' (p. 7)" (Perry, 2012, p. 54)

In the professional development sessions associated with this research, 33 picture cards were used in a contemporary youth culture simulation lab (see Appendix H). They provided an opportunity for Kenslie and Oliver to see the literacies, embedded in social and cultural interactions, that may be present in the spaces outside of school. The picture cards allowed them to see children and youth doing literacies in *their* worlds. This led them on a journey of discovery, showing them photos of cultural dances, instrumental and vocal music, imaginative play, powerful messages conveyed by the body's canvas, and use of social media. They saw photos in which children were used to convey political and cultural messages, teens working through complex issues, and the silent literacies that bond best friends. The photo journal (see Appendices I-J) documented Kenslie and Oliver's journey through the contemporary youth culture simulation lab, exemplifying the notion that literacies are always embedded in socially constructed knowledge (Gee, 1996; Street 1984, 1995, 2003; Heath, 1983). Removed from such, they stand alone in isolation, unnurtured and withering.

Photo journals were workspaces, sandboxes where Kenslie and Oliver found safe-space to encounter the literacies and experiences described above, and to connect these to their read-alouds. They discovered that "Literacy practices are not static. Instead, they are composed of a confluence of actions, modes, and meanings in the trajectories that flow into and emanate from a moment of site of engagement" (Wohlwend, 2011, p. 11). With this understanding, they were able to follow the possible flow of literacies from the site of engagement to the classroom read-aloud. This flow, represented by horizontal and vertical lines in the photo journals, opened possible paths for Kenslie and Oliver to follow as they unveiled ways to bring students' multiliteracies into their curriculum.

In this research, photo journaling of various literacies was the link, the bridge that allowed Kenslie and Oliver to cross over from schooled definitions of literacy to a sociocultural perspective on literacy. Working in their journals, they began to understand that literacies "[are] always situated in a social environment where knowledge construction, language, motives, values, societies, and cultures interact" (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013, p. 72). In future journals, it may be possible to catalog how and where literacies occurred in neighborhoods and to document students' life-worlds and literacies in a variety of modes (e.g., photos, videos, sketches) (Barton, 1991). The importance of documenting and cataloging cannot be understated. The photo journal was the tool that showed Kenslie and Oliver how to expand their conceptions of what counts, leading to change in their read-aloud practices and perceptions.

Make Way for Permeable Read-Alouds

Dyson's permeable curriculum was adapted for this research and subsequent professional learning sessions to describe read-alouds that recognize students for who they are, not just what they know. In permeable read-alouds, students' ways of living, knowing, being, and doing are not sealed tight or bordered off and separated from the classroom or the curriculum; instead, they permeate into it and become at one with it, an integral part of it. Professional learning that leads teachers in the reconceptualization of read-alouds and transforms their practices, as discussed earlier in this chapter, prepares them to make their read-aloud spaces permeable.

This research used a professional learning model (see Figure 22) that focused on leading teachers to re-envision their read-alouds (i.e., expanding what counts) and changing their read-aloud practices and perceptions (i.e., meaningfully grounding read-alouds in students' life-worlds and literacies) to arrive at the point where permeable read-alouds were made possible. It is in this space of a read-aloud that teachers have the power to provide their students with

windows and mirrors – mirrors in which students' life-worlds are reflected, and windows through which they can see the lives, experiences, and struggles of others and explore their thoughts and emotions with increasing awareness, knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of oneself and others (Bishop, 1990; Tome-Fernandez et al., 2019; Quast & Bazemore-Bertrand, 2019; Culham, 2019).

The culminating activity in this research entailed Kenslie and Oliver planning three permeable read-alouds and enacting one. While findings indicate that both teachers were aware of the elements that define a permeable read-aloud (see Figure 17) and demonstrated the ability to select and use text that opens them, sustained practices over time were not measured. The consideration of such may be beneficial to future professional learning sessions and be an avenue for additional research.

Summary

Whether formal or informal, teacher professional learning has shown promise for transforming elementary read-alouds into permeable spaces when, as outlined in Figure 22, they:

- are designed within a specific professional learning framework;
- reconceptualize read-alouds to expand what counts to include what students are doing with literacies;
- revise read-aloud practices to meaningfully include students' life-worlds and literacies; and
- result in read-alouds that are permeated by students' ways of living, knowing, doing, and being.

Although Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1995) argue, "teachers must be at the center of change" (p. 602), I disagree in this instance. When it comes to preparing teachers for opening

their curriculum to their students' life-worlds and literacies, it is not the teacher who is at the center; it is the students. Like watching the rippling rings that cascade outwards from a pebble thrown into a pond, the students – *their* lives, *their* literacies – are at the center of this professional development model. The teachers' reconceptualization of what counts and their revised practices ripple outwards until resulting in the ring with the most extensive influence, that of a permeable read-aloud.

CHAPTER 8:

Concluding Thoughts

Guided by sociocultural perspectives on literacy, the purpose of this research study was to explore the ways that professional learning can be designed to increase elementary school teachers' understandings of their students' literacies and lived experiences, opening spaces where teachers can enact read-alouds that are permeable to students' life-worlds and literacies. Grounded in the conceptualization that literacies are more than linguistic, they are ethical and sociocultural practices that limit or create possibilities for individuals to become literate (Street, 1995; Heath 1983; Gee, 1996). Underpinning this conceptualization is the foundational understanding that literacy development involves engaging students in literacies that are grounded in *their* life-worlds and experiences, connected to larger contexts, and recognizes that literacies and language are part of and inseparable from their social and cultural contexts (Van Sluys et al., 2006; Compton-Lilly, 2013). Literacies exist within the experiences that people have, in "the relations between people and within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals" (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8).

Taking these perspectives into the first-grade classrooms of Kenslie and Oliver yielded findings associated with professional learning and additional unanticipated findings. These, as suggested in Chapters 4-6, indicate that, provided with professional learning opportunities, teachers can cultivate their skill in the use of permeable read-alouds. During the relatively short duration of this research, Kenslie and Oliver demonstrated their ability to begin shifting their read-aloud practices to focus on students, rather than solely on curriculum, as summed up in the following assertation made by Kenslie:

> The eye-opener for me was learning to see and to feel present in the literacies that students are doing in their life-worlds and to understand how these literacies

> connect what they think, know, and do inside and outside of the classroom. To have the opportunity to work through this and to come to understand it has altered the way that I will forever approach read-alouds and my instruction in general. I can honestly say that I no longer teach to the curriculum; instead, I now teach to open the curriculum to the students that I have before me.

Kenslie's statement illuminated an unanticipated and new significance of this research. The significance lies in the shift from *teaching to the curriculum* to *teaching to open the curriculum.* Yes, as indicated, professional learning can be effectively designed to increase elementary school teachers' understandings of their students' literacies and lived experiences, and that is an important finding. However, taking this one step further, Kenslie brought attention to the notion that professional learning can empower teachers to open up their curriculum.

Empowering teachers to open up their curriculum is vital in the current educational climate where fidelity to prescriptive packaged programs bypasses the students and diminishes teacher expertise and any sort of voice that they have in making instructional decisions based on their understandings of the students sitting right in front of them. When teachers know how to be present, to wander and wonder in the neighborhoods that they serve, to focus on the students' lived experiences and literacies, and to disrupt the reliance on packaged curriculum, perhaps then permeable read-alouds will be the norm in elementary classrooms.

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Appendices

Appendix A: School Permission to Conduct Research

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

IRB Number:	1808901366
Title of Study:	*Elementary Read-Alouds as Transformative Spaces*
Principal Investigator:	Jeannette Armstrong, Doctoral Student
Date:	August 29, 2019

As the/a principal in the [Name of School District] I am aware of the research procedures for the study. I give permission for the study to take place at [Name of Elementary School] School and for the researcher to have contact with students at this site (as described in the study information sheet).

____
Printed Name of School Principal

______________________________ ________________
Signature of School Principal Date

Page 1 of 1

Appendix B: Study Information Sheet

IRB STUDY # 1808901366

INDIANA UNIVERSITY STUDY INFORMATION SHEET FOR
Elementary Read-Alouds as Transformative Spaces

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines the factors that influence a teacher's selection of read-aloud literature and to identify how teachers are talking with students about read-alouds. You were selected as a possible subject because you are a teacher in the lower elementary or early childhood grades. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is being conducted by Jeannette Armstrong, doctoral student at the Indiana University, Bloomington in the department of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education. This study is not funded by any grants or sponsors.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to reveal the ways that read-aloud literature and subsequent discussion are being used in the classroom. This information could inform curricular changes at the undergraduate and graduate levels of teacher preparation programs. In addition, it could inform teacher professional development at the district and university level.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:

If you agree to be in the study, I will observe your classroom during regularly-occurring reading activities during the coming school year, taking notes while visiting during daily literacy periods up to three times per semester. During the observation, I will take notes and audio-record during times when teachers read books aloud to the class, including any class discussions that follow the read-alouds. I may take photographs of classroom books and other materials in the classroom. Additionally, I will audio-record an interview with you to talk about book selection and other read-aloud practices for about 30 minutes at a time convenient to you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

While taking part in the study, the risks are minimal. When participating in the observations or interviews, you can tell the researcher that you prefer not to continue to, not to answer a particular question, or that you are uncomfortable responding.

The risks of participating in this research could include being uncomfortable responding to interview questions or having voice recorded during read-aloud sessions.

There is also a risk of loss of confidentiality.

You are not expected to benefit from participating in this research.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published and in databases in which results may be stored. I will be the only individual who has access to any recorded data or photographs. The recordings and other details will be immediately transferred to a password protected computer and stored in a password protected drive. All recordings and other details will be destroyed within 2-years of the date obtained.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Indiana University

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Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP).

PAYMENT

You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study, contact the researcher, Jeannette Armstrong at [phone number]

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information, or offer input, contact the IU Human Subjects Office at (317) 278-3458 or [for Indianapolis] or (812) 856-4242 [for Bloomington] or (800) 696-2949.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with your school district or community.

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Indiana University Assent to Participate in Research
Elementary Read-Alouds as Transformative Spaces

We are doing a research study. A research study is a special way to learn about something. We are doing this research study because we are trying to find out more about **how teachers use read-alouds in their classrooms and the ways that professional learning can influence these.** We would like to ask you to be in this research study.

Why am I being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this research study because **you are an early childhood teacher who read aloud to their students on a regular basis**

What will happen during this research study?

We want to tell you about some things that might happen if you are in the study. This study will take place at **[your elementary school, in your classroom]**. We think it will last for **eight weeks (8 weeks).**

If you want to be in this study, here are the things that we will ask you to do. **I will observe you reading aloud to your students on two separate occasions. You will participate in collaboratively designed on-the-job professional learning events for the duration of ½ day, and you will participate in two interviews, each expected to last about 30 minutes.**

Are there any bad things that might happen during the research study?

Sometimes bad things happen to people who are in research studies. These bad things are called "risks." The risks of being in this study might be **a loss of confidentiality**

Not all of these things may happen to you. None of them may happen. Things may happen that the doctors (**or researchers)** don't know about yet. If they do, we will make sure that you get help to deal with anything bad that might happen.

Are there any good things that might happen during the research study?

Sometimes good things happen to people who are in research studies. These good things are called "benefits." The benefits of being in this study might be **learning new approaches to teaching and/or reading aloud to students.**

We don't know for sure if you will have any benefits. **If applicable:** We hope to learn something that will help other people someday.

Will I get money or payment for being in this research study?

You will not get any money for being in this research study.

Who can I ask if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about this study, you can ask **the researcher, Jeannette Armstrong at** .
[redacted] ave any questions that you didn't think of now, you can ask later. For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints, or concerns about a research study or to obtain information, or offer input, contact the IU Human Subjects Office at (317) 278-3458 or [for Indianapolis] or 812-856-4242 [for Bloomington] or 800-696-2949.

What if I don't want to be in the study?

If you don't want to be in this study, you don't have to. It's up to you. If you say you want to be in it and then change your mind, that's OK. All you have to do is tell us that you don't want to be in it anymore. No one will be mad at you or upset with you if you don't want to be in it.

My choice:

If I write my name on the line below, it means that I agree to be in this research study.

______________________________ ________________
Subject's signature Date

____
Subject's printed name

______________________________ ________________
Signature of person obtaining assent Date

____
Name of person obtaining assent

Appendix D: Individual Interview Protocol

Research Protocol: Informal Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews with Participants

Question 1

What specifically influences your decisions to choose a particular read-aloud book? Start from the time that you first begin consideration of the book; describe your thoughts and actions when considering a read-aloud book. Don't be afraid of providing too much detail or information. I am interested in everything that you have to say.

Covert categories:

Are considerations related to: a particular genre, unit theme or social issue; components of reading (e.g., phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension); literary elements (e.g., characters, setting, plot); curriculum requirements; social or societal issue, award winning (e.g., Caldecott, Newberry, etc.); ease of access; illustrations; interest of students, entertainment value?

Possible follow-up questions:

a. You mentioned that you choose books that are _____ to your students. Tell me more about books that are _____ to students.

b. You talked about curriculum requirements; please expand upon that?

c. You stated that teachers at each grade level are required ________. Tell me more about that.

d. When you say that you read '_____' to your students, how do you define '_______'?

Question 2

Pretend that you have been asked to lead a staff development session on selecting read-aloud books. What information would you include in the session? Tell me everything that you would include; try to leave nothing out. Don't be afraid of providing too much detail; I am interested in

learning about every consideration.

Covert categories:

Does the information relate to: a particular genre, unit theme or social issue; components of reading (e.g., phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension); literary elements (e.g., characters, setting, plot); curriculum requirements; award winning (e.g., Caldecott, Newberry, etc.); disciplinary literacy; illustrations; ease of access; student interest, entertainment value; frequency of read-alouds; follow up activities?

Possible follow-up questions:

a. You stated that you would encourage teachers to _________. Tell me more about _______.

b. You suggested reading books that _______. Describe _________.

c. You discussed _______. Please tell me more about that.

Question 3

Tell me about the understandings that you hope your students will come away from your read-alouds with. Describe what you hope will “stick” with your students after the read-aloud is over. Don’t be afraid of sharing too much. I am interested in all that you have to say.

Covert categories:

Does the information relate to: behaviors, character traits (e.g., morality, hard-working, never give up, friendly, etc.); gender; sports; religion; culture; skin color; physical disabilities; socio-economic status; social issues; culturally responsive month; thematic knowledge?

Possible follow-up questions:

a. You mentioned that you hope your students will walk away from read-alouds remembering_____Please tell me more about this.

b. How do you know (what will indicate) if the message of _____ will stick with your students

after the read-aloud? Tell me about this?

c. Tell me what you hope, overall, that your students will remember from read-alouds?

d. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about this?

Question 4

Tell me about the literacies that your students bring to class. Don't be afraid of sharing too much. I am interested in all that you have to say.

Covert categories:

Does the information relate to: the notion that children are already literate, multiple literacies, or specific literacies?

Possible follow-up questions:

a. You mentioned that you students are literate in the following ways _____ . Please tell me more about that?
b. How did you know that your students were literate in _____ ?
c. Describe how a student who is literate in _____ looks and acts like.

Question 5

When you think of the neighborhood that surrounds your school, what comes to mind specific to literacy? Does this influence your approach to read-alouds? Don't be afraid of sharing too much. I am interested in all that you have to say.

Covert categories:

Does the information relate to: specific literacies, multiple literacies, literacies that are community specific or generalized, are social or cultural literacies mentioned?

Possible follow-up questions:

a. You mention that _____ is a form of literacy in the surrounding neighborhood. Please tell me more about that.
b. Tell me more about how you know that _____ literacies exist in the surrounding neighborhoods.
c. When you stated that _____. Expand on that notion, please.

Question 6

Is there anything else that you would like to share with me or any questions that you would like to readdress or expand upon? Remember, I am interested in all that you have to say.

Question 7

OPTIONAL: What topics or issues do you tend to shy-away from when reading aloud to your students? Why do you think this is? I am interested in everything that you have to say. Don’t be afraid of providing too much information or too much detail.

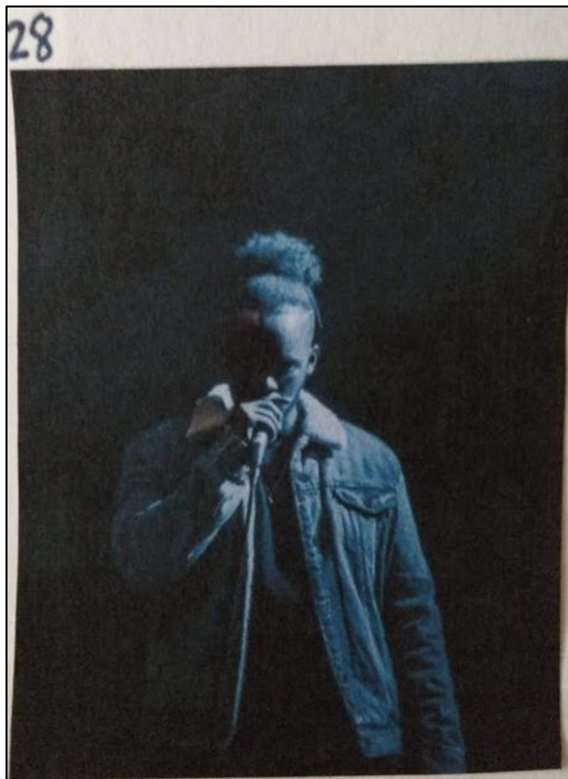
Appendix E: Teachers' Verbal Responses to Picture Cards

The following samples show how teachers' responses and reactions to the images on photo cards were jotted down on the back of each card.

Sample 1

Kenslie art gender music perform
art, graffiti, guitar, fenced off, microphone, maybe gender neutral clothes
Oliver
some type of gathering or rally - maybe a concert or music fest
perform music action/protest

Sample 2



Kenslie performance music
Singing or rapping - maybe outside after dark like at an event or fair - maybe a concert
Oliver
He could be singing, rapping, preaching
performance music

Appendix F: Books Considered While Planning for Permeable Read-Alouds

Arkolaki, E. (2020). *Where am I from?* www.faraxapublishing.com

Beyers, G. (2018). *I am enough.* New York, NY: Harper Collings

Britt, P. (2017). *Why am I me?* New York, NY: Scholastic

Brown, M. (2013). *Tito Puente, Mambo King*. New York, NY: HarperColins Espanol

Child, B. (2018). *Bowwow Powwow*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press

Copeland, M. (2014). *Firebird.* New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers

Curtis, J. L. & Cornell, L. (2018). *Me, myself, and I: A cautionary tale.* New York, NY: Feiwel & Friends

Engle, M. & Lopez, R. (2015). *Drum dream girl: How one girl's courage changed music.* Boston, MA: HMH Books for Young Readers.

Khan, H. (2019). *Under my hijab.* New York, NY: Lee and Low Books, Inc.

Mechin, S. (2015). *Goodnight, selfie.* Boston, MA: Candlewick Press

Reich, S. (2005). *Jose! Born to dance: The story of Jose Limon.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster

Spires, A. (2014). *The most magnificant thing.* Toronto, Canada: Kids Can Press

Steptoe, J. (2016). *Radiant child: The story of young artist Jean-Michel Basquiat.* New York: NY: Little, Brown, and Company

Venezia, M. (2001). *Jacob Lawrence (Getting to know the world's greatest artists).* Chicago, IL: Children's Pres.

Williams, M. (2019). *Because.* New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children

Yamada, K. (2014). *What do you do with an idea?* Seattle, WA: Compendium, Inc.

Appendix G: Data Analysis Sheet for Planning Permeable Read-Alouds

Data Analysis Sheet **Planning Permeable Read-alouds**		
***Open doors to familiar and unknown worlds (text selection)**	Kenslie: *What does it mean to be an American?* PB – I	Oliver: *Stella Diaz has something to say*. Chapter 6 C – F
Moving beyond the written word	Reading a map; cheering for others; reading; coloring; singing; dancing; photography; talking with others; imaginative play; computer programming.	Speaking Spanish and English; having a family that speaks only Spanish; having an accent.
Knowing students' life- worlds	"Lots of talk on TV and in the community about Americans, closing borders, Muslim bans, family separation, deportation, etc. It is important to let students know that being an American is more than residency."	"Many students' parents speak their native language or speak English with an accent. Several students receive EL services – and I want them to know that it is OK. Also lots of families are non-traditional, and this book includes that as well."
Fill classrooms with student talk	Used sticky notes to plan for: 1 open-ended class discussion; 3 turn-and-talks; 2 attempts to make thinking visible	Used sticky notes to plan for: 2 turn-and-talks; 2 attempts to make thinking visible
Focus on their realities	We are all American: create paper flags showing how we are American. Place photos and words on the flag that represent us. No parameters – open ended.	Talk about how to be accepting to those entering our groups – practice ways to welcome people into our groups. Practice ways to enter into new groups.

Appendix H: Picture Cards

The following 33 picture cards were used during the professional learning phase of this study.

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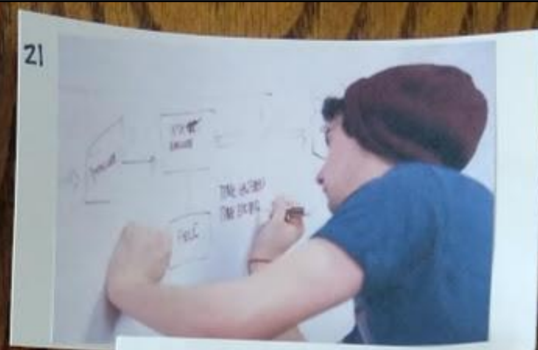
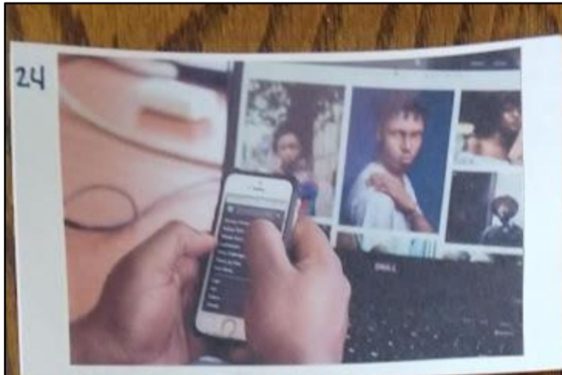

21

19
STOP OFFSHORING
KEEP JOBS HERE
WORKER CHAMPION

22

20

23


24

27

25

28

26
Not your
Mascot

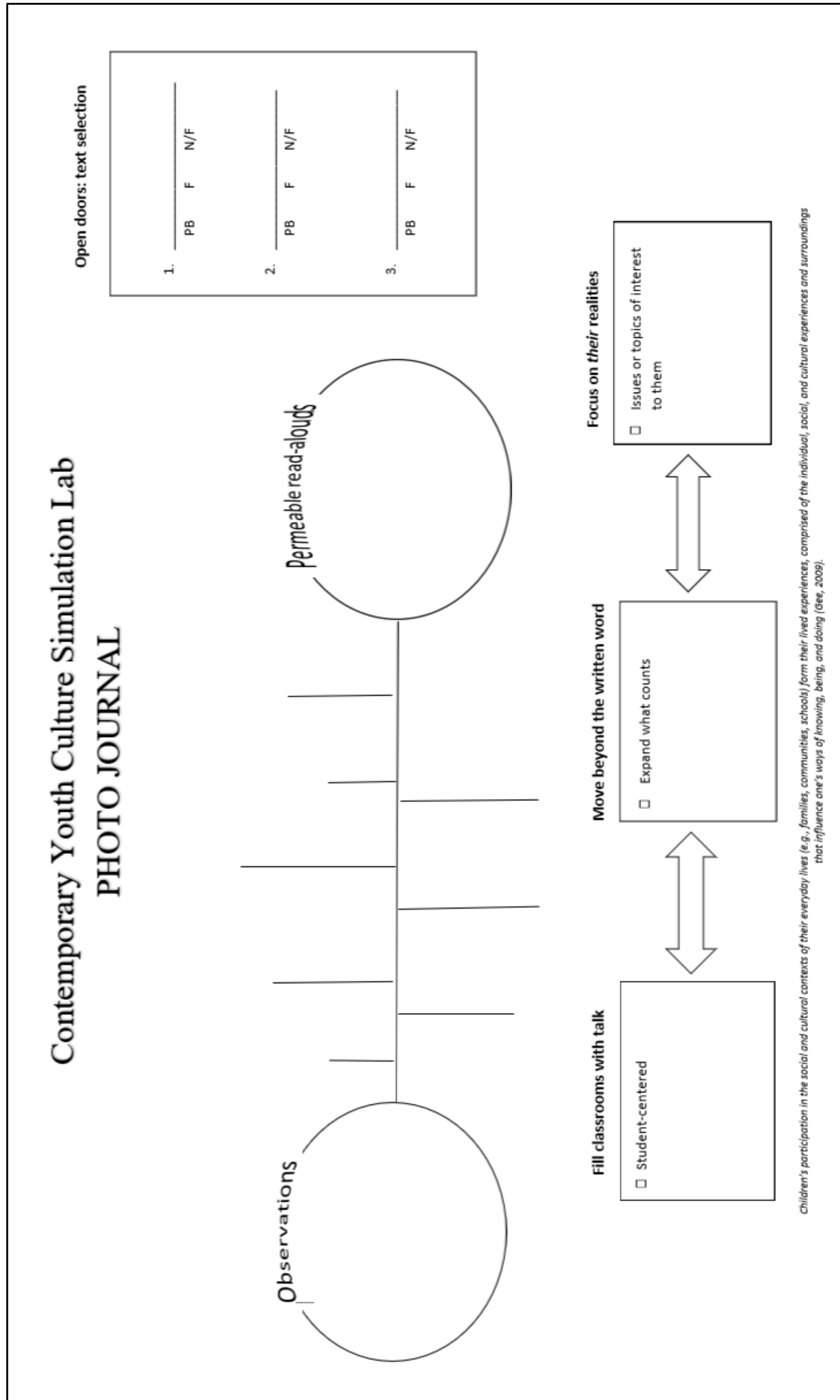
29
DRUG STORE
Coca-Cola
RPM
SHELL MOTOR OIL
CANADA DRY

Free stock photos retrieved from Pexels: https://www.pexels.com/

Appendix I: Photo Journal Cover

Kenslie and Oliver's Photo journals.

Appendix J: Photo Journal Template



Appendix K: IRB Protocol

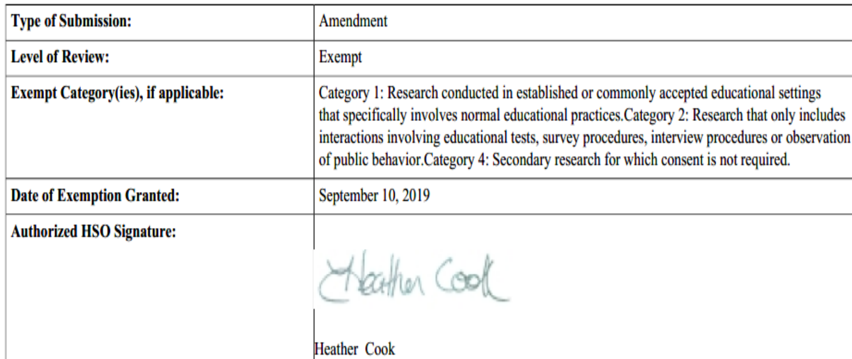
INDIANA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH
Office of Research Compliance

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION GRANTED

DATE:	September 10, 2019
TO:	Karen Wohlwend, Principal Investigator EDUCATION Jeannette Armstrong UNIVERSITY LEVEL
FROM:	Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) Office of Research Compliance – Indiana University
RE:	Protocol #: 1808901366A001 Protocol Type: Exempt Protocol Title: ELEMENTARY READ-ALOUDS AS TRANSFORMATIVE SPACES Funding Source: None

In accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b) and/or IU HRPP Policy, the above-referenced protocol is granted exemption. Exemption of this submission is based on your agreement to abide by the policies and procedures of the Indiana University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) and does not replace any other approvals that may be required. Relevant HRPP policies and procedures governing Human Subject Research can be found at: https://research.iu.edu/compliance/human-subjects/guidance/index.html.

Submission and Review Information:



Type of Submission:	Amendment
Level of Review:	Exempt
Exempt Category(ies), if applicable:	Category 1: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings that specifically involves normal educational practices.Category 2: Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.Category 4: Secondary research for which consent is not required.
Date of Exemption Granted:	September 10, 2019
Authorized HSO Signature:	Heather Cook

Regulatory Determinations:

- There are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data.

Documents Approved with this Submission (for Amendments and Renewals, documents appearing in bold were either added or replaced with the submission):

Attachment Type - Document Version #
Other - Letters of support from school officials that I wish to visit. To be completed by school administrators prior to my first visit to the classroom(s) **Other - School Permission to Conduct Research (PV)** **Other - School Permission to Conduct Research - VK**

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Other - Interview Questions **Recruitment Materials - Recruitment materials for the teachers** **Study Information Sheet - Study information sheet that will be sent home with the children in advance of my visit(s)** **Study Information Sheet - SIS**

NOTE: If you submitted and/or are required to provide subjects with an informed consent document, please ensure you are using the most recent version of the document to consent subjects.

The following key personnel are approved to participate in the above titled research activities:

Investigator Name	**Role**	**Training**
Karen Wohlwend	Principal Investigator	Yes
Jeannette Armstrong	Co-PI Student/Fellow/Resident	Yes

Organizations:

Organization
Indiana University

You should retain a copy of this letter and all associated approved study documents for your records. Please refer to the assigned study number and exact study title in future correspondence with our office. Additional information is available on our website at https://research.iu.edu/compliance/human-subjects/guidance/index.html.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact the HSO via email at irb@iu.edu or via phone at (317)274-8289.

Jeannette E. Armstrong
Curriculum Vitae

Education

Ed.D. Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. Graduation: July 31, 2020.
Literacy, Culture, and Language Education; Learning Sciences minor.
Dissertation: *Opening Elementary Curriculum Through Permeable Read-Alouds.*
Dissertation chair, Dr. Karen Wohlwend

MAE. Marian University, Fond du Lac, WI. 2011
Education; Educational/Instructional Technology; Online Instruction minor

Post-Baccalaureate Teaching License, California State University, Fullerton. 2003
Multiple subject K-12 teacher licensing program with Cross-Cultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) certification

B.A. California Baptist University, Magna *cum laude.* 2002
Liberal Studies; Social Science/Latin American Studies minor

A.A.S. Lehigh Carbon College, Schnecksville, PA. 1999
Early Childhood Education/Early Childhood Special Education