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Struggling adolescent readers: A case study of teacher beliefs and practices using the How People Learn framework

Laura Katherine Thomas Hood

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Struggling adolescent readers: A case study of teacher beliefs and practices using the How

People Learn framework

By

Laura Katherine Thomas Hood

Approved by:

Devon G. Brenner (Co-Major Professor)
Stephanie M. Lemley (Co-Major Professor)
Anastasia D. Elder
Kathleen M. Alley
Rebecca R. Robichaux-Davis (Graduate Coordinator)
Richard L. Blackbourn (Dean, College of Education)

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Name: Laura Katherine Thomas Hood

Date of Degree: August 6, 2020

Institution: Mississippi State University

Major Field: Curriculum Instruction and Special Education

Major Professors: Devon G. Brenner and Stephanie M. Lemley

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In this qualitative study, I explored teacher beliefs and practices about struggling adolescent readers. I chose to study 3 middle school 7th- and 8th-grade English teachers based on purposeful and convenience sampling through principal recommendation. My data consisted of interviews, observations, and documents to understand what teachers believe about struggling adolescent readers and what teachers of struggling middle school students do during instruction. I created the interviews and observation protocols and analyzed the data using the How People Learn Framework (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; National Research Council, 2000). Findings suggest (1) negative extrinsic motivation was used to boost student assessment performance, (2) the lack of foundational reading skills can cause problems through adolescence, (3) discussion strategies were used to assist struggling adolescent readers, (4) teachers had strong opinions about data walls, and (5) positive relationships with and between students were beneficial. These findings suggest implications for teachers and school leaders.

Keywords: struggling readers, adolescents, How People Learn Theory, practices, beliefs

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother. Your love, support, and courage carried me through the majority of this process. Your sweet memory and your desire for me to be Dr. Thomas Hood brought me to the end. You never stopped believing in me and were my constant source of encouragement. I hope one day I will be half the mother to Maddie Grace that you were to me.

I dedicate this dissertation to Madeline Grace, my most extraordinary gift from God. You are our miracle. You amaze me every single day with your strength and persistence. No matter what obstacles cross your path, you persevere. I am so proud to be your mom. You are brave, you are strong, and you are sassy. You took the broken pieces of my heart and put them back together. Every hug, giggle, and pout makes me thankful just to know you. I look forward to watching you grow and seeing the fantastic things you will accomplish. God has great big plans for you, my sweet girl.

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Jeremy. You have stood by my side through every step of this journey. You are my rock. I do not deserve you or this wonderful life that we have with our sweet daughter. Thank you for always pumping me full of confidence and teaching me to believe in myself. Thank you for carrying the load so I could build my "race car" too.

I dedicate this dissertation to my Daddy. You are the reason I do what I do every day. You inspire me to want to learn more.

I dedicate this dissertation to my entire family. Thank you for supporting me every step of the way. You never gave up on me, and you are the reason I made it. Now let's celebrate! Love you…mean it!

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Dr. Alley, you are such a positive force. Thank you for believing in me from the very first day we met. We have come full circle. It has definitely been a roller coaster of emotions

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just like my graduate school interview was so many years ago. Thank you for helping me make

connections and for asking thought-provoking questions. Thank you for all your encouragement

and for showing me that a librarian can still talk about literacy.

Dr. Elder, you scare me, but in a best way. Thank you for keeping me on my toes and

intimidating the fire out of me. You made me a better writer. You forced me to think about why

I made certain choices. Why these choices worked for my study and were not just the way

things were done in qualitative research.

To Keri, I will never forget the afternoon you burst through my classroom door to tell me

we needed to go back to school. I can still hear you stomping down the hall in those loud heels

of yours. It has been a whirlwind of a journey, but I could not imagine it with anyone else. This

process would have broken me had you not been there to pick up the pieces each time. Just don't

forget, only one of us can cry at a time.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When I was a little girl, my father and I learned to read together. Looking back, I thought it was fun reading the small *Hooked on Phonics* books with him. We sounded out words and practiced reading pages. Somewhere along the way, I progressed, and he did not. As a child, I did not realize that my father never received a complete education. For most of his childhood, his speech was difficult to understand. He was bullied and treated poorly by both children and adults. Believing he was not intelligent enough to do well in school, my father decided to leave school to help with the family business. As long as I can remember, my father always stressed to me the importance of getting an education. Now, as I hear him trying to read equipment manuals or calculate sales tickets, I am reminded of his most important life lesson—never stop learning.

Seeing my father struggle inspired me to help others. During my first few years as a middle school teacher, I developed a passion for working with challenging students. Challenge track was a program created by my school district to provide smaller learning environments in English and mathematics for students who had learning and behavioral challenges. These students had failed multiple times and struggled with basic reading and mathematics skills. They also exhibited disruptive behavior. Working with students in challenge track was one of the most beneficial experiences of my life. I grew so much as I learned to work with students who did not believe in themselves.

These challenging students became a symbol of my father to me. I found satisfaction and enjoyment in reaching those students who had been shoved along, passed over, and neglected by other teachers. The thugs, the bullies, the discipline problems, and the "bad" kids pulled at my heartstrings. Helping them to succeed and find confidence became personal to me. I strived to build up their confidence by helping them find success in my classroom. The majority of my challenging students had been told they were not good enough or smart enough, and they believed it. They wanted to learn, succeed, and achieve. They just did not know how to be the "bad boy" and still be successful in school. When they came to me in the challenge track setting, they knew they were at their final destination. Their success in my room helped determine their future academic track—regular, vocational, or General Equivalency Diploma. I wanted to be the teacher who made a difference in their lives. I wanted to help them to make better choices; choices that my father was never given because of family needs and his own lack of confidence and success in school. I wanted them to feel successful in school and life, but I just needed to know how to help them.

During my second year of teaching, I decided to go back to college to pursue my Master's degree in Elementary Education. I was ready to learn more about adolescents and how to help them find success. I had spent most of my undergraduate experience focusing on adolescent's characteristics and needs, but I still needed to know more. Due to my work with challenge track students, I began researching the impact of tracking on students. I used the knowledge I gained to provide a better learning environment for my students.

After five years of teaching challenge track, I knew it was time to learn more by pursuing my doctorate in literacy. I still wanted to learn more about how to help my struggling adolescent readers achieve success in the classroom. I knew how to make them excited about reading, but I

still needed to know more about making them successful readers. I have always wondered what practices allowed my challenge track students to feel and be most successful, and so I decided that I needed to go back to the beginning to get the answers—teacher education. I hoped to find out—Did my fresh novice attitude, teaching strategies, supportive mentor, and my traditional elementary background give me the edge? Did I have certain beliefs about struggling readers because of my experience with my father? What reading strategies did my challenge track students benefit from the most?

These experiences and questions led me to where I am today and to my dissertation. This dissertation focuses on the teachers of struggling adolescent readers. My desire is to understand what beliefs teachers hold about struggling adolescent readers and what instructional strategies they use to impact student learning. With so much emphasis placed on student academic success through standardized testing as well as college and career readiness, and so many initiatives geared toward early literacy and the promotion of literacy behaviors, we must begin to understand the complexity of teacher sentiments toward struggling adolescent readers in literacy and the instructional strategies they use to enhance learning.

This introduction begins with background information about struggling readers in general. The statement of the problem shows the number of students failing to meet proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) tests. I then discuss the intent of the study, the research questions, and the nature of the study. The significance explains the compounded problem of the lack of focus on struggling adolescent readers and their vulnerability. Finally, I present a theoretical framework based on the How People Learn (HPL) framework, followed by limitations and delimitations.

Struggling Readers

Struggling readers are students who read below grade level and do not have a learning disability (Ruddell & Shearer, 2002, as cited in Hall, 2010). These students have fallen behind their peers and have been unable to catch up perhaps because most struggling readers lack the foundational reading skills and strategies, taught in elementary school (Allington, 2012). Due to their lack of reading skills and strategies, struggling readers experience failure regularly (Hall, 2009). While struggling readers generally already know what counts as reading, if they have what it takes, and what their problems are (Hall et al., 2011), they still fall further behind.

Struggling readers are generally defined by what they cannot do, while good readers are defined by what they can (Hall, 2010; Hall et al., 2011). For instance, struggling readers are depicted as individuals who have trouble with texts, while good readers are shown as having skills that improve their learning and that of their classmates. Teachers send messages about what it means to be a good reader and a struggling reader. Students use teacher definitions for struggling reader and good reader to determine where they fit on the spectrum and draw conclusions about their own abilities. (Hall, 2010; Hall et al., 2011). Struggling readers develop negative self-perceptions and may view themselves as incompetent based on their experiences in the classroom, which are compounded by teacher messages (Hall, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) analyzes data from the NAEP and publishes it in the Nation's Report Card for the nation as well as each state and territory (NCES, 2019). Based on the most recent administration of the NAEP, a significant share of United States students are struggling adolescent readers (NCES, 2019). The majority of students score

basic or below basic, while very few reach the proficient and advanced categories. Score patterns have continued to remain consistent regardless of socioeconomic status, region, or race.

The Nation's Report Card results are mentioned as follows and are the results from 2019, unless otherwise indicated. Nationally, roughly 30% of eighth-grade students in the nation are performing at or above proficiency. The lowest performers in the nation have declined since the last reading assessment in 2017 and, in comparison to 1992, have made no substantial gains. The number of eighth graders scoring proficient or above nationally was lower in 10 states and no different in the other 42 locations. The nation's eighth grade reading performance trends show no major difference from 2017.

In 2019, eighth-grade Mississippi students scored 256 on the reading assessment, lower than the nation's average at 262. This was an improvement from 2017 at nine points below, and both 2013 and 2015 at 12 points below. Mississippi has performed below the national average in reading since 1998. Roughly 60 to 67% of Mississippi students performed at or above basic since 1998 on the reading assessment, while approximately 18 to 25% performed proficient or advanced in the same time frame. Since 1998 less than two percent of eighth-grade students scored advanced in reading for Mississippi. Only Alaska, New Mexico, and the District of Columbia had significantly lower eighth-grade reading scores than Mississippi in 2019. Eleven states, including Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas, performed at the same or similar level on the eighth-grade reading assessment as Mississippi in 2019. Other southern states like Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida performed about six points higher than Mississippi on the eighth-grade reading assessment in 2019.

In terms of the achievement gap between White students and students of color, there was roughly a 24% difference between White and Black students on the eighth-grade reading

assessment in Mississippi, with scores being 268 and 244, respectively. For the rest of the nation, the same racial disparity existed with a difference of 20 to 30 points between White and Black students. There was a 10% difference between White and Hispanic students on the eighth-grade reading assessment in Mississippi in 2019, with a 10 to 30% difference nationwide. There was a 25% difference between students who were eligible and not eligible for free or reduced lunch on eighth-grade reading scores in Mississippi, which matches the rest of the nation. In terms of gender, female students performed 8 to 17% higher than their male peers in every state.

In Mississippi, third-grade students must take and pass the Reading Summative Assessment before moving to fourth grade (Mississippi Department of Education [MDE], 2019c). In 2015 and 2016, 14.8% and 13% of third graders, respectively, failed to pass the reading gateway proficiency test (MDE, 2017b). In 2017 and 2018, 8% and almost 7% of third graders, respectively, failed to pass the reading gateway proficiency test (MDE, 2019c). In 2019, 25.5% of third graders failed to pass the reading gateway proficiency test due to the passing score being increased (MDE, 2019c). In the middle grades, many students failed to achieve proficiency as measured on the state tests during this same time frame. Performance on the MAAP test was not significantly better. Twenty-three percent of seventh graders performed at the minimal and basic proficiency levels on the MAAP test, while approximately 20% of eighth graders performed in minimal and basic proficiency levels (MDE, 2017a). This percentage does not seem terrible until the number of students the percentage represents is considered. A little over eight thousand seventh graders and seven thousand eighth graders performed in the minimal and basic range on the MAAP test out of approximately 35,000 seventh graders and 34,000 eighth graders (MDE, 2019a). The achievement gap data analysis showed all students and all grade levels tested in reading in 2018 and 2019 (MDE, 2019b). The gap between White and

Black students increased by 1%, and the gap between White and Hispanic students increased by 1% from 2018 to 2019. The gap between economically disadvantaged students and those who were not economically disadvantaged went down 0.8% between 2018 and 2019. The difference in gender was 0.1%. Therefore not much has changed in terms of drastically decreasing the achievement gaps that exist between Mississippi students.

Reading achievement is a particular challenge in rural areas, like the area where I live and work. In a report entitled *Out of the Loop*, compiled for the National School Boards Association's Center for Public Education, Lavelly (2018) presented relevant information about schools, specifically students, poverty, and educational opportunities in rural locales. Policymakers often overlook rural students' needs due to more focus on suburban and urban needs, where the majority of students are located (Lavalley, 2018). Initiatives and policies are rarely geared specifically toward them and their needs. Rural students face inequalities due to poverty, limited educational access, lack of reading skills, and limited access to college. According to Lavalley (2018):

> Poverty is often associated with urban areas, but poverty in rural America actually exists at higher rates, is felt at deeper levels, and is more persistent than in metropolitan areas.… It is also experienced as deep poverty more frequently than in urban areas. Deep poverty, a situation in which a child's family income falls below half of the poverty line, indicates that a family is experiencing severe financial difficulty…. Persistent poverty is an overwhelmingly Southern problem: almost 84% of counties in persistent poverty are located in the South. (p. 4)

Rural poverty impacts a large number of students, both Black and White (Lavelly, 2018). In addition to high poverty rates, rural students have less access to advanced coursework due to a

lack of teachers and the increased amounts of staff training necessary for Advanced Placement classes (Lavalley, 2018). Advanced Placement classes require training and staffing that many small rural schools are not able to provide. In terms of graduation and college aspirations, rural students are more likely to graduate than their urban and suburban peers; however, they are less likely to attend college due to poverty, finances, academic barriers, or college distance from home (Lavelley, 2018). According to Lavalley (2018):

> Rural students overall are significantly less likely to hold a college degree than students in metropolitan areas…. Combined with the factors of persistent poverty and large physical distances, these specific rural problems limit the academic achievement and educational attainment of rural students compared to their metropolitan peers. (p. 14)

In terms of reading ability, rural students start school with fewer reading skills compared to their urban and suburban peers. Lavalley (2018) stated, "This gap continues through elementary and middle school in both mathematics and reading and is widest between rural and suburban white students" (p. 8).

These statistics do not even begin to address the widening achievement gap for struggling adolescent readers who have continued to struggle since elementary school (Allington, 2012). Many students struggle to read at a level of proficiency. Too many adolescents struggle to read, and it may be that the problem lies with teacher beliefs and subsequent decision-making. The present study may lead to a better understanding of teacher beliefs and instructional strategies that will benefit struggling adolescent readers.

Purpose of the Study

There were two purposes for this research. One purpose was to understand teacher beliefs about working with adolescent struggling readers. The second purpose of the study was

to explore what teachers do in the classroom to impact adolescent struggling readers' success. A clear understanding of teacher beliefs about struggling readers and adolescents in general, as well as understanding of the practices they select to use in their classrooms, may be helpful for teachers as they seek to help all students succeed.

Research Questions

For this particular study, I had two questions driving my research:

1) What do middle school teachers believe about struggling adolescent readers?

2) What do middle school teachers of struggling adolescent readers do during instruction?

Overview of Methodology

I used a qualitative case study approach (Merriam, 1998; Thomas, 2003; Yin 2013) to determine what teachers believe about struggling adolescent readers and what teachers do during literacy instruction. I used a purposeful and convenient sample of seventh and eighth grade English teachers based on principal recommendation and teachers' willingness to participate in the study (Merriam, 1998). These participants were from one public school district in the northeastern region of a southern state.

I collected data in the form of semi-structured interviews, observations, and documents of three middle school English teachers (Merriam, 1998). I coded and analyzed themes found in and across cases using descriptive coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I used member checking and peer review to help triangulate data (Merriam, 1998). I used the HPL framework (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000) as the basis for development of the interview protocols and an observation guide as well to guide my data analysis.

Significance of the Study

Student performance is at the center of the current wave of policies and legislation aimed at improving schools. There are initiatives to promote teacher attention to the bottom 25% of students, provide extra practice to and reteach those who do not understand, and extend the learning of advanced students. Currently, the focus of Mississippi's educational system has been reading with the emphasis on kindergarten readiness tests and third grade reading gateway tests (Center for Public Education, 2015).

Somehow the needs of students with a high degree of vulnerability to risk factors such as poverty, home life, and outside influences have been ignored in the push to promote student performance (Morales, 2010). There are widening gaps between low-income and middle-income students, which can cause struggling adolescent readers to fall further behind academically due to their parents' low incomes and education levels (Allington, 2002). Presently, there is a multitude of research about best practices for struggling readers (e.g., Allington, 2002, 2009, 2012; Dennis, 2008, 2009, 2012; Hall, 2006, 2010); however, there is a disconnect between what this research shows and what teachers actually do in the classroom. Struggling adolescent readers had trouble reading in their past school experiences and they continue to struggle to read as older students. Older struggling readers are reading drastically fewer words than their more proficient peers because of factors such as lack of motivation, lack of confidence, reading pull-out programs, and texts that are too difficult (Allington, 2012).

If struggling adolescent readers come from a background with low income or limited parental education, this creates even more problems. Tragically, the problem of struggling adolescent readers has not been rectified and remains an issue today. Therefore, understanding what beliefs teachers have about struggling adolescent readers, as well as the instructional

strategies they use, may lead to improvement in the performance of struggling adolescent readers.

Next, I present a preliminary discussion of the theoretical framework used in this study. The theoretical framework helped guide my understanding as I sought to determine what middle school teachers believe about the struggling adolescent readers in their classrooms.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The HPL framework, discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, consists of four overlapping components: learner-, knowledge-, assessment-, and community-centered instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005; National Research Council [NRC], 2000). The learner-centered component suggests teachers consider what students bring with them to the classroom. In terms of knowledge-centered instructional practices, teachers must consider the curriculum, curriculum standards, and the meaning of mastery. The assessment-centered component asks teachers to consider both formative and summative assessments and how they drive instruction and inform students. Finally, the community-centered component asks teachers to incorporate their knowledge of the classroom, school, and outside community as they make decisions. The NRC (2000) recommends a balanced approach that integrates all four components. For instance, assessment generally drives instruction. Knowledge of the learners and the content, as well as the classroom, school, and community, also impacts instructional decisions. Thus, each component of the HPL framework works together and complements the other components. Next, I address the limitations of this study.

Limitations

Despite every effort selecting a framework, methodology, and analysis methods that complemented this study of teacher beliefs and practices regarding struggling adolescent readers,

several limitations may exist and should be addressed. Social desirability could be a limitation of this study due to the preferences of teachers responding to questions regarding their beliefs and perceptions. Teachers may have decided to filter their responses to make them more acceptable or more aligned to what they perceived the researcher to desire. The small sample size and the unequal distribution of participants across gender also limited the study. Limiting the study to include only seventh and eighth-grade teachers created a smaller number of potential participants. The teachers in this study were female. In future studies, it could be beneficial to include the perceptions of male teachers as well as other school personnel such as the counselor, principal, and other teachers. Future studies on this topic could also be extended to include other subject areas or grade levels. There was a final limitation of this study regarding context and participants. All three participants held jobs within the same rural school district in the southeast. Future studies may want to look across districts, states, and regions.

Delimitations

This study also has delimitations based on my choices. I chose to study English teachers for the large amounts of text read within their classes and because of my focus on literacy and adolescence. I could have chosen all subject-area teachers; however, I felt teachers of other subjects might not have the specific knowledge I sought regarding literacy. I could have chosen teachers of younger students or older students; however, I felt middle school students were on the verge of finalizing their beliefs about school and their reading ability. Also, middle school is a time of "storm and stress" for adolescents; thus, they are likely to face various risk factors that could hinder their performance (Arnett, 1999). I could have chosen to interview students, parents, or counselors; however, I wanted to know what knowledge middle school teachers have about struggling adolescent readers. This study occurred in the rural South. Thus, this study is

narrow in focus. Middle school English teachers within a rural Southern school were interviewed and observed in order to understand teacher beliefs about struggling adolescent readers and opinions of best practices for these students.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms used throughout the study that have multiple definitions. In order to decrease confusion, these terms are defined here, and the given definitions are integrated throughout the study.

- *Adolescence:* Bean and Harper (2009) define adolescence as "a natural biological phenomenon, universal and predictable in its characteristics and onset, and all aspects of adolescent life, including the cognitive, social, and psychological aspects, are affected by it" (p. 39).

- *Adolescents:* Scales (2010) suggests "youth between the ages of 10 and 15 are characterized by their diversity as they move through the pubertal growth cycle at varying times and rates" (p. 53).

- *Assessment-centeredness:* Assessment-centeredness is a component of the HPL framework that focuses on "what kinds of evidence for learning students, teachers, parents, and others can use to see if effective learning is really occurring" (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 41).

- *Community-centeredness:* Community-centeredness is a component of the HPL framework that focuses on "what kinds of classroom, school, and school-community environments enhance learning" (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 41).

- *Knowledge-centeredness:* Knowledge-centeredness is a component of the HPL framework that focuses on "what should be taught, why it is important, and how this knowledge should be organized" (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 41).

- *Learner-centeredness:* Learner-centeredness is a component of the HPL framework that focuses on "who learns, how, and why" (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 41).

- *Struggling readers:* "[Students who] typically read one or more years below their current grade level but do not have an identified learning disability of any kind" (Ruddell & Shearer, 2002 as cited in Hall, 2010, p. 1793).

Organization of the Dissertation

In the following chapters, I present information relevant to the study. In chapter two, I review literature focusing on struggling adolescent readers and the HPL framework. I divide the literature into four sections: Learner, Knowledge, Assessment, and Community. I begin by defining adolescence and struggling adolescent readers. Then I discuss best practices and assessment practices. Finally, I address creating a learning environment conducive to learning. In Chapter Three, I discuss how I used a qualitative case study approach to determine what teachers believe about struggling adolescent readers and what happens in their classrooms. I interviewed, observed, and collected documents from three middle school English teachers. In this chapter, I describe the participants, context, methods, data collection, data analysis, validity, and reliability. Chapter Four summarizes my findings based on data analysis. Finally, I discuss my findings in Chapter Five. I also discuss my role in the process as well as implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As I conducted the literature review pertinent to my study, I used my research questions as a guide to help me examine the extant literature. The questions that directed my study are listed below.

1) What do middle school teachers believe about struggling adolescent readers?

2) What do middle school teachers of struggling adolescent readers do during instruction?

I structured my study around the HPL (NRC, 2000) theoretical framework. In this chapter, I begin with an overview of my theoretical framework and explain how this framework supports my study. Then, I present the relevant literature about struggling adolescent readers pertaining to each component of the framework: learner, knowledge, assessment, and community.

Theoretical Framework Review of the Literature

My study was framed by the HPL theoretical framework, which was developed by the NRC and consists of a balance of learner-, knowledge-, assessment-, and community-centered instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000). The three components of learner, knowledge, and assessment overlap with each other within the context of the community of learners, culture, and school. According to the framework, the learner

component is meant to be considered while thinking about the others. Additionally, effective teachers incorporate all four components in their classroom practice. I included the HPL diagram illustrating the interworking parts of the learner, knowledge, and assessment working inside the community component of the HPL framework, shown in Figure 1.
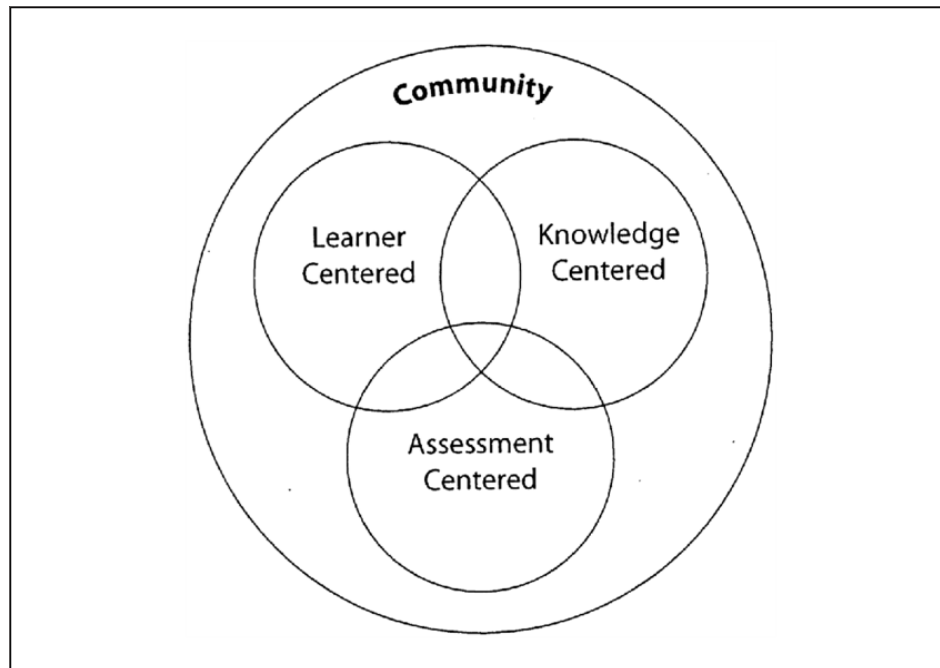
Figure 1. *The How People Learn Framework. Reprinted from Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005, p. 32).*

Learner-centered

The learner-centered component of the HPL Framework invites teachers to think about content in terms of who their current students are, how they learn, and why learning is important (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Teachers need to know their students' interests, backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses so they can match instruction to meet their needs. Teachers learn about their students by using

interest inventories and diagnostic testing. The NRC (2005) posits, "Teachers must pay close attention to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that learners bring into the classroom" (p. 23). Teachers should determine their students' prior knowledge as well as each student's strengths and weaknesses in order to guide their instructional planning. In addition to their prior knowledge, students also bring a wealth of information that helps or hinders their learning. For instance, each student brings with them preconceptions for each subject area, which could be inaccurate. Teachers should consider ways to address student misconceptions as well. Students bring their languages and cultural backgrounds into the classroom, which impacts instructional practices, activating background knowledge, and a student's behavior in the classroom.

Not only should teachers understand what their students already know and believe about intelligence, but they also should consider how their students learn to transfer knowledge and how to best plan instruction. Students benefit when teachers consider their students' ability to transfer knowledge and what that means for student learning and teacher instructional decision making. Teachers who monitor the progress of their students will be better prepared to create engaging instruction. In terms of instruction, teachers need to provide engaging, yet feasible assignments that provide a challenge yet do not discourage students from learning (NRC, 2000). Thus, the knowledge of student strengths, weaknesses, and interests helps teachers plan engaging instruction that is learner-centered.

The learner-centered component of the framework considers why learning is important. In the case of an English teacher, reading and learning reading skills are essential for students to function and read in today's society. Since students encounter text throughout their lives, teachers must consider ways to instill the belief that reading is vital. For example, reading is important in later life because students must read a manual and pass a written exam before

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receiving a driver's license. Thus, being able to read is an essential for membership in society since individuals without reading skills will most likely continue to struggle throughout their lives (St. Clair, 2010).

The learner-centered component focuses on who the students are, how they learn, and why learning is important. It is necessary to consider the learner component because teachers are more effective when they understand what the student brings to the learning process.

Knowledge-centered

The knowledge-centered component of the HPL framework focuses on the "what" of education. The knowledge-centered component addressed "what is taught (information and subject matter), why it is taught (understanding), and what competence or mastery looks like" (NRC, 2000, p. 24). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) included an additional part of the knowledge component's definition—"how this knowledge should be organized" (p. 41).

Teachers decide what is imperative for students to learn within the context of community expectations, state and local standards, and their own goals for student learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Teachers may or may not have control of many of the curriculum decisions; however, most teachers have autonomy over their lesson plans and instructional decisions. The knowledge component also involves understanding what it means to demonstrate mastery of the content. Students transfer their learning more efficiently by understanding the organization and structure of the curriculum (NRC, 2000). Therefore, teachers need to understand the organization of knowledge within the discipline. Since students bring their own knowledge to the classroom, an essential part of the knowledge component is identifying and addressing student misconceptions (NRC, 2000). Within the knowledge

component, understanding is more useful than memorizing (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Lastly, the knowledge component is influenced by as well as influences other components of the framework. For instance, the goals of the teacher impact the knowledge-centered component—the content—as well as the assessment component—evaluating knowledge (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). In other words, the connection between knowledge and assessment impacts the goals of the teacher.

Assessment-centered

According to Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005), "effective teachers connect knowledge with learners by being assessment centered" (p. 32). The assessment-centered component of the HPL framework focuses on evidence about learning. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) state that the assessment component involves understanding "what kinds of evidence for learning students, teachers, parents, and others can use to see if effective learning is really occurring" (p. 41). The three types of assessments are formative, summative, and accountability assessment, which are all discussed in more detail later in the chapter. For now, formative assessment shows evidence of progress, while summative assessment shows evidence of mastery. Accountability assessments are standardized tests given by the government to determine success in a subject area (Popham, 2009).

Teachers use formative and summative assessments to understand what students know and can do as well as to determine if the achievement of their instructional goals has taken place, to monitor student progress, and to make instructional choices (NRC, 2000). Further, they use assessment results to inform parents, students, and the community of student progress and to

provide instructional feedback to the student so the student will understand mistakes or see success (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

When assessing students, teachers keep in mind both the learner- and community-components of the framework because the student's home life, culture, and classroom community influence the wealth of knowledge the student brings to the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Community-centered

The community-centered component is the context in which the knowledge-, learner-, and assessment-centered components are enacted (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The community-centered component involves environments that enhance learning such as a classroom or school. According to the NRC (2000), "Learning is influenced by the context in which it takes place. The community-centered component requires the development of norms for the classroom and school, as well as connections to the outside world, that support core learning values" (p. 25). The learning environment provides the context for learning to take place, while the established values, beliefs, and expectations contribute to the overall learning experience. Teachers enhance the learning environment by utilizing the knowledge of the community as well as the knowledge students bring into the classroom. Making community connections to classroom learning experiences benefit students. Allowing students and other adults to share their knowledge enhances the learning experiences of all students by showing that all contributions to the discussion are valuable. Collaboration and social learning are vital elements of the community-centered component. Working together to share and build knowledge is beneficial to the learning experience and to building a community of learners.

Learning occurs in the school, class, or outside community. Community expectations are an important factor in student success (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Creating a learning community is not only about meeting the needs of students. Teachers benefit from having a community of learners as well (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000). Teachers and school staff work together for the betterment of the students. This collaboration occurs through team planning or other professional learning opportunities.

Interconnectedness of the Components

The components of the HPL Framework intersect and support each other. For instance, formative assessment intersects with all other components. Teachers may be more effective when they understand the role that formative assessment plays in shaping their instructional decisions and student learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Formative assessment, when administered appropriately, provides feedback that leads to motivation and future learning. In order to assess students formatively, teachers create instructional goals about what students should know, which is knowledge-centered. Teachers determine the strengths, weaknesses, and misconceptions of the learners in their classrooms, which is learner-centered. Teachers understand the community expectations and challenges that affect their students, classrooms, and schools (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Teachers and administrators create a classroom and school climate that is conducive to student success. Thus, in order to gain a full picture of a student's understanding through formative assessment, each component of the HPL theory must be intertwined. To conclude this discussion of the HPL theory, I discuss several studies using HPL as a framework.

Studies Utilizing the How People Learn Framework

Several researchers have used the HPL framework as a theoretical lens for their research (e.g., Best, 2016; Cox, 2005; Gazca, López-Malo, & Palou, 2011; Turner, 2005). In a mixed methods study, Gazca et al., (2011) used special observation instruments, notes, and statistical analysis to determine if redesigned and traditional classrooms complied with the HPL framework. They found that redesigned classrooms were more aligned to the HPL framework, specifically in the areas of assessment, student participation, critical thinking, and making student thinking visible. They also determined assessment was a major weakness of traditional classrooms.

Similarly, in another study using HPL, Turner (2005) found teachers' assessment knowledge to be a weakness, while teacher knowledge of students and how they learn to be strengths. Turner conducted observations and interviews with two participants for a dissertation investigating the practices of secondary science teachers and their incorporation of the HPL framework. He determined that teachers utilizing HPL created effective learning environments, although assessment was not as effective. In these studies using HPL as a lens, assessment was a weak area.

Researchers used the HPL framework to validate teaching programs as well as observational systems. For example, Best's (2016) dissertation focused on teachers as learners through a professional development program. In this dissertation, using a multi-case design, Best (2016) utilized observations, interviews, group meetings, and surveys to determine the use of the HPL components in a virtual classroom. HPL was the analytic framework for understanding the virtual classrooms under review and found that resource sharing and the long term effects of teacher learning were beneficial. Similarly, in a dissertation seeking to validate a

classroom observation system, Cox (2005) conducted surveys, observations, and group data comparisons to test the observation system used in an engineering program. Cox found courses to have the HPL materials, but they were failing to utilize HPL-based instruction.

I used the HPL framework for the present dissertation because it helped me think about teaching and learning in a way that helped me understand teachers of struggling adolescent readers.

Review of the Relevant Literature

I now turn to my review of the extant literature. I begin my review of the literature with a discussion of learner-centered components of instruction relevant to this research such as characteristics of struggling readers, social-emotional learning, and adolescent development. Next, I address the knowledge-centered component in terms of what makes reading difficult and evidence about reading instruction, including teacher talk and concrete strategies. Then, I address assessment-centered components, including formative, summative, and accountability assessments. I conclude my review of the literature with a discussion of community-centered components such as classroom environment and learning communities, as they are relevant to research on teacher beliefs and practices for adolescents who struggle with reading.

Learner-centered Instructional Practices

Focusing on the learner involves thinking about what the learner brings to the classroom such as beliefs about learning, developmental characteristics, and background knowledge. For this dissertation, aspects of the learner-centered component of the HPL framework included the characteristics of struggling readers, social-emotional learning, and adolescent development.

Characteristics of struggling readers. Researchers characterize adolescent readers as struggling if they read at least one year below their current grade level but do not have a learning disability (Ruddell & Shearer, 2002 as cited in Hall, 2010). There are many issues related to why adolescent readers struggle to read, including reading background, motivation, and beliefs about ability.

Struggling adolescent readers struggle for many reasons. Adolescents who struggle to read early in school often continue to struggle through graduation (Hall et al., 2011). Their continuous struggle could be due to limited reading experience, time spent reading, and practice struggling readers receive. Early reading problems may be due to inadequate decoding instruction, vocabulary practice, background knowledge instruction, limited access to appropriate texts, and limited experiences in and with text (National Governors Association [NGA], 2005). Allington (2012) posited that "older struggling readers have read millions fewer words than their better reading peers"(p. 104). Good readers read three times more than struggling readers, which means that struggling readers read much less than their peers (Allington, 2012). This lack of reading is exacerbated because struggling readers lose actual reading time in reading groups as they sit and listen to others read. Struggling readers also read very little by choice compared to their peers (Allington, 2009). They read aloud hesitantly because either they anticipate an interruption from the teacher, or they have been programmed to want confirmation from the teacher (Allington, 2012). This focus on the teacher's reaction causes struggling readers to develop learned helplessness because they expect to be corrected, interrupted, and praised. Dweck (1999) noted that helplessness "is a reaction to failure that carries negative implications for the self and that impairs students' ability to use their minds effectively" (p. 9). Many students who are struggling readers in adolescence were once on-level readers who experienced

difficulties later in their reading development (Allington, 2012). These students could also struggle due to the changing nature of the reading curriculum.

There are many specific reasons adolescent readers struggle. The majority of fourth-grade readers struggle because of poor vocabulary skills, lack of background knowledge, poor reading strategies, lack of motivation, or unfamiliarity with specialized texts (Allington, 2002; NGA, 2005; O'Brien & Dillon, 2008). Other students struggle with fluency and comprehension (Allington, 2002; NGA, 2005; O'Brien & Dillon, 2008). Allington (2012) suggests that the real achievement gaps for older students are in vocabulary and comprehension. Struggling readers may not have developed into fluent readers due to the continual use of difficult reading material that they cannot accurately read alone (Allingon, 2009). Struggling readers also have limited oral language skills that hinder reading development (NGA, 2005). Those who achieve high levels of success learn more, while others who did not achieve success are more likely to quit reading and misbehave (Allington, 2012). Thus, adolescent readers struggle for many different reasons.

The lowest performing students, English language learners, students from poverty backgrounds, and minority students, make up a considerable portion of the struggling adolescent reader population. The bottom 10% of struggling readers have decoding problems related to reading disabilities, being an English language learner, or limited instruction in decoding (Allington, 2012). Few older children had decoding issues; some needed help with transfer of skills, while others benefitted from automatic application of decoding (Allington, 2012). English language students were likely to rely on their first language while they attempted to learn English inside an English-speaking classroom (O'Brien & Dillon, 2008). Further, struggling readers in high poverty situations generally have had inadequate teachers, inadequate instruction,

inadequate support, as well as inadequate exposure to print and vocabulary (O'Brien & Dillon, 2008).

Struggling readers often lack motivation to read in school as well. They dislike reading to learn because content reading was often too difficult for them to do successfully (Hall et al., 2011; O'Brien & Dillon, 2008). In their beginning school years, they learned to read, but later they read to learn content information. Reading becomes more difficult due to the increased complexity of text and the infusion of content information. Older students have to overcome hurdles because reading is more difficult in fourth grade and beyond (Allington, 2012).

Hall (2010) studies readers' identities and found that struggling readers were very protective of their reader identities and often based their interactions with reading on how they viewed their reading abilities and how they wanted their peers to view them as readers. In contrast, teachers in the study based their interactions with students on what they thought it meant to be a good reader and the identity they had created for the student. Struggling readers' beliefs about their abilities and how they wish peers to view their abilities had a better impact on their learning than the quality of instruction. The implication is that struggling adolescent readers need help maintaining their dignities (Hall, 2010). They desire social acceptance, particularly they desire social approval of their reading abilities. Guthrie and Davis (2003) called these students "self-handicappers" because they care more about what other people think about them and do not put forth the effort to improve. Hall's (2010) case study participants understood that protecting their images would hinder their reading abilities; however, they refused to care. Consequently, their teachers thought they were being lazy and failed to realize the real reason behind their behaviors. Protecting the image of a struggling adolescent reader involved teaching the whole person – emotionally, socially, cognitively, and physically.

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According to Hall et al. (2011), "Some students disengage due to personal issues, social pressures, cultural values, or other issues far beyond any teacher's control" (p. 62). Most struggling readers disengage or avoid reading to save their self-esteem (Hall, 2006; Hall, 2010; Hall et al., 2011; O'Brien & Dillon, 2008). Struggling readers disengage if their past experiences showed they were not successful. Thus, these readers fear they will not be successful, so they shut down (O'Brien & Dillon, 2008). Struggling readers often see themselves as incompetent and devalue reading, resist reading, fake read, or misbehave to avoid a reading task (Hall et al., 2011; O'Brien & Dillon, 2008).

In other studies, Hall found that struggling readers wanted to participate in classroom reading and understand the text; however, they were embarrassed by their supposed weaknesses (Hall, 2006; Hall, 2009). Some struggling readers wanted to read more demanding text and needed help doing so (Hall et al., 2011). Other readers who struggled but thought they were good readers, generally failed to realize they needed to apply new strategies to become better readers (Hall et al., 2011). Reading success and achievement are ultimately determined by the student. Struggling adolescent readers' beliefs about their abilities and skills impacted their decisions (Hall, 2010).

Not all struggling readers in Halls' studies disliked reading. Many struggling readers were active readers outside of school but hated reading required books, completing assigned tasks, or answering frivolous questions (Hall et al., 2011). Most wanted to succeed in school and wished they were better readers (Hall, 2007).

Unfortunately, not all reading teachers are effective, as documented by Hall (2006) in her dissertation using case study methodology. She found that teachers were frustrated when struggling readers chose not to use a reading strategy. Oddly enough, they never asked students

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to explain their decisions and just assumed laziness. Specifically, readers in the study based their decisions on interacting with the text on their own beliefs about their abilities, how their peers viewed them as readers, and how much they wanted to comprehend the text. Most of these students wanted to learn from the text; however, the strategies chosen by the teacher called attention to their weaknesses. Instead of using teacher suggested strategies, these readers depended on class discussion and their friends for support and peer models of good comprehension. Hall found that students were trying alternative ways to learn and comprehend regardless of their beliefs about their abilities. On the other hand, teacher beliefs about student motivation to use comprehension strategies and assumptions of student strengths and weaknesses influenced teacher behavior. Teachers in this study based their decisions on their opinions of student strengths and weaknesses and on how motivated they perceived students were to use suggested strategies. Teachers were irritated when they saw students not using the suggested comprehension strategies. Despite this frustration, teachers failed to discuss these choices with their students. They let assumptions impact their judgments and failed to ask the students to explain their reasonings for choosing alternative strategies. Thus, they lost faith in their students and missed an important opportunity to understand student beliefs.

The characteristics of struggling readers varied, but what was consistent was that they read less and took fewer risks. They used alternative strategies in order to protect themselves from scrutiny. As shown by these studies and reviews, there are many reasons why readers struggle such as reading background, motivation, and beliefs about reading ability.

Social-emotional learning. Another aspect of the learner-centered component is understanding about the importance of social-emotional learning, an emerging focus in the field.

While there are many concepts under the umbrella of social-emotional learning, I discuss self-efficacy, which is a focus for this study.

Self-efficacy. Many struggling readers do not have confidence in their skills as readers. Teachers can help students build beliefs about their capabilities. Eccles, Wigfield, Midgley, Reuman, Iver, and Feldlaufer (1993) believe that teachers can teach self-efficacy to adolescents. Self-efficacy refers to a person's beliefs about their performance abilities and consists of four factors: past performance, modeled behavior, social persuasion, and physiological responses (Bandura, 1977; 1982). A person's past performance, whether good or bad, impacts future performance. Thus, having a successful experience builds self-efficacy. When we see other people succeed through effort, it builds our self-efficacy and allows us to believe we can do it too. The likelihood increases if we know and respect the person succeeding. Social persuasion provides the persuasion necessary to encourage us to put forth the effort to achieve. Physiological responses, such as stress or depression, impact a person's self-efficacy in the current situation. Thus, self-efficacy is a complex theory that deals with belief in one's capabilities.

Various elements such as lesson design, classroom climate, and teacher behavior influence how students create opinions about their performances in school. Providing students with opportunities to make choices about their learning and to experience success promotes self-efficacy (Schunk, 1989).

Teachers build self-efficacy by providing opportunities for students to experience success, see teachers and peers work hard and be successful, and hear encouragement based on effort and persistence. Self-efficacy impacts student effort and persistence (Schunk, 1989). Beliefs about ability help students decide whether tasks are worth the effort. Positive beliefs

give students the confidence to persist even when the task is difficult, while negative beliefs hinder student success by derailing their confidence. Thus, self-efficacy beliefs impact student achievement (Andrews, 2013; Schunk, 1989). Students with low self-efficacy avoid learning tasks, while students who feel they are skilled are eager to learn (Schunk, 1989). While success and failure impact student beliefs, failure is not as detrimental if self-efficacy is established (Schunk, 1989). Thus, self-efficacy is a beneficial social-emotional learning concept for teachers to understand.

Mastery experiences proved to be the most beneficial in promoting self-efficacy in science. Through exploratory factor analysis using science GPA and efficacy scales with 319 middle school students, Britner and Pajares (2006) found that mastery experiences in science predicted self-efficacy. They also found that boys had a weaker science self-efficacy than girls.

Self-efficacy has been used in reading comprehension studies as well. In a multiple regression study, Solheim (2011) conducted reading comprehension testing with passages containing multiple choice and short answer questions with 217 fifth grade students. Solheim (2011) determined that reading self-efficacy predicted comprehension when controlling for reading ability, listening comprehension, and non-verbal skills. Low self-efficacy students had higher scores on the multiple-choice section.

Critiques of self-efficacy. Despite the support of Bandura's self-efficacy theory, there has been some debate regarding self-efficacy and causation. Lee (1989) stated, "the ability of the concept of self-efficacy to explain human behavior is largely illusory" (as cited in Hawkins, 1992, p. 251). Self-efficacy was not a cause of behavior; even though, Bandura claims it was (Hawkins, 1992; Hawkins, 1995). In studies where the cause was used as the explanation, there are other factors at play. Hawkins (1992) mentioned several studies of self-efficacy as evidence

to suggest behavior was the result of external variables, and self-efficacy was not needed to explain these behavioral outcomes. Hawkins (1995) believed the theory of self-efficacy would be acceptable if not for the causation claim, and suggested self-efficacy simply be a predictor.

Although causation has been the issue of the most concern, self-efficacy has also been considered incomplete, ethnocentric, and trivial (Tuchten, 2012). It was considered incomplete in that it did not provide the entire picture of behavioral change. There has also been a difference in the responses of participants from cultures, making self-efficacy mainly a western culture construct. Finally, self-efficacy was sometimes considered merely common sense and not a real theory.

In the famous Pygmalion study, researchers tested elementary school teachers using the expectancy theory (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). These teachers were given positive expectations for specific children in their classes. The exceptional students in the lower grades showed more growth than their control group peers (Dweck, 1999; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Dweck (1999) explains:

> They told them that these children were likely to bloom; in other words, they conveyed that these children were open to learning, were ready to grow, could profit from teaching. What this message probably did was lead teachers to work more effectively with these children, and not simply to praise their intelligence. (p. 117)

Another study showed the impact on older children. There were small gains in the fifth-grade students (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968); thus, teacher expectations could positively impact middle school learners. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) suggested the smaller gains in the older students were due to commonly known student reputations. In contrast, younger students did not

have set reputations, so they were less likely to be judged by teachers. Thus, teacher beliefs may play a part in student success.

In the previous section, I discussed self-efficacy, including studies and critiques. Next, I present a discussion about adolescence.

Motivation and literacy. Some studies suggest that many adolescents, including struggling readers, are motivated to read, though they may not be motivated to read texts offered in school. In a mixed-methods study using the constant comparative method, statistics, and discourse analysis, Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris (2008) determined that adolescents "do read outside of school" (p. 146). Adolescents in this study enjoyed reading about relatable characters who struggled through relationships or personal identity but persevered in the end. They were motivated by social capital factors such as facts, identity formation, self-improvement, and connections with others and not necessarily school achievement. While novels were not the chosen reading material of most students, students found characters relatable, life lessons informative, and the text enjoyable in the novels that they had read. Students in this study read all types of text, including manga, maps, instruction manuals, lyrics, biographies, emails, newspaper articles, blogs, magazines, and novels. Adolescents read texts that interested their peers or respected adults. Students in the study were even talking about text. Some of the girls discussed their reading through organized book clubs, while boys casually discussed gaming manuals or car books as normal conversation allowed. While reading was taking place, the types of text students were not always reading was deemed respectable by teachers and adults. Adolescents needed help choosing text in their areas of interest and recommendations for books to read for pleasure.

Teachers' instructional decisions can foster motivation. Adolescents experience many changes in middle school, including more challenging content, lack of reading strategies and reading support from teachers, fewer opportunities for choice, decreased sense of belonging, and lack of belief in their abilities (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). A lack of belief in one's abilities can impact students' abilities to respond to the increased demands of the curriculum in middle school. Guthrie and Davis found that struggling adolescent readers had no one to turn to in their times of need and concluded that struggling readers need strategy instruction as well as teachers who provide support. In their study, middle school offered less choice and more structured, required assignments when struggling adolescent readers needed choice and flexibility to keep them engaged. Middle school also offered a smaller chance to connect with teachers causing students not to gain a sense of belonging. Guthrie and Davis (2003) proposed that struggling adolescent readers "are likely to feel disrespected and uncomfortable in school, and they do not enjoy a sense of belonging" (p. 60). This lack of belonging also decreased engagement. Students did not believe in their reading abilities, which could be caused by the lack of support, strategies, choice, and connection they received.

Guthrie and Davis (2003) called for teachers to motivate adolescent readers by using their proposed engagement model. While using individual parts of the model was moderately helpful, incorporating all six of the components was the most beneficial to students. Guthrie and Davis' (2003) engagement model consists of creating learning goals, connecting reading to the outside world, providing a variety of text options, allowing students to choose what to read, using direct instruction for reading strategies, and incorporating collaborative reading discussions.

In terms of motivation, most adolescents were motivated extrinsically because of their grades, competition, and beliefs about ability. Guthrie and Davis (2003) stated, "competent

readers maintain a balance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, whereas less competent readers show a precipitous drop in intrinsic motivation and become oriented only to extrinsic factors such as grades and recognition" (p. 61-62). If extrinsic grades and recognition are the driving factors for struggling adolescent readers, then connection and engagement could shift their motivation to intrinsic, supporting the development of lifelong readers.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), "intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence" (p. 56). People are not intrinsically motivated by the same activities. What motivates some will not motivate others. Intrinsic motivation involved belief in one's competence and autonomy. Intrinsic motivation improved when a person felt a connection and were hindered by the feelings of control.

Ryan and Deci stated (2000), extrinsic motivation occurs ". . . whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome" (p. 60). The separate outcome could be a reward or punishment depending on the situation. The difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation depends on the involvement of interest. For example, doing something because one is interested in learning more results in intrinsic motivation. If someone considers a task valuable for his or her future or completes a task simply to avoid a punishment, he or she would be exhibiting extrinsic motivation.

Understanding the role of motivation in education and reading was necessary. They wrote:

Understanding these different types of extrinsic motivation, and what fosters each of them, is an important issue for educators who cannot always rely on intrinsic motivation to foster learning. Frankly speaking, because many of the tasks that educators want their

students to perform are not inherently interesting or enjoyable, knowing how to promote more active and volitional (versus passive and controlling) forms of extrinsic motivation becomes an essential strategy for successful teaching. (p. 55).

Assignments are not always exciting or fun; therefore, teachers needed to understand how to use extrinsic motivation properly and without the controlling aspects of rewards and punishments.

Ryan and Deci (2000) presented a motivation model that was not sequential in nature. Amotivation meant the lack of initiative needed to begin. Extrinsic motivation included four designations: (1) external regulation including rewards and punishments used as motivation, (2) introjection, that is, involving the ego and the need to impress self or others, (3) identification meant the ability to see value in a project, and (4) integration involved merging the activity with personal goals. Intrinsic motivation included interest as well as competency and autonomy. An individual needs to feel competent enough to reach his or her goal and autonomous while doing it.

Adolescence. The learner-centered instructional component encompasses teacher understanding of students and their development. Several studies suggest that the knowledge of adolescent development aids teachers in making appropriate instructional decisions (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 1995). Reports by the National Middle School Association promote the appointment of teachers who hold a wealth of knowledge about adolescent development and the continued training of all teachers in adolescent development (National Middle School Association, 1995; 2003).

In one specific study using a Likert scale questionnaire completed by 258 middle and high school teachers in the Midwest, researchers determined that for teachers to be effective, they needed a firm foundation in adolescent developmental psychology (Paulson, Rothlisberg, &

Marchant, 1998). Teachers in this study believed several commonly held myths about adolescent diversity, school, and social relationships. They also realized they would benefit from understanding the cognitive development and diversity of their adolescent students, but felt they were ill-equipped in these areas. In another study, Petzko (2002) surveyed 1,400 middle school principals to summarize data on teacher effectiveness and found that the majority of principals believed their teachers were unprepared to teach middle school. Of the principals surveyed, 77% believed their teachers should have more training in adolescent development. They believed their teachers would benefit from professional development opportunities in middle school topics, developmentally appropriate practices, interdisciplinary instruction, and building positive teacher-student relationships.

Most of the following information about adolescents as learners is based on the *This We Believe* statement on middle school learners published by the National Middle School Association.

Who are adolescents? Adolescence occurs at a time when students are vulnerable due to continuous changes occurring within both their bodies and their school environments. Too old to be considered children, yet too young to be considered adults, adolescents have their own unique developmental characteristics, needs, and risks. Scales (2010) defined adolescents as young people between the ages of 10 and 15 who have a unique developmental experience that varies greatly for each individual. In order to help all students succeed, teachers should have knowledge of adolescent development.

Adolescent development. Adolescence can be a turbulent time for students. Eccles, Lord and Midgley (1991) wrote, "for some children, the early adolescent years mark the beginning of a downward spiral in school-related behaviors and motivation that often lead to academic failure

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and school dropout" (p. 521). The downward spiral of adolescence consists of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social changes that impact school behaviors and motivation. These school behaviors and motivations impact academic success. The turbulent nature of adolescence can also impact the development of character and beliefs about success. Adolescents are transitioning from being dependent as children to being independent as adults (Brown & Knowles, 2007). They want the freedom and independence of adulthood but are not always completely finished with childhood. Adolescents are in a state of continuously becoming (Andrews, 2013; Bean & Harper, 2009). They are slowly moving towards maturity and can be considered both too old and too young at the same time—too old to reason as a child, yet too young to be an adult.

During adolescence, school becomes more difficult while bodies are changing. Adolescence is difficult due to the difference between the characteristics of the school environment and the needs of adolescents (Eccles et al., 1991). Dweck (1999) addressed adolescence as well. She explained that during adolescence, "for many students, the work suddenly becomes quite a bit harder … and the instruction often become far less personalized" (p. 29). Teachers have more students with whom to contend, so there is less individualized attention. Middle school students are taking harder classes in an unfamiliar environment. Thus, the compounded change of puberty and a new school environment makes adolescence stressful.

Physical development. Physically, adolescents are experiencing the hormone fluctuations and overactive glands involved in puberty (Brown & Knowles, 2007; Powell, 2005). Growth and development stages are often unpredictable, and these physical changes of adolescence are more drastic than any other time in life, excluding infancy (Brown & Knowles, 2007, p 3-4; Scales, 2010). These changes may cause students to be disruptive, disrespectful, or disengaged.

Their behaviors decline if they are bored, struggling, or attempting to impress others. Hormones

increase changes in mood, aggression, and sexual interest (Brown & Knowles, 2007; Scales,

2010). Physical changes during puberty also cause adolescents to be restless and tired (Caskey

& Anafara, 2014; Powell, 2005; Scales, 2010). In a survey of Japanese and American teachers,

most teachers believed the timing of puberty to be affected by the school structure rather than

adolescent development (LeTendre & Akiba, 2001).

Intellectual development. Physical changes often happen before intellectual and social

changes occur (Powell, 2005), making the middle school transition much harder. Adolescent

bodies are changing at a rate that adolescent minds are not always ready to handle. Brains are

still developing during adolescence; thus, intellectual development varies with each student

(Brown & Knowles, 2007; Powell, 2005; Scales, 2010). The brain develops during adolescence

by adding and pruning neural connections, which causes adolescents to lack organization and

social skills (Brown & Knowles, 2007).

There can be an entire intellectual spectrum in a single classroom. For instance, some

adolescents are in the concrete stage of development between the ages of 10 and 14, while others

are in the abstract stage of development between the ages of 11 and 18 (Powell, 2005).

Adolescents in the concrete operational stage benefit from direct experiences, hands-on

activities, manipulatives, and role-playing (Brown & Knowles, 2007). Hypothetical,

multidimensional problems and future planning are forms of the abstract stage (Brown &

Knowles, 2007). During adolescence, students are also able to improve at thinking

metacognitively (Brown & Knowles, 2007; Caskey & Anafara, 2014; Powell, 2005). Thinking

about one's thinking is an abstract skill that allows students to understand the content in an in-

depth way. Thus, students on various levels of understanding fill middle school classrooms.

Adolescents usually have limited attention spans and vivid imaginations (Powell, 2005). This lack of attention makes focusing on academic tasks and learning more advanced subject matter difficult. Adolescents also tend to be curious and have a wide range of interests (Brown & Knowles, 2007; Caskey & Anafara, 2014; Scales, 2010). Curiosity causes students to disengage from the lesson to focus on some other interesting idea that has occurred in their brains. On the other hand, curiosity encourages adolescents to want to participate in activities where they solve real-world problems (Brown & Knowles, 2007).

During adolescence, students are experiencing many changes, and the compilation of all these changes can hinder them intellectually. Changes during adolescence lead to declines in motivation and behavior (Eccles et al., 1991). Students begin to lose motivation if they feel school is a hassle or too difficult. Adolescents are at risk for academic disengagement (Eccles et al., 1991). Personal beliefs about reading ability cause an individual to disengage if he or she feels he or she is a poor reader or has an inflated view if he or she believes the opposite (Andrews, 2013). These beliefs cause students to withdraw because they feel they are too good or not good enough to learn. Adolescents are at risk for declines in self-perception (Eccles et al., 1991). When they feel unsuccessful, they think less of their capabilities. Their developing cognitive abilities also lead adolescents to feel indestructible, unique, and brilliant (Brown & Knowles, 2007). These feelings lead to poor decision-making.

Emotional development. Middle school students are generally emotionally erratic and unstable (Bean & Harper, 2009; Brown & Knowles, 2007; Powell, 2005; Scales, 2010). Hormone fluctuations and limited self-control contribute to the emotional inconsistency and influence adolescent behavior. Students are experiencing a roller coaster of emotions, which could lead to depression, stress, and aggression (Powell, 2005). Adolescents are also easily

offended, worried, and self-conscious (Caskey & Anafara, 2014; Powell, 2005; Scales, 2010). These emotions could be due to the constant changes they experience, causing them to believe they are under constant scrutiny. They tend to not be confident in their abilities, appearance, and aptitudes, so they become erratic and very sensitive to criticism (Scales, 2010). Emotions also influence adolescent attention and retention (Powell, 2005), which impact academic success. The emotional consequences of adolescence leave students with scars that impact their futures (Powell, 2005).

Social development. Adolescents have an exaggerated view of themselves and their capabilities (Powell, 2005). Sometimes an adolescent's social identity can also be exaggerated to him or her. For this reason, social identity and developing friendships are extremely important to middle school students. Friendships are an essential part of social development because friendships allow students to practice their socialization skills (Brown & Knowles, 2007); however, friendships lead adolescents to make harmful choices. If they feel their worlds and their bodies are unstable, they may seek stabilization through group membership regardless of whether it is positive or negative (Powell, 2005). In order to fit into their chosen groups, they may need to conform to the ideals of the group, making them extremely vulnerable to their peers and placing them at a high risk for poor decision-making (Powell, 2005). While peer pressure is a positive force for many adolescents, it can also encourage experimentation that leads to negative consequences (Brown & Knowles, 2007). Due to the overwhelming influence of peer groups, adolescents tend to experience flock mentality, which means holding shared beliefs and opinions (Brown & Knowles, 2007). Conforming to flock mentality allows them to stay in good standing with their peer groups. Adolescents tend to prefer the approval of their peers rather than worry about the disapproval of their parents (Brown & Knowles, 2007).

Since I have discussed the development of adolescents, I now turn to the needs of adolescents. I have categorized adolescent needs as physical, intellectual, and social and personal attributes.

Adolescent needs. Due to the turbulent nature of adolescence, teachers should be mindful of the specific needs of their students. Adolescents not only benefit from effective teachers and developing self-efficacy, but they also have physical, intellectual, social, and character development needs as well. Knowing adolescent needs will help teachers positively impact student learning.

Teacher and school related needs. Adolescents benefit from teachers who build positive relationships with their students (Andrews, 2013). Students learn better when they feel supported by and connected to their teachers. Teachers may be more effective when they understand adolescents and their thinking (Caskey & Anafara, 2014), consider how student enthusiasm in school drops during adolescence (Andrews, 2013), work to make learning accessible and engaging. Because of the impressionable nature of adolescence as adolescents work to determine who they are through the middle school experience, students benefit from opportunities to engage in identity formation with role-play, literature, and modeling (Caskey & Anafara, 2014; Scales, 2010).

Physical needs. With so many physical changes occurring during adolescence, middle school students benefit from having teachers who understand their physical needs. Due to the drastic changes occurring in their bodies, adolescents need the opportunity to move around and rest from time to time (Andrews, 2013; Brown & Knowles, 2007; Scales, 2010). These physical changes cause students to fidget or appear restless. Brain breaks of movement or rest are beneficial to middle school students. Adolescents also require more sleep per night,

approximately 9 hours and 15 minutes, due to the rapid changes happening within their bodies (Brown & Knowles, 2007).

Intellectual needs. Intellectually, adolescents benefit from lessons and experiences that are developmentally appropriate (Andrews, 2013). The varied nature of adolescent intelligence found in one classroom makes this task daunting (Powell, 2005). It is important for teachers to know their students and how to design appropriate learning opportunities that challenge all students. In order to maintain cognitive growth, adolescents must have stimulating learning experiences that match their interests and provide useful cognitive strategies (Brown & Knowles, 2007). Adolescents benefit from active learning rather than passive learning (Powell, 2005; Scales, 2010). Learning needs to be active in order to compensate for limited attention spans and the need for movement. Adolescents thrive when they learn through real-life experiences and authentic activities (Caskey & Anafara, 2014; Scales, 2010). Authentic learning allows curiosity to motivate their learning.

Socialization needs. Adolescence is a time of social development. Most students believe that school is a place to make friends and socialize with those friends. Middle school students benefit from the opportunity to socialize in the classroom and make positive friends within a safe environment (Brown & Knowles, 2007; Scales, 2010). Assistance is beneficial as they learn how to interact with their teachers and peers (Brown & Knowles, 2007; Caskey & Anafara, 2014). Allowing opportunities for students to work in pairs and small groups provide this outlet while still focusing on the content and supporting the development of social skills (Brown & Knowles, 2007). Adolescents also benefit from positive, supportive relationships with adults who are not family members (Scales, 2010).

Personal attributes. Personal attributes such as self-efficacy, autonomy, stamina, and self-monitoring can be valuable during adolescence. These attributes help struggling readers as they grapple with difficult text and subject matter. O'Brien and Dillon (2008) suggested struggling readers developed self-efficacy by setting goals for their successes and focusing on meeting those goals by believing in their capabilities. Adolescents benefit from autonomy, which they can gain through choice and the ability to self-select books and tasks (Allington 2012; Hall et al., 2011). Generally, teacher-selected texts are too difficult for struggling readers, and these texts remove student opinions from the decision (Allington, 2009). Teachers should not only allow students to make choices about their learning outcomes from time to time, but also provide rationales for teacher-selected activities just like a coach should require certain drills of the team (Hall et al., 2011). Struggling readers benefit from time to read without interruptions in order to help them develop stamina, which is the ability to read for extended periods, such as thirty minutes or more independently (Allington, 2012). Struggling readers also benefit from being taught reading strategies through modeling and demonstration rather than worksheets and low-level comprehension questions. More time reading, discussing, and writing about the text would be helpful. Biancarosa and Snow (2006) reviewed research on reading instruction and showed that effective literacy programs incorporate self-directed learning and rigorous writing instruction in order to help students prepare for the future. It is also important that struggling older readers have many opportunities to develop self-monitoring skills (Allington, 2012). Self-monitoring skills allow students to monitor their own learning and set goals from themselves.

Adolescence is a time of self-discovery and taking chances. The transition to middle school happens at a time when adolescents are experiencing numerous bodily and emotional

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changes. This transition during adolescent development creates a difficult mismatch for students who benefit from structure and consistency (Eccles et al., 1991). Adolescents benefit when teachers understand the nature of this developmental period and support the development of the whole student. Teachers' beliefs about struggling reader's physical, social, intellectual, and emotional development may impact how they teach struggling readers. Understanding what middle grades English teachers believe about adolescence and how that impacts their practices may provide valuable information.

Caveats. These characteristics and needs of adolescents are drawn from the *This We Believe* report of the National Middle School Association. It is important to acknowledge that *This We Believe* is not perfect. While the document summarizes information about adolescent development, it does not provide an exhaustive list of developmental characteristics, especially regarding race and culture (Busey, 2017). In a critical race discourse analysis, Busey (2017) analyzed Association of Middle Level Education's (AMLE) *This We Believe* to review the presentation of race in the text and whether race was excluded from the discussion to further the beliefs of the white majority. Race and culture were mentioned only in passing rather than in the discussion as important learning opportunities for teachers to expand upon in the classroom and use in developmentally appropriate ways. Busey (2017) suggested three additional belief statements for educators: race matters in identity development, racial differences do not mean students are at an intellectual disadvantage, and considering race is necessary when creating positive learning environments. With these important changes, the *This We Believe* document provides a framework for teacher beliefs about adolescent development.

Studies about teachers' beliefs regarding adolescent development. As discussed above, teachers should understand adolescent development and use that knowledge to guide practice,

but the link between that understanding and practice is not straightforward. Sometimes instruction based on assumptions about a student's needs actually backfires. For example, in a narrative autobiographical research study Nesin (1998) studied the relationship between herself and a troubled student. Through the constant comparative analysis of the tragic experience, she found outside factors negatively influenced her student. The student also had an undeveloped self-concept hindered by social and academic isolation. Nesin tried to help the student through the incorporation of a special project she thought would be engaging and developmentally appropriate, but the isolation of working alone on a project only served to isolate the student more.

Adolescence is a complex construct that is different in different locations. For example, in a survey of Japanese and United States teachers, LeTendre and Akiba (2001) found the definitions of adolescence to be different. Japanese teachers thought of adolescence as a level of schooling, while American teachers defined adolescence as a period of years. Japanese teachers believed adolescence was a category not a developmental period.

Still, another study showed the complexity of adolescence. In a content analysis of four popular textbooks, Djang (2011) found the textbooks under review did not cite the same empirical studies, and that of the research cited, 66% were peer reviewed. These textbooks did not solely address adolescent development; however, the adolescent sections mainly discussed psychosocial development and failed to include physical development. Based on this study and the lack of recent publications, there does not seem to be an updated consensus about what should be taught about adolescence and adolescent development and who are current researchers in the field. The textbooks studied presented different descriptions of adolescent development, and all four failed to include information about diversity. Djang (2011) stated, "Overall the data

gathered demonstrated that these best-selling textbooks were built from different topics and used

different citation authors" (p.49). Thus, adolescent development is an important topic with little

consensus.

For teachers of adolescents who struggle with reading, the learner-centered component of

the HPL framework may be particularly important. Here, I have summarized research and theory

about the characteristics of struggling readers, the branches of social-emotional learning, and

characteristics of adolescents.

Knowledge-centered Instructional Practices

Knowledge-centered instructional practices involve what teachers teach and why they

teach it. Instructional choices, strategies, and content choices are part of the knowledge

component. The knowledge-centered component of the HPL framework deals with the

curriculum including what teachers teach and why, as well as how proficiency is determined.

For teachers of struggling adolescent readers, knowledge means reading comprehension, fluency,

vocabulary, and strategy use. Here, I address the complexity of reading, instructional practices,

and teacher talk.

Reading is a complex task. Reading is complex since it involves several interworking

components such as word identification, vocabulary, memory, attention, engagement, context,

motivation, and comprehension (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005). Reading the words on the page

is not just about reading individual words; instead, it involves several contributions from the

reader such as background knowledge and experience, word and vocabulary skills, adjusting the

meaning, and attitude of the author. The words alone lack the meaning that only the reader can

provide. Reading comprehension is "active and constructive" (Snow et al., 2005, p. 22). The

reader adds his or her background knowledge and prior experiences to the views of the author.

The reader then challenges the meaning and ultimately makes it his or her own. Thus, reading

comprehension is a complex process that involves background knowledge as well as a reader's

experience to interpret, disprove, or agree with the words on the page (Snow et al., 2005).

Reading comprehension is a process that does not end in elementary school. The

majority of middle school students struggle with comprehension of texts (Hall et al., 2011).

Reading involves a constant progression of strategy use and increasing automaticity (rapid word

recognition) (Snow et al., 2005).

Not only does reading become increasingly difficult in the middle grades, but it is also

different for all readers. Reading comprehension differs in four ways: reader, text, activity, and

context (Snow et al., 2005). First, the reader has different skills, background knowledge, and

motivation. For example, the background knowledge and motivation one reader brings to the

task will be completely different from another reader. Next, the text varies in terms of

readability and depth of meaning. Each text a reader is assigned or chooses has different

readability demands and different interpretations. Some texts have underlying meanings or

complex sentence patterns that can impact readability. A reading comprehension activity differs

depending on the purpose and outcome of the assignment. For instance, some activities focus on

monitoring comprehension, while others focus on problem solving. The context varies according

to the cultural influences in a community or school. Cultural influence could impact the reader's

comprehension of a text. For example, a student from a non-majority culture may find difficulty

participating in school norms like discussion if discursive practices at school vary from those at

home.

In their revised position statement on adolescent literacy, the International Literacy

Association (Donovan, 2012) outlined eight factors necessary for adolescents to be literate

individuals in the 21st Century. Among them: Adolescents require new skills and strategies for dealing with literacy across the content areas using various print and non-print texts. Content area teachers must teach strategies specific to their domains to help students decipher difficult content-specific print and non-print text. Schools should promote literacy across all contents and provide a safe environment to learn new literacies. Text is no longer limited to words printed in textbooks and books; instead, schools must adapt and incorporate multi-modal texts, which enhance instruction by providing motivation and engagement.

Teachers need to consider using developmentally responsive classroom literacy practices in the content areas. Rather than using a textbook, which is often two to three grades higher than the grade of the students, Dennis, Parker, Keifer, and Ellerbrock (2011) suggest providing students the choice of multiple texts on varying levels. In a developmentally responsive classroom, teachers provided strategy instruction relevant to the content as well as student needs, a focus on mastery learning, real-world problems, and a supportive classroom climate (Dennis et al., 2011; National Middle School Association, 2003). In addition, collaboration, ongoing assessments, mini lessons, activating prior knowledge, using multi-leveled texts, choice, and positive teacher-student relationships are also beneficial in a developmentally responsive classroom and effective literacy program (Biancarosa & Snow 2006; Dennis et al., 2011).

Instructional strategies. There is ample evidence about instructional practices that support struggling readers, including adolescents, in developing reading proficiency. These are briefly summarized here. When people think about struggling adolescent readers, they often start with instructional practices such as phonics or decoding as a one size fits all solution but these are just a beginning.

Adolescence is an already difficult time due to developmental factors, but it is "a time when one's literacy needs shift, so that appropriate and particular forms of instruction are required" (Bean & Harper, 2009, p. 43). This shift in literacy needs is compounded by the increasing momentum to "read to learn" when the vocabulary, text structure, and content are more difficult. Thus, adolescents benefit from both advanced and remedial reading instruction in order to combat the more difficult instruction and literacy needs in middle school such as challenging vocabulary and text structures (Bean & Harper, 2009).

Struggling readers have instructional needs. Smaller classes and expert reading teachers are assets for struggling readers (Allington, 2012) because they provide more assistance to struggling readers. Smaller instructional groups allow for more successful outcomes with struggling readers (Allington, 2012). Biancarosa and Snow (2006) suggested effective literacy programs encourage students to collaborate with texts. Adolescents benefit from additional support in the classroom, but not extra reading pullouts (Hall et al., 2011).

Typical instruction generally does not meet the needs of struggling adolescent readers. In struggling readers' classrooms, authentic conversations about text often do not happen (Allington, 2012). There is little actual reading, almost no silent reading, and a lot of decoding (Allington, 2012). Lower achieving classes have fewer discussions which are short; although, more frequent and longer discussions produced higher achievement (Allington, 2012). Proficient readers receive more independent reading, while struggling readers receive less due to challenges with reading stamina, skill, attention span, and the amount of effort reading takes (Allington, 2009).

Middle school reading teachers have a unique job. Snow et al. (2005) wrote, "In the middle grades, teachers guide students through encounters with structures and features of written

language so they can grapple with more intricate texts and literacy tasks" (p. 16). Thus, reading instruction is a complex process that involves a multitude of interworking parts. Teaching reading to middle school students involves extensive knowledge and experience to help guide students through the extensive process of reading.

Due to the importance of reading and the focus on state reading assessment for high stakes accountability, a great deal of reading research has been undertaken. Much of that research was summarized in the 2000 report of the National Reading Panel which recommended eight research-based reading comprehension strategies: monitoring comprehension, cooperative learning, graphic organizers, story structure elements, answering teacher developed questions, question generating by the student, summarization, and multi-strategy instruction. Although there is a vast amount of research about reading strategy instruction, I mention only a few studies in order to provide context, but not overwhelm the reader.

Reading strategies can have a positive impact on student performance; however, in one study, some low-level students did not always receive the best instruction. Parisi (2013) conducted individual and team interviews to research the implementation of strategies learned in reader's workshops in an urban middle school. Teachers found making connections, inferences, main idea and supporting details, summarizing, graphic organizers, and strategic questioning to be the most successful strategies taught through the reader's workshop. Parisi (2013) determined that scaffolding is still necessary to help students understand how to incorporate reading strategies. Student participation and motivation increased during the implementation of reader's workshops.

On the other hand, researchers found negative results in a quantitative study involving observations and student task performance scores across middle and high schools in five states.

Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, and Gamoran (2003) determined that classroom practices involving

discussion help students transfer their knowledge and skills to other literacy tasks such as writing

about characters or their own experiences. However, after reviewing the data from the diverse

classes chosen, researchers found that lower track students receive less effective instruction

based on the tested variables. Specifically, lower track students "have less engagement in all

aspects of effective English instruction: dialogic instruction, envisionment-building activities,

extended curricular conversations, and high academic demands" (Applebee et al., 2003, p. 719).

In this study, dialogic instruction referred to the use of questioning and authentic discussions as

instruction. Envisionment-building activities were activities that allow students' voices and

perspectives to be involved in the discussion. It was also important for student voice to be

significant to the discussion. Extended curricular conversations dealt with the amount of

conversations that matched the lessons taught. High academic demands referred to the amount

of assignments students were assigned and actually completed. Unfortunately, these lower track

students had less effective instruction.

Lack of professional development and limited actual reading instruction were found

evident in the next two studies. Teague, Anfara, Wilson, Gaines, and Beavers (2012) conducted

an exploratory mixed methods case study to understand what was happening in content area

classes. Through questionnaires, interviews, and observation, the researchers found that most

teachers espoused beliefs that they did not act on in the classroom. Most teachers used seatwork

instead. Professional development was the recommended solution to the lack of utilizing

appropriate practices. Likewise, Ness' (2009) participants blamed a lack of training and state

testing pressure for their failure to incorporate reading comprehension strategies in their

teaching. The mixed methods study involved quantitative observation and qualitative interviews

with middle and high school science and social studies teachers in Virginia. Quantitative observation revealed that comprehension instruction only accounted for 3% of the subject's class time. Below, I describe several of the evidence-based practices that should be found in adolescent literacy classrooms including explicit instruction, teacher talk.

   Explicit instruction. Explicit instruction is needed due to the changing needs of adolescents (Valencia & Buly, 2004). Biancarosa and Snow (2006) reviewed the research and found that effective teachers engage in explicit instruction for comprehending text. Struggling readers benefit from content strategies for reading as well as opportunities to use these content specific reading strategies within the subject matter (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Hall, 2005; O'Brien & Dillon, 2008). Struggling readers need practice working with genres and disciplines (Hall et al., 2011), which will allow them to grow familiar with texts within various disciplines. Struggling readers often benefit from a structured vocabulary program that builds their vocabularies and knowledge of language, which has them involved in the text (Allington, 2012). Further, they benefit from explicit instruction, vocabulary instruction, and the opportunity to practice discussing literature in authentic ways (Allington, 2012).

   Time to read. Adolescents also benefit from time to read in the school setting. They need exposure to print that is on their levels and given time to read (Allington, 2012). Most time spent reading is generally time working on reading strategies; however, students benefit from actually reading text. Time spent reading is more important than numerous hours of strategy work (Allington, 2012). Struggling older readers benefit from opportunities to use repeated readings with a text without being interrupted (Allington, 2012). These repeated readings provide opportunities for struggling readers to practice automaticity and become comfortable with a text, which lead to success. High success reading is critical to reading development and positive

beliefs about reading (Allington, 2012). According to Biancarosa and Snow (2006) effective

literacy programs provide between two and four hours of literacy instruction and time for

practice in isolation and in the content areas.

Readable texts. Each day teachers present their students with texts that are too difficult

for them (Allington, 2012), which makes reading and learning much harder. Providing on-level

texts for each student can promote reading with all students. According to Allington, "Providing

sixth grade struggling readers with texts they could read accurately proved far more valuable

than providing tutoring in the texts used in their classrooms" (p. 69) Providing on-level text

allows the reader to build endurance, stamina, and the motivation to read more because he or she

has been successful in the past. Struggling readers and all students in general benefit from

access to books on their levels. Older struggling readers should have good books to read that are

on their levels. For most struggling readers, their experiences with reading involve an abundance

of difficult and boring books, so they learn very little. Effective literacy programs provide

students with a well-rounded variety of books in terms of reading levels and subjects (Biancarosa

& Snow, 2006).

Think-aloud modeling. Think-aloud modeling occurs when teachers show students their

thinking processes through verbal demonstrations. Modeling provides cognitive support while

students are learning the material so they become independent (Rosenshine, 2012). Think-aloud

modeling builds students critical thinking skills and helps them to practice strategies (Orlich et

al., 2010).

Teacher talk. One important aspect of the knowledge-centered component of the HPL

framework is the way that teachers interact with students and support students in interacting with

each other. Teacher talk is not only about the words spoken, but it also involves beliefs and

actions such as facial reactions. A teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning impact a

student's success (Johnson, 2012). If teachers believe reading is an innate trait that cannot be

improved based on effort, then their actions will make their beliefs evident in the classroom

(Dweck, 2006). Teachers who believe that students use effort, perseverance, and past success to

help them succeed may try harder to incorporate instructional strategies that help support student

success and growth. Teacher behaviors such as praise, facial reactions, and cues show students

how teachers feel about students' abilities to succeed. Struggling readers often feel less than

adequate (Hall, 2010). The knowledge that hard work does pay off could go a long way in

convincing these students they can achieve regardless of past performance and beliefs.

The way teachers speak to students impacts teachable moments, student beliefs about

learning, and their participation (Johnson, 2012). Teacher actions and words create the

environment students experience by either legitimizing student comments and making them

seem relevant or making them seem insignificant. Thus, teacher words matter because they have

a motivating or hindering effect on student learning (Gharbavi & Iravani, 2014). As such, it is

important to be careful of conveying messages, especially if those messages confirm negative

teachers or adults from the past.

Classroom conversation. Teachers employ several types of classroom conversations

applicable in the real world such as questioning, feedback, speech modification, and negotiation

(Cullen, 1998). In terms of real-world questioning, teachers ask questions without set answers in

order to prompt a discussion, rather than incorporating numerous known answer questions. They

base feedback on the actual meaning of the student's words rather than their linguistic accuracy.

When teachers modify their speech or even hesitate when speaking, they are modeling real-world

conversation. On the other hand, teachers who simply echo student responses are not exhibiting

normal conversation behavior. Finally, negotiating meaning through clarification and

interruption also simulates real-world conversation rather than the traditional question, response,

feedback configuration of asking questions.

      Questioning. Questioning is a way of leading a discussion for students to practice what

they have learned through active participation (Rosenshine, 2012). Teachers learn how much

students learned and determine deficits through questions where students explain their thinking

processes (Rosenshine, 2012). There are generally four strategies for questioning: convergent,

divergent, evaluative, and reflective (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2010).

Convergent questions are teacher-initiated questions that assess the knowledge and

comprehension level of Bloom's Taxonomy. They generally have a single response.

Convergent questions answer who, what, where, or why.   Divergent questions have multiple,

lengthy responses. Thus, there is no one correct answer. Divergent questions ask what would

happen if or what do you think. Evaluative questions are similar to divergent questions because

they have multiple answers; however, evaluative questions ask students to make judgments and

explain them. Finally, reflective questions are similar to the Socratic method. These questions

are similar to the other three forms; however, they involve higher-order thinking. These

questions ask students to analyze, infer, and challenge.

      Questioning also involves creating a positive learning environment that uses wait time to

allow students time to think between hearing the question and providing an answer (Orlich et al.,

2010). When the student fails to answer or only partially answers the question, the teacher

prompts the student by positively helping the student to formulate an answer. When the student

incorrectly answers a question, the teacher can remain neutral and help the student toward the

correct answer through prompting. Teachers should refrain from negative responses, sarcasm, and insults due to this type of damage being irreparable (Orlich et al., 2010).

Teacher expectations. Teacher backgrounds, such as culture and personal experience, influence teacher expectations. Student characteristics such as race, gender, or social-economic status also influence teacher expectations. Characteristics, especially at risk for influencing teacher expectations, are those from minority or poverty backgrounds and low achievers (Rubie-Davis, 2015). Expectations influence how the teacher plans instruction, uses questioning, expects answers, and responds to answers (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Teachers may not realize these expectations are impacting their instruction. Teacher expectations lead to treatment based on racial or gender bias and self-fulfilling prophecies. Therefore, teachers must self-assess their belief systems (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Student labels also create lower teacher expectations (Rubie-Davis, 2015; Smith & Mack, 2006). When students are aware of teacher expectations, the expectations are more influential in impacting student performance (Kuklinski & Weinstein, 2001), but this means students accept these expectations as true (Rubie-Davis, 2015). Thus, when teachers verbalize their beliefs about students, they hinder students' progress.

Teacher beliefs impact words and actions. Teachers' mindset, whether they assume ability is fixed or dynamic, impacts the way they handle, judge, and communicate with children (Johnson, 2012). Teachers need to help students understand that individuals are not just either smart or not smart. Teachers must consider the different impacts of feedback and praise, how they introduce activities, and how they explain how the brain works to students (Johnson, 2012). The way a teacher introduces an activity either motivates students by helping them believe they can succeed or inhibits students. Teachers also need to explain to students that change is an

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integral part of learning, and they will change and grow throughout the school year (Johnson, 2012).

   Studies of teacher talk. There are several effective forms of teacher talk used to enhance instruction. In a qualitative study using observation and field notes, Sharpe (2008) observed a history class in order to determine effective types of teacher talk. The most effective types were the following: "repeated, recasting, and recontextualizing language to develop technical language; cued elicitation; modifying questioning to extend or reformulate student's reasoning and recycling ideas through busy cluster of words" (p. 164). Teachers repeat student responses in order to show their approval of an answer. They recast student words into more technical words. Further, they recontextualize student language in order to fit it into the content of the lesson. Cued elicitation involves providing cues for students to finish the teacher's statements. Questioning involves a question, response, feedback pattern. Teachers recycle ideas by using and reusing the same terms throughout the lesson.

   On the other hand, negative teacher talk hinders student learning and impacts teacher-student relationships. In a discourse analysis of a videotaped lesson from an exemplary teacher, Beaulieu (2016) found examples of microaggression towards female students and students of color. The teacher in this study treated students unfairly due to race and gender. Specifically, the teacher ignored female students, and she chastised a Hispanic male for not following the teacher's directions, an action previously completed by a Caucasian male. The researcher theorized that this negative interaction would cause the teacher-student relationship to decline.

   In a study about teacher effectiveness in communication, Gharbavi and Iravani (2014) determined teachers in their study were not effective in creating authentic communication due to

their use of yes or no questions, right or wrong feedback, and routine talk. They also failed to connect learning to real-life situations and provide engaging talk.

There are three particular aspects of the knowledge-centered component of the HPL framework that are important for thinking about instruction for adolescents who struggle with reading. Here I have discussed what makes reading complex, instructional strategies, and teacher talk as instructional practices important for struggling readers.

Assessment-centered Instructional Practices

Assessment-centered instructional practices involve the evidence of learning. In the next sections, I discuss assessment practices, including formative, summative, and accountability and specific reading assessments.

Assessment. Assessment involves collecting and interpreting the evidence about whether learning has occurred. There are multiple purposes and audiences for assessment. Assessment assists teachers in making decisions about pacing, instruction, and content. It tells teachers if their instruction is or is not working (Snow et al., 2005). Teachers use assessment to provide feedback to students and families about their learning and to evaluate student progress. Assessments should be linked to learning goals developed using the state standards (Northwest Evaluation Association, 2015; Snow et al., 2005).

Feedback is an important use for assessment information. Assessment provides feedback for teachers and students to use in the improvement of student knowledge (Black & Wiliam, 2010; Snow et al., 2005). Black and Wiliam (2010) also explained, "Feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve and should avoid comparisons with other pupils" (p. 85). Feedback is information students use to gauge how successful they are at meeting their learning goals, while guidance is

information on how to improve performance (Snow et al., 2005). In order to gain the full picture, students require both feedback and guidance. Students' learning increases when they receive plenty of feedback (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Hall et al., 2011).

Teachers should be fluent in assessment literacy. The Northwest Evaluation Association [NWEA] (2015) convened a taskforce, which was led by Stiggins. Stiggins developed the assessmentliteracy.org webpage based on an emerging understanding of the importance of the field of assessment literacy. The taskforce defined assessment literacy as "the knowledge of the basic principles of sound assessment practice—including terminology, development, administration, analysis and standards of quality" (NWEA, 2015). In other words, assessment literacy is an emerging concept in the field. It involves being literate in all things assessment, including creating, giving, grading, and analyzing results as well as knowing components and jargon. Teachers who are assessment literate interpret results and use them to enhance student learning. Stiggins (2002) believed assessment literacy means understanding all the principles of assessment, although many teachers lack the professional development to grasp this understanding.

Teachers who plan student-centered instruction have to be able to assess students thoroughly. Knowledge of the uses and principles of assessment, familiarity with assessment tools, using data to inform instruction, and reporting assessment results to students, parents, and colleagues are necessary skills for Reading teachers (Snow et al., 2005). Students do better when teachers assess them and use data to drive instruction (Black & Wiliam, 2010; NWEA, 2015; Snow et al., 2005; Stiggins, 2002). A few types of assessment are defined below. Popham (2009) identified two main types of assessment: classroom and accountability. There are two types of classroom assessment: formative and summative. Teachers are then responsible for

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determining how much the accountability assessment will impact the decisions they make about

their classroom instruction and assessment (Popham, 2009). In the following sections, I discuss

the three major types of assessment: formative, summative, and accountability assessment.

Formative. Formative assessment is on-going assessment in the midst of instruction that

is used to change or modify instruction to meet the needs of students (Black, Harrison, Lee,

Marshall, & Wiliam, 2004; Black & Wiliam, 2010). Johnston (2012) expressed, "Assessment

isn't formative if it doesn't influence learning in a positive way." (p. 49) Formative assessments

take the form of teacher verbal or written comments on unfinished drafts or about progress in a

task. Teachers also use clickers, hand gestures, individual response boards, and teacher-created

tests and quizzes as a means of formative assessment (NWEA, 2015).

Formative assessment takes place continuously, is formal or informal, and is used by

teachers, peers, or students. Formative assessments are used by teachers to determine student

understanding and adjust instruction accordingly (NWEA, 2015; Popham, 2009). They provide

evidence to help teachers and students adjust instruction, gain feedback, and review (NWEA,

2015). Formative assessment is the most beneficial form of assessment for low achievers

because it provides explanations of misunderstandings as well as how learning can be fixed

(Black & Wiliam, 2010; Stiggins, 2002). Self- and peer-assessment is a type of formative

assessment when students understand the learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 2010). Students

need to be able to self-assess their progress based on learning goals. Self-assessment can help

build a student's understanding of the importance of learning and understand the process toward

mastery (Black & Wiliam, 2010).

Black and colleagues (2004) posited, "Assessment for learning is any assessment for

which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of student learning" (p.

10). Stiggins (2002) also defined assessments for learning as assessments that provide students with the opportunity to grow and learn. These types of assessments allow students to show ownership over their learning.

It is important to use formative assessment as a tool to increase student understanding and motivation. Questioning and discussion tactics must increase student understanding and not cause students to withdraw from participation in learning activities (Black & Wiliam, 2010). The student is the most important recipient of formative assessment. Depending on the presentation of their results, students' motivation and self-esteem will flourish or flounder (Black & Wiliam, 2010). In the following sections, I address several types of formative assessment.

Universal screening. The first type of formative assessment screens students for intervention purposes. Universal screening is a means of assessing all students quickly in order to identify students who would benefit from extra support and intervention (State Education Resource Center [SERC], 2012). Universal screeners generally take place three times a year and are easy to give and grade. Universal screeners for reading generally assess oral fluency and reading comprehension. Examples include AIMSweb, MAZE, and Renaissance STAR (SERC, 2012).

Diagnostic. Diagnostic assessments are formative assessments given to specific students in order to determine more information about their needs (SERC, 2012). Diagnostic assessments provide information about a student's prior knowledge, strengths, weaknesses, and current skill level so that teachers make informed decisions (NWEA, 2015; SERC, 2012). Diagnostic tests identify areas of weakness (Snow et al., 2005). Using other information such as student work and observations in addition to diagnostic test results helps triangulate data (SERC, 2012). Reading diagnostic tests generally assess decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Examples of reading diagnostic tests are the Gray Oral Reading Test, running records, and Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (SERC, 2012).

Progress monitoring. Progress monitoring assessments are a type of formative assessment administered to check specific skill and concept performance on a regular basis (SERC, 2012). They are sensitive to small changes in growth, and they aid teachers and administrators in the decision-making process. Reading progress monitoring assessments test decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Examples of progress monitoring assessments are AIMSweb, running records, and work samples (SERC, 2012).

Summative. Summative assessments measure the outcome of a learning experience and the success at reaching a goal (NRC, 2000; Popham, 2009). These measures could be a test, portfolio, project, or essay. Summative assessments, or culminating assessments, are meant to help teachers make decisions about whether students learned the material or not (NWEA, 2015; Popham, 2009). Summative assessments show whether learning took place, and they occur at the end of a unit, semester, or year.

Accountability assessments. The final type of assessment discussed here is accountability assessment. Accountability assessments are intended to provide information about what students have learned in terms of the standards and how teachers performed (Stiggins, 2002; Turner, 2014). While it is considered by some a type of summative assessment (NWEA, 2015), it was considered a separate entity for the purposes of the current study. Stiggins (2002) pointed out, "We are a nation obsessed with the belief that the path to school improvement is paved with better, more frequent, and more intense standardized testing" (p. 759). These assessments have many names such as state tests, standardized tests, and high stakes tests. The term "high stakes tests" is another name for accountability tests because they

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determine whether or not states meet accountability (NWEA, 2015). Accountability assessments

can impact funding, student placement, and teacher placement.

There are certain things accountability assessments cannot do. Accountability

assessments are unable to provide formative information that teachers require to make quick and

daily instructional decisions; furthermore, the pressure to prepare for accountability assessments

may hinder teachers from using appropriate formative assessments (Stiggins, 2002; Turner,

2014). Accountability assessments occur once a year and cannot possibly yield all the results

necessary to make instructional decisions and cannot diagnose or provide the detailed feedback

necessary to make instructional decisions as learning occurs. They also cannot easily inform

students and parents of ways to improve learning due to the presentation of results.

Accountability assessments affect students in different ways. While some students are

motivated by accountability assessment, others realize success is out of reach, and they

surrender. Stiggins (2002) related different reactions to standardized testing to a dragon by

suggesting, "Some come to slay the dragon, while others expect to be devoured by it" (p.761).

Accountability assessment can discourage students with negative experiences.

Accountability requirements have produced a challenge for the current educational

system. According to Valencia and Buly (2004), "In the current environment of high-stakes

testing and accountability, it has become more of a challenge to keep an eye on individual

children, and more difficult to stay focused on the complex nature of reading performance and

reading instruction" (p.530). Thus, accountability assessments can hinder individualized

instruction and assessment needs for purposes other than accountability.

Benchmark assessments. A subgenre of accountability assessments is benchmark

assessment. Benchmark assessments are intended to predict performance on accountability

assessments or end of the year assessments (NWEA, 2015). They are supposed to aid teachers in adjusting instruction early in the year in order to show performance gains on the end of year assessments.

Accountability assessments are not always positive. For example, in order to determine the long-term impact of state testing on low achievers, Kearns (2011) conducted individual semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and participant sketches of sixteen students who had failed state exams at least one time. Kerns (2011) asserted that testing became meaningless to marginalized youth who had failed the state tests multiple times due to the shame and further marginalization. These students did not realize they were struggling before the test and felt surprised when they saw their results. Their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and school relationships suffered as a result.

Assessments of reading. Good reading assessment drives instructional decision making of teachers and provides instructive feedback to students to involve them in the process of monitoring their learning. Specifically, reading assessment improves instruction by assessing the effectiveness of instruction and providing feedback to students while learning is taking place as well as after assessing learning. (Snow et al., 2005). Assessment is a major tool in the reading teacher's tool belt. According to Snow and colleagues, "good assessment not only evaluates instruction but will also be instructive as it provides ongoing feedback and involves students in the assessment of their own reading" (p.191-192).

Assessment of reading involves understanding what good readers know and can do. Successful readers know "how print works, how words can be segmented into phonemes, how letters represent sounds, what words mean, how to read accurately and fluently, and how to

construct meaning using print" (Snow et al., 2005, p.183). Knowing what good readers should know will help teachers determine what to teach next.

Assessments test various reading skills. Reading assessments include observation, conferencing, inventories, and writing samples including student essays, open responses, and journal entries. These assessments help assess important reading skills such as word identification and comprehension. Teachers assess vocabulary through several different methods, including a cloze procedure.

Middle school teachers are generally under time constraints due to the number of classes they teach. Individual pre-assessments require a substantial amount of time. Due to limited time to effectively assess individually, middle school teachers can, instead, initially conduct whole class assessments such as interest inventories, spelling inventories, writing samples, content textbook inventories, and reading strategies inventories (Snow et al., 2005).

Assessments like interest inventories or teacher observation determine student interests. Interest inventories help teachers determine how to motivate students as well as help them overcome reading problems.

Assessment also provides the learner with feedback. In the case of reading instruction, struggling readers need feedback about their reading progress. They benefit from specific feedback on their work that focuses on success as well as areas that still need work (O'Brien & Dillon, 2008). Feedback allows adolescents to show progress, which leads to improved self-efficacy (O'Brien & Dillon, 2008). Feedback provides students with an opportunity to improve.

Teachers also should understand that struggling readers are different. They do not all struggle for the same reason, so one blanket strategy for all students will not work. Valencia and Buly (2004) conducted an empirical study with fourth-grade students who failed the state

assessment in reading and found students who fail have different weaknesses and needs.

Specifically, they found several clusters of students who fail to pass reading accountability

assessments. They highlighted six clusters of struggling readers who fail state reading tests:

automatic word callers, struggling word callers, word stumblers, slow comprehension readers,

slow word callers, and disabled readers. Automatic word callers say the words, but do not read

for meaning. Struggling word callers struggled with meaning and identification of words in text.

Word stumblers had strong comprehension skills and self-correct, but they were weak in word

identification. Slow comprehension readers lacked automaticity and struggle with multisyllabic

words. Slow word callers read one word per second and had difficulty in comprehension and

fluency. Disabled readers had severe difficulties in identification, meaning, and fluency. Each

group of students would benefit from different instruction to remediate their challenges. In this

way, assessment is essential for effective reading instruction. Effective reading teachers

understand which assessments are appropriate and how external factors such as time and number

of students' impact assessment choices.

Teacher knowledge about assessment practices. Prospective reading teachers need

knowledge of "the basic principles of assessment, familiarity with various types of assessments

for reading and opportunities to administer a selection of them, knowledge about and practice

using information from assessments in instructional decision making, and practice

communicating assessment results" (Snow et al., 2005, p. 195).

Some studies showed that teacher knowledge about the use of assessment can improve

instruction. For example, teacher knowledge of formative assessment tools benefited students in

the following study. Black et al. (2004) summarized their formative assessment project with two

schools in England based on their thorough literature review mentioned above. They found

improved motivation and higher scores on achievement tests due to better questioning techniques, feedback meant to foster improvement, and incorporating peer- and self-assessment.

There are many concerns about how much teachers really know about assessment, especially the roles of formative and summative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 2010; Brookhart, 2011; Dixon & Williams, 2001; NWEA, 2015; Stiggins, 2002; Volante & Fazio, 2007). New teachers must understand how to weave assessment practices into their daily classroom experiences, how to manage their classrooms so assessment occurs effectively, as well as how to read, handle, and analyze data from assessments (Snow et al., 2005). In addition, students' and community members' limited understanding of assessments and their results adds to the already existing problem of teachers' limited assessment literacy (NWEA, 2015).

In spite of their intended purposes, teachers often misuse formative assessment, and they fail to use formative assessment results to enhance instruction and student learning (Brookhart, 2011). Teachers often do not use formative assessments as a means to improve student learning by involving students in the process either through decision making or explanation of results.

In some cases, the purposes and benefits of formative and summative assessments have been misunderstood and misapplied. For example, in a summary of a literature review of 250 sources, Black and Wiliam (2010) discussed the black box of the classroom and the importance of formative assessment. In their opinion, the teacher is inside the black classroom box, while everyone else, such as principals and state leaders, are dumping mandates inside the box and calling for better outcomes. While in this black box, teachers have to produce knowledgeable students as their outcome. They found that state assessments receive all the attention, while formative and summative assessments are the true means of gaining information about student learning to inform instruction. Thus, the researchers recommended that policies and realistic

training for teachers be put into place to improve the formative and summative assessment process which could ultimately positively impact student achievement and raise standards.

Several studies pointed out that teachers usually do not know about or use formative assessment to guide instruction (Volante, 2010, 2011; Volante & Fazio, 2007). For example, in one study, Volante and Fazio (2007) conducted a survey with open and closed ended questions with 69 elementary and middle school teacher candidates and found they lacked belief in their abilities to assess students. Most of the teacher candidates surveyed relied on summative assessment. While a few knew of formative assessment, they mainly relied on observation and discussion. In a constant comparative method study using open-ended interviews with teachers and administrators in Canada, Volante (2010) found similar results to his 2007 study. Volante (2010) determined that the majority of teachers focused on summative assessments, including tests, quizzes, and projects. They were less focused on formative or metacognitive assessments because the results and assessment methods are hard to justify to parents. Teachers felt constrained to assess summatively and mainly focused on general knowledge. Using assessment to drive instructional decisions was not required in Canada; therefore, summative results were simply grades for these teachers. In a third study, using the constant comparative method with semi-structured interviews with twenty teachers in Canada, Volante (2011) echoed a lack of formative assessment as well as the lack of collaboration through teacher-, peer-, and self-assessment. Teachers in the study also struggled with balancing the accountability assessments with their own data from classroom assessments.

Middle school assessment is difficult due to time constraints, the number of students, and the amount of other duties. To counteract this problem, Turner (2014) conducted a content analysis of the literature and identified five themes related to effective assessment procedures for

middle grade classrooms. He then created an acronym, PILOT, for the five themes: preassessment, identify, link, offer, and test. Utilizing methods of preassessment allows teachers to determine misconceptions, current knowledge, interests, and foundational skills before planning and teaching a new unit. This knowledge helps teachers to plan appropriate lessons based on individual needs and interests. Preassessment consists of "oral questions, written journal prompts, Venn diagrams, concept webs, group discussions, and brainstorming sessions" (Turner, 2014, p. 4). Identifying strengths and weaknesses occurs through reviewing the preassessment results and making decisions about how to help students improve. Linking learning to the curriculum standards and learning goals helps teachers know what to assess and what students will learn. Offering multiple avenues of assessment through formative measures allows students to receive beneficial feedback and learn from the assessment process. Turner (2014) mentioned several types of middle school formative assessments: "observation cards, entrance/engage/exit, student-made quiz questions, student-created rubrics, mini-quiz, one-on-one conference survey, and question cards" (p. 9-10). Finally, testing student progress is based on learning goals after providing time to learn and practice the content. The researcher mentioned several options for testing: "forced-choice items, essays, short answer/short written response, oral reports, teacher observation, student self-assessment, and performance tasks" (Turner, 2014, p. 13-14). Programs like PILOT allow teachers to plan effective assessments, which provide results for planning and adjusting instruction as well as determining student learning progress.

Students benefit when teachers understand the various aspects of the assessment-centered component of the HPL framework and use assessments appropriately and for multiple reasons including instruction and student feedback.

Community-centered Instructional Practices

Community-centered instructional practices encourage teachers to create learning communities that enhance student learning. Teachers should develop a classroom community that embraces the belief that all students' opinions are important, all students can learn, and students are safe to take risks. Due to the nature of this dissertation, I describe only a few features or the community-centered component of the HPL framework, including school connectedness, classroom environment, and those factors relating to struggling adolescent readers. Within the community-centered component, an engaging curriculum, behavior approaches, and moral development are important; however, I do not address these topics here.

School connectedness. Part of building a school community involves school connectedness. School connectedness is the belief that there are adults in a school who care about students and their academic success (Niehaus, Rudasill, & Rakes, 2012). School connectedness provides students with a sense of belonging and is beneficial to students' achievement, motivation, and behavior. Students who feel connected to school due to a positive school environment and positive teacher-student relationships make higher grades (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004; Niehaus et al., 2012; Roeser, Midgley, & Urban, 1996). School connectedness increases student motivation (Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007). School connectedness through supportive teacher-student relationships has reduced problems related to missing school such as absence and suspension (Crosnoe et al., 2004; Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007).

School connectedness or lack thereof impacts student achievement and behavior. Using a latent growth curve model, Niehaus and colleagues (2012) surveyed 330 students in sixth-grade to determine the link between school connectedness and academic achievement. They found that

most sixth-grade students felt that school support decreased throughout the year; however, the students who reported an increase or no noticeable decline had higher grades than their peers. They also determined that girls felt more connected to school, made higher grades, and had better behavior than boys at the end of sixth grade.

Classroom environment. Studies suggest that an open, inclusive environment benefits adolescent learners, particularly those that struggle with reading. As Hall (2011) wrote, "Environments can be created that encourage the development of all students, or they can create contexts where some students are inadvertently privileged or others silenced" (p. 30). Effective environments include an atmosphere of fairness and respect is supported by the teacher exhibiting these behaviors for the students, including attitude, manners, fairness, and respect.

Ideal learning environments are clean, appealing, and practical (Bean & Harper, 2009) with functioning equipment, furniture, and materials. An attractive environment helps students feel welcome. A well-designed room arrangement will allow teachers to monitor student behavior through visual and physical proximity (Orlich et al., 2010) including adequate walkways free from obstructions. According to Hall et al. (2011), "Building an engaging environment for reading in English class is essential" (p.63). Building an engaging environment occurs through promoting literacy through the use of posters of celebrities reading (Bean & Harper, 2009).

Classroom contexts. Adolescent readers as well as struggling readers have various needs in school such as support, safety, and a positive classroom climate.

The teacher is a necessary part of the classroom context. According to Bean and Harper (2009), "Students are more likely to be motivated to learn when they perceive the teacher to be caring, pleasant, positive, encouraging, and understanding" (p. 67). Thus, it is important for

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teachers to build a rapport with students. In establishing rapport, teachers use student names, include everyone, react positively, and use kindness (Gharbavi & Iravani, 2014).

Teacher in-school and out-of-school behavior matters to student learning. Thus, outside communication impacts student perceptions of a teacher's ability in the classroom. In order to build a classroom community, it is important to incorporate tasteful humor, use appropriate facial gestures, smile often, listen to be able to respond to students, call students by name, and pay attention to tone (Bean & Harper, 2009; Johnson, 2012). Classrooms can be places where questions and misunderstandings are allowed or places where ignorance is not.

Each classroom has routines and norms, or normal behavioral characteristics. Routines are well-established and used consistently (Johnson, 2012). Routines are patterns developed through the use of rules and procedures for tasks such as submitting work or participating in a group discussion. Consistency can help teachers establish rules, procedures, and routines. While the current teacher establishes routines at the beginning of the school year, the creation of most norms occurred early in elementary school. Norms are accepted, generally unspoken rules which provide stability and control (Orlich et al., 2010). For example, raising a hand to ask for permission is an acceptable norm established during elementary school and used continuously through schooling. Not all norms begin in elementary school. Teachers or students can establish norms in any grade. For example, respecting yourself and others is a type of norm, which is beneficial during classroom discussion.

The classroom environment also involves the behind the scenes preparation, which impacts the learning experience. Proper planning, clear instructions, and routine preserves instructional time (Orlich et al., 2010). Likewise, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) echoed, "The quality of learning depends on substantial prearrangement and preparation of

materials, planning of activity structures, and skillful management of workflow" (p. 342). Thus, space management, clear instructions, and preplanning help preserve instructional time. Creating an environment conducive to learning involves planning feasible learning activities, making sure materials are in place, and managing the environment.

Safety is an essential part of the classroom context. Adolescents need to feel safe to make mistakes (Hall et al., 2011; Johnson, 2012). They benefit from being involved in an open discussion about how they see themselves as readers, and they should see others struggle (Hall et al., 2011). A positive classroom climate provides an avenue for open discussions and participation without fear of ridicule over mistakes.

Feeling valued and important also impacts the classroom context. Struggling adolescent reader performance depends on the reader's station in the classroom (Hall et al., 2011). For instance, struggling readers who feel they are valued will be more likely to participate in classroom instruction. Thus, the classroom environment either strengthens the struggling reader's beliefs in his or her inability or grants he or she access to reading instruction (Hall et al., 2011). A student's station may have evolved through previous classroom experience and can have an impact on student participation and behavior in the classroom. Understanding a student's previous experience and other limitations helps teachers promote a classroom environment where all students want to participate (Hall et al., 2011).

Studies about community. Sometimes results about school connectedness are not always clear. In a randomized control trial, Hanson, Polik, and Cerna (2017) administered surveys to understand the effects of listening circles as a means of school reform in nine middle schools in California. Through the experimental study, they determined listening circles had no

effects on climate, student beliefs, change, or connectedness to school; however, the staff believed school connectedness had improved although there was no way to verify their beliefs.

Students feel differently about their connection to school. In a mixed methods study on school connectedness, Whitlock (2006) incorporated focus groups and surveys to determine how connected 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders from three different school districts felt towards school. The study sought to determine school connectedness by using four means: meaningful roles, academic engagement, creative engagement, and safety. The focus groups had guiding questions based on open-ended survey questions. According to the study, seniors are the most passionate and vocal about issues surrounding school connectedness and suggested their school lacked connectedness due to the administration's excessive amounts of control over them. They vehemently wanted to have some control over policies and decision-making in their school. Younger students were more likely to be engaged and feel connected. Tenth-grade students were the least vocal participants; however, when asked, they mostly discussed academic engagement.

The community-centered component of the HPL framework is the realm where the learner-, knowledge-, and assessment-centered components dwell. Community context can be influential in the lives of students because it touches all of the other HPL components. Here, I have summarized aspects of school connectedness, classroom environment, and classroom contexts.

Conclusion

In this literature review, I summarized research related to two research questions pertaining to the beliefs teachers have and what teachers do in the classroom regarding struggling readers. The HPL theoretical framework provided a lens for the study and organizational structure for the review of literature. In this chapter, I presented the relevant literature within the

format of the HPL framework, including literature on adolescent development and on struggling adolescent readers. In the next chapter, I detail the methodology for my study.

Summary of Chapter

Struggling adolescent readers have their own set of characteristics and needs to consider as well. In order to help all their students succeed, teachers would benefit from not only the knowledge of adolescence, but also the knowledge of struggling readers. In addition, knowledge of best practices for struggling adolescent readers provides valuable information for middle school teachers. Finally, providing teachers with the knowledge of social-emotional learning, including resilience research, which takes into consideration both the developmental characteristics and needs of adolescents, promotes the use of protective factors, which enable at-risk adolescents to succeed despite obstacles. Looking through the lens of HPL theory helps to show how teacher beliefs about the learner, knowledge, assessment, and community impact student success.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand teacher beliefs about working with struggling readers and what teachers did in the classroom to impact student success. In order to gain this type of data, I conducted a qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998) using semi-structured interviews, observations, and document data. I collected interview, observation, and document data to determine what teachers believed about struggling adolescent readers and what instructional practices they used in the classroom. The remainder of this chapter includes a summary of the theoretical framework, research questions, sample, context, data collection methods, data analysis methods, trustworthiness, and delimitations.

Theoretical Framework

I used the HPL framework, which consisted of learner-, knowledge-, assessment-, and community-centered instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000), as a lens for this study. The NRC (2000) recommended a balanced approach incorporating awareness of the learner, knowledge, assessment, and community components. In the HPL framework, the learner component considers what the learner already knows and brings into the classroom. The knowledge component involves the subject matter, student understanding, and competence. Addressing the assessment component means making student learning visible through multiple forms of assessment. Finally, the community-centered

component focuses on the context around the student, which includes the classroom, school, and community.

Design of the Study

Qualitative Design

Merriam (1998) stated qualitative designs "understand and explain the meaning of a social phenomenon with as little disruption to the natural environment as possible" (p. 5). Qualitative studies start with broad research questions in the hopes of narrowing the focus to a theory or hypothesis that can emerge through data collection. The research questions for this study lent themselves to qualitative research design due to the nature of the questions and the ultimate goal of finding themes through content analysis. For instance, the broad questions regarding beliefs and best practices left room for a wide variety of responses. Qualitative research allows theories to emerge as data are collected and analyzed. Qualitative research does not quantify data into numbers or manipulate situations. Instead, qualitative research seeks to describe in narrative accounts in order to understand situations from the participant's perspective. I chose qualitative design as a means to collect data due to the richness of multiple data sources (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative design also provided the ability to see the connections between participant beliefs and actions (Merriam, 1998).

Case Study

In this study, I used a case study approach to understand teacher beliefs about struggling readers and their potential for success. Yin (2013) stated:

A case study allows investigators to focus on a 'case' and retain a holistic and real-world perspective – such as studying individual life cycles, small group behavior,

organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries. (p. 5)

Case studies are generally used in educational research because they yield a thorough description of a single unit such as one individual or group (Merriam, 1998; Thomas, 2003). Multiple cases provide greater variation and thus strengthen the findings (Merriam, 1998). Three English teachers were the focus of this exploratory case study.

Case study research has several strengths such as "a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon . . . a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon . . . [that] illuminates meanings that expands its readers' experiences" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). Similarly, Thomas (2003) stated, "the greatest advantage of a case study is that it permits the researcher to reveal the way a multiplicity of factors have interacted to produce the unique character of the entity that is the subject of the research" (p. 35). Thus, case studies provide a thick description in a natural setting that provides deep understanding.

Case studies also have several limitations according to Merriam (1998) including: extensive amounts of time and money needed, "the sensitivity and integrity of the researcher", influence of researcher bias, "lack of rigor", and "subjectivity of the researcher" (p. 42-43). Case studies are also limited by their generalizability unless the researcher studies multiple cases (Thomas, 2003). Thus, case studies are time consuming, labor intensive, subjective, and provide limited generalizability.

Case study was the most appropriate type of research for this study due to the need for a complete picture of how teachers made sense of struggling readers.

Research Questions

I used a qualitative case study design through interview, observation, and documents to answer the following questions:

1) What do middle school teachers believe about struggling adolescent readers?

2) What do middle school teachers of struggling adolescent readers do during instruction?

Participants

I used both a purposeful and convenience sample of seventh and eighth-grade English teachers as participants. Merriam (1998) stated, "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Given that rural middle schools were the focus of this study and scheduling differences in sixth grade at the chosen site, seventh- and eighth-grade teachers were the focus of this study. Seventh- and eighth-grade classes last 50 minutes, while sixth-grade classes last twice as long. This sample was also convenient in that the school district and participants were near where I lived.

I selected three seventh- and eighth-grade English teachers based on principal recommendation and their willingness to participate in further phases of the study. The participants had specific beliefs about working with struggling adolescent readers and the designated instructional strategies they used.

I conducted this study at the only middle school in a medium-sized town in a Southern state. The middle school housed approximately 900 students, and each grade level consisted of three English teachers. One eighth-grade and two seventh-grade teachers participated in this study. There were five possible participants; unfortunately, two had personal scheduling

conflicts. Table 1 briefly describes the participants. Before presenting the findings, I briefly

describe each teachers' history and classroom.

Table 1

Participants

Participant	Demographic	Position	Experience	Education
Naomi	White Female	7th grade English Language Arts [ELA]	16 years	Master's English Education
Phyllis	White Female	8th grade ELA	5 years	Bachelor's English Education
Rachel	African American Female	7th grade ELA	21 years	Alternate Route

Case One: Naomi

Naomi was a veteran teacher with 16 years of teaching experience at the time of the

study. Naomi earned a bachelor's and a master's in English Education from a local university.

Immediately following college, she began her teaching career as a high school teacher in a

private school. After an unsuccessful year, Naomi took a hiatus and decided to pursue other

goals. After her children were born, she decided to give teaching another try, and she began

teaching at the local middle school. Now older with more life experience, Naomi's career as a

middle school teacher in a public school setting was much more successful. Naomi earned

various accolades, including being recognized as a National Board Certified Teacher, grade-level

chair, student teaching mentor, Spotlight Teacher of the Month, mentor teacher, and Teacher of the Year.

Naomi's seventh-grade classroom exhibited a relaxed atmosphere. At the same time, she held high expectations for her students. Naomi built a rapport with her students through corny jokes, kindness, and respect. She held her students accountable for their actions in the classroom. According to her principal, Naomi's students consistently produced high state test results at the end of the school year.

Naomi's classroom consisted of neat rows of desks with the middle sections facing the smartboard and the outer sections facing the center of the room. She covered her pale blue walls with colorful images and signage, including her tower of success, anchor charts, and graphics. Naomi's whiteboards were full of colorful text detailing announcements, notes, and reminders.

Case Two: Phyllis

Phyllis had five years of teaching experience at the time of the study. She earned a bachelor's in English Education at a local university. Although Phyllis would have preferred a high school English teaching position, she accepted a middle school job upon moving to town. She started her teaching career as a sixth-grade English Language Arts teacher and then moved to an eighth-grade teaching position. She taught eighth grade for the past three years.

Phyllis initially became an English teacher because she loved teaching English and wanted to spread her love of English to future generations. Phyllis' classroom atmosphere was one of cooperation, which was made possible by her students working in groups at tables. She was energetic and silly, which her students seemed to enjoy. Phyllis held high expectations and kept her instruction fast paced. Her students knew that work not completed in class became

homework. While her energetic and silly persona may seem counterproductive, her students knew how to focus on learning.

Phyllis' classroom consisted of six tables with accompanying chairs and pink baskets. Student placement at tables was based on scores from the previous test and were known as the advanced, proficient, passing, basic, and minimal tables. Her fluorescent lights were covered with light blue fabric to set a calming atmosphere. She decorated her pale blue classroom walls with pastel-colored anchor charts, competition boards, and her participation wheel.

Case Three: Rachel

Rachel was a veteran teacher with 21 years of experience at the time of the study. She earned a bachelor's in marketing from a local university. Rachel began her career in marketing and then decided to get her teaching degree through an alternative certification route. She found her desire to teach during her visits to her mother-in-law's classroom and her work with a local tutoring program. When her husband's job forced them to move to a small town, Rachel decided to use her new teaching license. She accepted a job at a local middle school as an English teacher and has taught seventh-grade English ever since.

Rachel was a very quiet and reserved person. Her classroom generally had a calm atmosphere; although, her students could be rambunctious at times. When the time came to raise her voice, Rachel could enforce the rules. She taught with compassion and genuinely cared about all of her students. Although Rachel had trouble with consistency in calling on students, her students had good end-of-the-year outcomes according to her principal. She had a very optimistic personality and held positive beliefs and high expectations for all of her students. Rachel's classroom consisted of rows of student desks facing the smartboard. Her pale blue walls displayed anchor charts for her two strategies. The remaining walls and her board were

left neutral. Dark blue scalloped curtains hung over her two windows. Rachel decorated her door with bright paper, indicating successful student scores on previous assessments.

Research Context

At the time of the study, the public middle school consisted of 900 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students with approximately 300 students per grade. The district is in the north-central portion of a state in the southeastern region of the United States. The School District was ranked High Performing in 2014 by the Department of Education. Paintings used to teach art, technology, and history through an audio headset tour covered the middle school's interior walls. The school also had a well-equipped library media center, numerous computer labs, and an outdoor garden. The student population of the middle school could be broken down into 50% Caucasian, 48% African American, 2% other, and 51% female. Of the middle school students, 70% were eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Data Collection

I collected data in the form of interviews, observations, and documents in order to address research questions.

Interviews

I conducted interviews using an interview protocol. One initial semi-structured interview and two follow-up interviews took place. Merriam (1998) suggested, "Interviewing is the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals" (p. 72). I conducted initial semi-structured interviews with three participants or cases for approximately 30 to 90 minutes. In semi-structured interviews, "either all of the questions are more flexibly worded, or the interview is a mix of more or less structured questions" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). Semi-structured interviews provide a list of questions and topics to help the interviewer;

however, the order and the flexibility are dependent on the researcher (Merriam, 1998). The

interview protocol listed research questions, interview questions, and possible probing questions

to use in case of participant brevity. Merriam (1998) suggested using an interview protocol to

help guide the interview process, "the interview guide, or schedule as it is sometimes called, is

nothing more than a list of questions you intend to ask in an interview" (p.81). In conjunction

with the protocol, it was also necessary to include probing questions. Merriam (1998) suggested

probing involves "questions or comments that follow up something already asked…. Probing can

come in the form of asking for more details, for clarification, for examples" (p. 80). Interviews

were audio-recorded, and detailed researcher notes were taken during the actual interview to

document gestures, demeanor, and body language. The interview protocol was peer reviewed

and reviewed by the dissertation committee as well. Revisions were made and resubmitted for a

second review. A pilot interview was beneficial as I was a beginning researcher. Merriam

(1998) believed, "pilot interviews are crucial for trying out your questions" because the

researcher gains both practice interviewing and feedback on the actual questions (p.75-76). Two

pilot interviews took place in the summer before any actual participant interviews in order to

check for misleading, redundant, and leading questions.

I developed interview questions based on a thorough review of the literature about

struggling adolescent readers and by incorporating HPL theory (see Appendix A). In terms of

the first research question dealing with teachers' beliefs about adolescent readers, I asked

participants to define adolescence, describe a struggling adolescent reader, describe working

with a struggling adolescent reader, and explain what it would take for a struggling reader to

improve. The second research question dealt with what reading teachers do during instruction.

Participants discussed and gave examples of best practices. They also discussed grouping and

strategy instruction. Participants discussed the supports they had in place for struggling

adolescent readers in their classrooms. I took detailed interview notes during interviews.

I conducted two follow-up interviews with each participant – one during and one after the

completion of observations. These follow-up interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes and

allowed me time to gain clarity and ask additional questions relevant to the study. Follow-up

interviews were audio-recorded, and I took detailed notes during follow-up interviews.

Observations

Someone outside of the research context may notice the mundane and routine things

participants no longer see. These insights could lead to greater understanding and help

triangulate data with interviews and documents (Merriam, 1998). Observations occur in a

"natural field setting" and "observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the

phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview"

(Merriam, 1998, p. 94). I conducted six observations during the first semester as a non-

participant observer using an observation guide. The observation guide consisted of specific

interactions, strategies, and methods identified through interview data. Observations lasted

approximately 50 minutes and focused on teacher behavior and communication, which could

signify beliefs about struggling adolescent readers and instructional practices. Observations took

place at a time of the participant's choosing during a class period where struggling adolescent

readers were present. Observations were video recorded.

I used an observation guide to conduct six observations (see Appendix B). The guide

reminded me to observe the setting, time frame, participants, activities, interactions, and other

subtle factors. An observation guide or "code sheet might be used to record instances of

specified behavior" (Merriam, 1998, p. 97). I created the observation guide based on the research

questions, theoretical framework, and interview data. Specific reminders were included in the guide to help the researcher address the research questions. For the first research question, the guide reminded me to pay attention to interactions between the teacher and struggling adolescent readers identified by the teacher. The second research question referred to best practices, so the guide included several best practices for me to observe such as grouping and checking for understanding.

Each observation had a specific focus; although, all observations contained a general description of the setting, time frame, participants, and subtle factors. Observation focused on the beginning of the school year, teaching a new lesson, returning an assignment, and working with small groups. During the observations, I still took notice of important occurrences outside of the specific purpose for the visit.

Throughout each observation, notes were taken on the observation guide to enhance my memory while reviewing the guide. Field notes were the written notes I took during the observation. Merriam (1998) stated, "Field notes come in many forms, but at the least they include descriptions, direct quotations, and observation comments" (p. 111). I included detailed field notes on the observation guide.

Documents

Documents are referred to as "a ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator" (Merriam, 1998, p. 112). Merriam (1998) explained documents as "the umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, and physical material relevant to the study at hand" (p. 112). I collected documents in the form of pictures from each classroom, graded essays, and a few instructional handouts for this study. The pictures show the data wall, the wheel, tables, posters, and other signage used to show student achievement. The

data wall consisted of numbered magnets to represent each student; thus, the data wall already protected student confidentiality. Copies of all documents were obtained and checked for authenticity. Merriam believed "it is the investigator's responsibility to determine as much as possible about the document, its origins and reasons for being written, its author, and the context in which it is written" (p. 121). Ultimately the gathering of documents and the interpretation depend on the abilities of the researcher. Merriam (1998) stated, "Since the investigator is the primary instrument for gathering data, he or she relies on skills and intuition to find and interpret data from documents" (p. 120).

In summary, I conducted individual case study interviews with three English teachers of grades seven and eight who were chosen based on principal recommendation. I conducted observations six times during the first semester, with interviews occurring at the beginning, middle, and end of the process. I also collected documents. In order to make sure data were collected simultaneously, Table 2 reveals the data collection timeline.

Table 2

Data Collection Timeline

Week of	Participant	Data Collected	Researcher
Summer 2017	Retired	pilot interview conducted	Initial codes developed
	8th grade	pilot interview conducted	Initial codes developed
August 14, 2017	Naomi	Initial interview	Transcribe initial interview
August 21, 2017	------	------	Transcribe initial interview
	Naomi	Observation 1	Draft follow up questions
August 28, 2017	Rachel	Initial interview	Transcribe initial interview
	------	------	Update Observation guides
September 4, 2017	------	------	Transcribe initial interview
	------	------	Update Observation guides
	Naomi	Observation 2 & Observation 3	Draft follow up questions
September 11, 2017	Rachel	Observation 1	Draft follow up questions
	------	------	Update Observation guides
September 18, 2017	------	------	Update Observation guides

Table 2 (continued)

Date	Participant	Data Collected	Researcher
September 25, 2017	Naomi	Follow up #1	Transcribe initial interview
"	Phyllis	Initial interview	Transcribe interviews
"	------	------	Update Observation guides
October 2, 2017	------	------	Transcribe interviews
"	------	------	Update Observation guides
October 9, 2017	Naomi	Observation 4	Draft follow up questions
"	Rachel	Observation 2 & Observation 3	Draft follow up questions
"	------	------	Transcribe interviews
"	------	------	Transcribe observations
October 16, 2017	Naomi	Observation 5	Draft follow up questions
"	Rachel	Follow up #1	Transcribe interviews
"	Phyllis	Observation 1 & Observation 2	Draft questions

Table 2 (continued)

Week of	Participant	Data Collected	Researcher
October 23, 2017	Naomi	Observation 6	Draft follow up questions
"	Rachel	Observation 4	Draft follow up questions
"	Phyllis	Observation 3	Draft follow up questions
"	------	------	Transcribe interviews
October 30, 2017	Rachel	Observation 5	Draft follow up questions
"	Phyllis	Follow up #1	Transcribe interviews
"	Phyllis	Observation 4	Draft follow up questions
November 6, 2017	Naomi	Follow up #2	Transcribe interviews
"	Phyllis	Observation 5	Draft follow up questions
November 13, 2017	Rachel	Observation 6	Draft follow up questions
"	Phyllis	Observation 6	Draft follow up questions
"	------	------	Update Observation guides
November 20, 2017	------	Thanksgiving week	Update Observation guides

Table 2 (continued)

Week of	Participant	Data Collected	Researcher
November 27, 2017	Rachel	Follow up #2	Transcribe interviews
"	Phyllis	Follow up #2	Update Observation guides
December 4, 2017	------	------	Transcribe interview
"	------	------	Update Observation guides

Procedures Followed for Data Analysis

I collected the data consisting of three interview transcriptions and six observation transcriptions taken during the first semester for each participant. I labeled the data with the pseudonym assigned to the participant and color-coded data by hand. I used index cards, colored markers, and binder clips to organize the data and conduct data analysis with the interview and observation data. Each participant's data were labeled by pseudonym, color-coded, and organized in file folders. Before transcribing interview data, I listened to the audio recording of the interview and made notes with initial thoughts. Observation guides were used during observations and updated while viewing the video recording.

According to Miles et al. (2014), codes "are labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to data 'chunks' of varying size" (p. 71-72). I organized my initial data analysis around the components of the HPL framework, while focusing on learner-centeredness and knowledge-centeredness due to their relationships with the research questions. Initially, I looked for references to using social-emotional learning, adolescent development, classroom practice, concrete strategies, building prior knowledge, classroom environment, and safety. In order to code data for research question one about teacher beliefs, I looked for references to social-emotional learning such as perseverance, passion, growth mindset, fixed mindset, protective factors, and risk factors. In order to code data for research question two about instructional practices, I looked for references to teacher talk, concrete strategy instruction, and activating prior knowledge. While codes changed as I immersed myself in the data, these were the codes I used to begin my analysis.

I color-coded interview questions and responses, which were also labeled by interview. Each participant had an assigned color: Naomi – green, Phyllis – purple, Rachel – orange. I shaded the edges of each interview document with the corresponding color. Then, I labeled each question on the interview data with the words "initial," "follow1, or "follow2". Therefore, each question was labeled with a color and an interview name to help me quickly locate the electronic copy if needed. Once labeled, the interview data were cut apart and divided into the four HPL components: Learner, Knowledge, Community, and Assessment. Each of the HPL component sets of data were held together by a binder clip and an index card label (See Appendix C). For example, the Learner index card was labeled 'learner' and was color-coded with a yellow mark, knowledge—blue, assessment—purple, and community—pink.

Within-case Analysis

For this study, the within-case analysis took place in two cycles. Initially, I analyzed the data for each teacher and coded individually, and I determined themes on a case-by-case basis. According to Miles et al. (2014), "A primary goal of within-case analysis is to describe, understand, and explain what has happened in a single, bounded context – the 'case' or site" (p. 100). I used descriptive, pattern, and theoretical coding to code data in a within-case analysis. The coding process began my data analysis because it helped with data condensation, which is the process of placing data into usable chunks so it can be analyzed more efficiently (Miles et al., 2014). Immediately after conducting each interview and observation, I transcribed the interview and observation data to prevent loss of data due to time and memory degradation. I coded the first cycle of data analysis during or immediately after I transcribed it. I replicated this process until I had transcribed interviews, reviewed the observations checklists, and made notes with my initial thoughts. These first cycle codes were the first means of summarizing sections of the

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transcripts. I used descriptive coding to generate word or phrase summaries as codes for data (Miles et al., 2014). In addition, I kept jottings and analytic memos throughout the entire process of initial coding. My jottings were quick, short notes similar to annotations or sticky notes, while my analytic memos were narrative syntheses of my thoughts (Miles et al., 2014). These jottings and analytic memos were coded and referred to later.

The second cycle of within-case analysis involved pattern coding. Saldaña (2013) stated, "coding is thus a method that enables you to organize and group similarly coded data into categories or 'families' because they share some characteristic—the beginning of a pattern" (p. 9). During this phase, I read over each transcription in order to group similar data into smaller categories. Pattern coding, according to Miles et al. (2014), has four functions:

1. It condenses large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytic units.

2. It gets the researcher into analysis during data collection, so that later fieldwork can be more focused.

3. It helps the researcher elaborate a cognitive map – an evolving, more integrated schema for understanding local incidents and interactions.

4. For multi-case studies, it lays the groundwork for cross-case analysis by surfacing common themes and directional processes. (p. 86)

This early pattern coding helped make sense of the initial descriptive summary codes and began showing trends and themes for individual participants. Saldaña (2013) believed "if we are carefully reading and reviewing the data before and as we are formally coding them, we cannot help but notice a theme or two (or a pattern, trend, or concept) here and there" (p. 14). Thus, I looked for patterns and themes within the data. A start list of codes was developed based on the theoretical framework of the HPL theory consisting of learner-, knowledge, assessment-, and

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community-centered components. I added additional codes as needed through further data analysis. Codes were combined, separated, deleted, or created during this process. Jottings and analytic memos were kept throughout the entire process of pattern coding as well.

Once I organized the data into stacks representing the four components of the HPL, each stack was further divided into subthemes using colored sticky notes matching the component's assigned color. I based these subthemes on the initial codes found in the pilot interview and then adjusted as needed during the process of data analysis. I used the colored sticky notes representing each of the HPL components to briefly identify the contents of each quote and keep the four components visually separate (See Appendix C). For example, I placed a purple assessment sticky note with the code "formative" on top of the quote about formative assessment.

Each HPL component bundle was then analyzed to determine commonalities and differences. An Excel spread sheet was created for each of the four HPL components and organized by participant, interview data theme, and observation evidence. The spread sheet included brief references to the actual data and became a quick reference tool to locate information in the electronic copies of the data easily (see Table 3). I created spread sheets for each participant showing the connections between her interviews, observations, and document.

Table 3

Example of Naomi's data in an excel sheet

	Naomi Assessment Grid		
Observation Number	Observation description	Interview highlights	Research Question
#1	**formative** oral theme quiz **formative** Bellringer finger voting **Supports for SAR** reviewed theme twice before practice group work & teacher assist	assess during bellringer; vote or I walk around and look at their paper so I know who struggled (Initial AQ2) quick data; most of the time it is between two answers (Follow1 Q9)	
#2	**Summative** activity based on google test results 11 multiple choice, part A &B, evidence, & multiple response **Supports for SAR** teacher discussed question tips based on test results group members & discussion autonomy in selecting answer "One misunderstanding is…."	Summative - unit tests with 3 or 4 standards they are tested on and it is cumulative (Initial AQ3) rigorous test; have to find ways to hold them accountable for learning…buffer for grades opportunity to earn points back chance to go back through the test and help them understand (Follow1 Q7)	RQ #2

I color-coded the observation checklists and my observation notes by participant and then analyzed a minimum of four times, representing each of the four HPL components. During the first analysis of the observation data, I looked for assessment references and color-coded them purple. During the next analysis, I looked for community references and color-coded them pink. I continued the process for knowledge and learner and color-coded blue and yellow, respectively. Once the data had been color-coded by the HPL components, I entered it into the existing spread sheet mentioned above. The spread sheet became a quick reference for me to use when trying to locate the actual data in the electronic versions. I used the spread sheet to help me determine how the interview and observation data overlapped.

Documents in the form of photographs were then analyzed and referenced on the spread sheet, where they connected with interview and observation data. During the next phase of data analysis, I coded the data across cases based on themes that emerged across all four cases of teachers. The second phase of data analysis, cross-case analysis, is discussed next.

Cross-case Analysis

I conducted a cross-case analysis to determine patterns across all cases. I used pattern coding to develop themes from the data across the cases. Thus, I reanalyzed data across cases to determine themes as well as similarities and differences in beliefs and practices. The purpose of a cross-case analysis is to "to build abstractions across cases" (Merriam, 1998, p. 195). Thus, by looking across cases, both concepts and themes can be discovered. According to Miles et al. (2014), the purpose of the cross-case analysis is to promote generalizability and gain a better understanding of the topic of study. I constantly reevaluated codes. Saldaña (2013) stated, "Rarely will anyone get coding right the first time. Qualitative inquiry demands meticulous attention to language and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human

experience" (p. 10). Thus, some codes changed, and additional codes and themes appeared upon the evaluation across cases. I kept jottings and analytic memos throughout the entire process.

I compared all participants' excel sheets containing interviews, observations, and documents data to see the commonalities across all three participants. Then I sorted the stacks from the with-in case analysis into common stacks. For example, all the purple assessment data about formative assessment was pulled and combined into one formative assessment stack. Using the stack I could see that all participants used observation and bellringers. Naomi and Phyllis used voting. Rachel used worksheets.

Ethical Considerations

Issues of Trustworthiness

To determine the trustworthiness of this study, I employed several techniques, including explaining confidentiality, triangulation, member checking, long-term observation, peer review, clarifying bias, audit trail, and a rich description.

Confidentiality. I met with each recommended subject to emphasize voluntary participation and share the contact information for my advisor and me. I discussed the procedures of the research study with the participant and explained that they could withdraw at any time. I gave an informed consent form to each of the teachers, indicating her interest in participating in the study, and I collected the consent letters in a manila envelope. The data and responses I collected did not contain any identifiers to distinguish the participants in question. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) stated, "All subjects should be assured that any data collected from or about them will be held in confidence" (p. 57). I kept and continue to keep hard copies of data, consent forms, and researchers' notes in a locked filing cabinet, and I kept and continue to

keep electronic copies of data and audio and video-recordings on a password-protected computer for five years. After five years, data will be deleted and shredded.

<div align="center">**Validity**</div>

Validity questions whether a study measures what it is supposed to measure. Qualitative research has several strategies for establishing validity (Merriam, 1998).

Internal Validity

Internal validity involves "the questions of how research findings match reality" (Merriam, 1998, p. 201). Triangulation, member checking, long-term observation, peer examination, participatory research, and clarifying biases enhance internal validity (Merriam, 1998). I used the majority of these strategies in order to increase internal validity. Participatory research was not used in this study.

Triangulation. Merriam (1998) suggested collecting several data sources in order to validate findings). In this study, I used various sources of data. Transcriptions from interviews, observations guides, documents, and researcher notes were collected and analyzed. Each participant was interviewed three times and observed six times during the first semester.

Member checking. Merriam (1998) suggested, "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from who they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" to increase validity (p. 204). I used member checking after I transcribed and reviewed the transcripts for accuracy. Participants reviewed the results in order to confirm researcher interpretations.

Long-term observation. Long term observation involved "gathering data over a period of time in order to increase the validity of the findings" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). Observation data were collected six times during the first semester for all three participants.

Peer review. Peer review consisted of "asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). Because "coding is not a precise science; it is primarily an interpretive act" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 4), an outside reviewer checked my coding and compared the results to my coding to make sure data were coded consistently, adequately, and correctly. A fellow graduate student reviewed data coding. This graduate student had no interaction with the teachers in the study and provided an outside perspective during the data analysis process. We analyzed the data independently and then met together to review our individual coding. We discussed our discrepancies to obtain agreement.

Clarifying bias. Merriam (1998) suggested clarifying researcher bias before beginning the study. As a former English teacher of struggling adolescent readers, I have certain beliefs about what struggling readers need. I believe struggling adolescent readers have been passed along, neglected, and ignored. I believe most teachers have no idea how to help struggling readers and have little time and energy to accommodate them. I believe most schools say their focus is on the bottom 25% on paper; however, they do little to impact their learning. I have also researched struggling readers for two years. To prevent my bias from impacting the data, I had an outside peer reviewer read the data to ensure that I accurately coded the data. The peer reviewer coded the data individually and then I compared her coding to mine.

External Validity

External validity involves generalizability. Specifically, external validity "is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (Merriam, 1998, p. 207). Multi-case and cross-case analysis enhance the generalizability with the inclusion of protocols for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998; Miles et al., 2014). Qualitative studies have limited generalizability or external validity; instead, qualitative researchers focus on transferability (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Transferability requires researchers to provide in-depth descriptions of their studies, the contexts, and data analyses. In order to enhance the transferability, I used a rich description when describing the three cases. I also used cross-case analysis to analyze data across the three cases of English teachers.

Rich description. Merriam (1998) suggested "providing enough description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred" (p. 211). In this study, I included a thorough description of the research context and participants in order to make findings transferrable.

Reliability

Reliability involves the consistency of the findings. Reliability deals with the potential to replicate the study with similar results (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) stated, "a study is more valid if repeated observations in the same study or replications of the entire study have produced the same results" (p. 205). In case study research, "just as a researcher refines instruments and uses statistical techniques to ensure reliability, so too the human instrument can become more reliable through training and practice" (p. 206). Merriam (1998) proposed that reliability in a qualitative study was difficult to obtain and thus suggested focusing on whether results are

consistent and dependable . Although it is difficult to replicate human behavior, there are a few strategies to increase reliability: investigator's position, triangulation, and audit trail. I previously discussed my bias and triangulation as a part of internal validity.

Investigator's position. In terms of the investigator's position, "The investigator should explain the assumptions and theory behind his study, his or her position vis-à-vis the group being studied, the basis for selecting informants and a description of them, and the social context from which data were collected" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993 as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 206-207). As previously discussed in the internal validity section, I am a former English teacher of struggling adolescent readers and have researched this topic for two years. I believe struggling adolescent readers are continuously pushed along because most teachers feel ill-equipped to help them improve. I selected three English teachers as participants from a rural middle school based on the knowledge I assumed they would provide to the study.

Triangulation. As previously discussed in the internal validity section, interviews, observations, documents, and researcher notes were collected, transcribed, and analyzed. Each participant was interviewed three times and observed six times during the first semester.

Audit trail. I kept an audit trail in order to explain how I made decisions during this study. Merriam (1998) stated, "In order for an audit to take place, the investigator must describe in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (p. 207). I kept detailed notes about the decision-making process in a research journal.

Delimitations of the Study

This study used interview and observation data to determine the beliefs teachers held regarding struggling adolescent readers in the rural South. The participants were a small number of teachers from a very specific area of the country, which narrowed this study tremendously. The focus on only English teachers also limited the study. I could have chosen to interview other teachers or a different geographical area; however, my focus was on middle school teachers working with struggling adolescent readers in the rural setting.

Summary

In this chapter, a qualitative case study using semi-structured interviews, observations, and document data were discussed. Information about the study's context, participants, data collection and analysis, as well as trustworthiness was addressed. In the next chapter, I address the findings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Throughout this study, I investigated the beliefs and best practices of middle school
teachers of struggling adolescent readers. Findings are based on interview and observation data.
Participant backgrounds are also discussed. This chapter is divided into four sections
representing each component of the How People Learn Framework. Each component is then
discussed based on the individual cases and research questions. The following research
questions guided the study:

1) What do middle school teachers believe about struggling adolescent readers?

2) What do middle school teachers of struggling adolescent readers do during
   instruction?

HPL Theme One: Learner

The learner component of the HPL Framework involves teachers' orientation toward the
learners and what the learner brings into the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005;
NRC, 2000) and how that orientation impacts student learning.

Learners: Characteristics of Adolescents

The characteristics of adolescents was an important topic for these participants. They
discussed the social nature of adolescents and the importance of making learners comfortable.

Learner: Adolescents are Social

Two of the three teachers, Naomi and Rachel, discussed the social aspects of adolescence and its value. During observations, I noted that students in both Naomi and Rachel's classes were social, playful, and chatty; it was obvious the students enjoyed being around one another. The two teachers set expectations for how students should behave in groups; although, one teacher, Naomi, believed group work constituted a small amount of off-topic socialization.

Naomi understood adolescence and believed that students were social individuals who need the opportunity to communicate and enjoy each other's company. She accepted a moderate amount of off-topic discussion and playfulness as long as students were completing their work. For example, she said, "You want to encourage them to enjoy the socialization of the group because that is part of it. And I wouldn't put myself in a situation like that and not visit and talk and play some" (Naomi Follow1 #9).

Sometimes the social proclivities of students made teaching and learning more difficult. In particular, Naomi had a male student who was extremely social during independent work, and she constantly moved his desk in all directions and changed his seat often. Sometimes she even had to ask him to move his desk away from another student. (Naomi Observation 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6). When asked why she kept him close to her as well as continually moving his desk, she said, "He is agreeable, but he won't hush" (Naomi Follow2 #5).

Rachel also understood that adolescents were social creatures and set expectations to allow them to be successful in their learning. Rachel knew how social her students could be when working with their peers; thus, she set expectations for them. She said, "If they are not talking about the lesson or behavior is out of control there is no need to let them work with a partner .... I always give them a chance. And then after that it's like ok it's over" (Rachel

Follow2 #10; Rachel Observation 5). She believed if she gave her students a choice between her talking and her students talking, the students would prefer to talk to each other because of their social nature.

Both teachers saw benefits and drawbacks from the social nature of adolescents and believed having students working in groups was beneficial. Naomi and Rachel believed adolescents were very social in nature. Both designed instruction, and they did two things because of this—they tolerated some off-task behavior (especially Naomi), and they set clear expectations and limits (Rachel). On the other hand, Phyllis designed her room based on the social nature of adolescents when she requested tables for her eighth grade ELA classroom. She encouraged students to ask each other for help when she was working with another student. Although she did not specifically mention the social nature of adolescents during interviews, she encouraged social interaction in her classroom.

Learner: Adolescents Learn Best in a Comfortable Learning Environment

Naomi and Rachel also spoke about the importance of making sure students were comfortable, so they would be able to learn. In Naomi's opinion, uncomfortable students were not able to effectively learn the content or work with their peers in a group setting. Rachel believed her students learned best in a group setting and would allow students to choose their groups as long as they behaved.

Naomi discussed the importance of making sure students felt comfortable with the peers they had to work alongside. When asked how she grouped her students, Naomi said:

But what I find is especially with this age group and with the lower performing students they are not very successful group workers when they are forced to work with somebody they don't like. I just think they lack the social skills necessary to interact with just

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anyone.… So, if they pick their own group, then I can hold them more accountable for

their behavior (Naomi Follow1 #4; Naomi Observation 2).

Rachel also believed the best way to help students learn was to make sure they felt

comfortable:

They can sit where they want as long as they know how to behave. When they are

comfortable, that is when I think that they learn best.… But if they are with someone that

they really don't know, or they feel uncomfortable with they are just going to be sitting

there (Rachel Follow2 # 11).

Both Naomi and Rachel showed a great deal of concern for student comfort within the

group setting. They believed adolescents needed to be comfortable around peers while working

in a group, so they encouraged autonomy. The choice of group allowed both teachers to hold

students accountable for their behaviors and their productivity. Both teachers were observed

assisting reluctant students in choosing a group; although, only Rachel addressed the fact in

interviews. Phyllis allowed test scores to determine table placement each week, so comfort was

of little concern.

Learner: Teacher Support for Struggling Adolescent Readers

Teachers generally have particular supports in place for their adolescent learners to make

learning easier for them. The three teachers in this study were no exception. Naomi and Phyllis

utilized similar support strategies, while Rachel focused on helping students feel safe in their

learning environment.

Naomi supported her students through proximity, modeling, and socialization with peers:

I'm an active teacher staying on my feet always [in] close proximity to the students.

Visual aids ... I underline and highlight, and they mimic on their own paper. We do a lot

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of turn and talks so they can feel more confident in their answers.... I do a lot of modeling

reading aloud (Naomi Initial LQ4).

This statement was corroborated in observations with Naomi's students receiving support from

their teacher through modeling (Naomi Observation 1, 2, and 5), proximity (Naomi Observation

1-6), and "turn and talks" (Naomi Observation 5 and 6).

When asked about the supports she provides for her students, Phyllis mentioned the same

supports—proximity, peer support, and modeling:

Group work because … it's the independent work when they really tend to shut down....

So, tables help a lot with that because it kind of fosters … we can easily talk about what

we are reading or what we are doing. ... We will put a text on the smartboard, and we

will marker and break it down that way, and it tends to help them to see those visual cues

with the text or an activity that we are doing. But for the most part, I just kind of try to

circulate the room a lot to make sure that they are not just struggling and shutting down

like some tend to do (Phyllis Initial LQ4).

Phyllis' use of tables provided a support tool and also the incentive of socialization (Phyllis

Observation 1-6). Phyllis used teacher support through constant monitoring, peer support

encouraged by the use of tables, and modeling using technology to support her students.

Rachel knew that adolescence could be difficult, and she made sure to support students in

their learning endeavors. In order to support her students, Rachel combated it this way, "Well, I

already know their confidence level is kind of low. You can tell when you ask them to read.… I

am asking them questions not in a demanding way but in a way where they don't feel

threatened" (Rachel Initial LQ4). Rachel believed students needed the support of their teachers

and a non-threatening environment for answering questions and reading aloud.

Naomi and Phyllis preferred proximity, peer discussion, and modeling using visual aids. Rachel focused more on what the teacher did to support students while reading aloud and created a non-threatening reading environment.

Learner: Extrinsic Motivation

All three participants in this study used some sort of extrinsic motivation system to encourage student performance on diagnostic and summative assessments. Positive rewards were in the form of food, recognition, and special activities. Negative rewards were in the form of undesirable recognition.

Extrinsic motivation – tangible rewards. Both Naomi and Rachel used a positive extrinsic motivation system to encourage student performance on assessments. For both participants, these rewards were in the form of food, public recognition, and special activities. To encourage diagnostic testing growth as well as student effort on the diagnostic test, Naomi and Rachel used pizza, a movie, and time out of class as an extrinsic incentive for their students each nine weeks.

> Naomi's purpose for all these extrinsic rewards was to appease the school district:
> This district has set up a requirement for the 7th grade English to grow 28 points from the first diagnostic to the third...and they can do it.… So, on the second one to encourage their growth because if you let them, they will blow it off, and some of them still will anyway (Naomi Follow2 #14).

Thus Naomi used a stacking reward system meaning the rewards increased as the year progressed. Naomi's students began with pizza, added a movie day, and ended with a few hours of outside playtime.

Rachel also used the enticement of food privileges. Rachel believed that extrinsic reward systems were beneficial for students because they made them feel positively about themselves, "Reward systems work a lot. We have a lot of good reward systems like … if they scored level six or seven, you get pizza on Friday" (Rachel Initial LQ6a). Rachel used stacking rewards based on student growth.

Both teachers used public recognition by posting the names of the top-scoring students. Rachel used public recognition to motivate her students to excel, "And you give them recognition you know having their name on the door for improvement or just to say I moved up a level or two. You know it makes them feel good. Those things too help out" (Rachel Initial LQ6a). Rachel's door was covered with signs about top testers, students who were proficient and advanced, and students who were pizza privileged. Naomi's room shared the same public recognition theme with posters plastered on her walls for top scorers (See Appendix D). Both teachers believed in classroom rewards like pizza, movie days, and public recognition because they helped the students feel good about themselves.

Rachel believed that somehow she needed to turn her extrinsic reward system into inner motivation, "You know they are motivated by food and drink. But somehow, I need to turn it into inner motivation. I haven't figured that out yet" (Rachel Follow1 #10). So, while Rachel believed in the effectiveness of her extrinsic motivation system of food and drink, she knew rewarding inner motivation would be better for her students.

Extrinsic motivation – punishments. Extrinsic motivation was also used in a negative way to encourage students to perform better on the next weekly and cumulative assessments. Phyllis and Rachel had other students witness evidence of student performance, while Naomi withheld privileges.

While Naomi used extrinsic motivation rewards with some students by celebrating their accomplishments with a movie and pizza, she simultaneously used extrinsic motivation punishments by forcing her other students to witness the rewards they failed to achieve. She liked the fact that she could taunt the students who did not achieve the reward goal, "An additional bonus is we will be able to hear that movie that they are in there watching while we are working and they will be like umm." (Naomi Follow2 #14). She felt as if their missing out would motivate some students to try harder next time.

Phyllis used her seating chart as an extrinsic motivation to encourage students to perform well on their weekly assessments:

> The table arrangements are based off of their scores on the previous week assessments. So, if they didn't do well on the assessment, then they are at the lower tables. They kind of help one another during group work, and if they don't get any help, it really motivates them to try and get to a higher table where they, you know, they have a little more help the next week. So, it's just kind of a good competition type thing for them to get into (Phyllis Follow1 #2).

The students stayed at the assigned table until they were given a new assessment. Phyllis used priority seating as a reward in her classroom. Her seating arrangement was tied to each student's weekly test grade and became an extrinsic motivation punishment to encourage them to try harder.

In Rachel's classroom, students were given their magnets and told to place it on the data wall (See Appendix D). For some students, it was a traumatic experience because they had to admit their poor performances in front of their peers:

So, I said you are not going to like it because your magnet is yellow, but you scored in

the red. And she was like, 'Mrs. R. don't make me go up there don't make me go up

there'. And I said, 'but you are going to have to I am just preparing you, but you are

going to have to do it because I have to do it for everybody'.... but what she said was she

was, 'well, it won't be there for long'. You know, so it was more motivational thing

(Rachel Follow1 #9).

She shared a similar experience of a male student who admitted he did not do well. When asked

why she made the students place the magnets in front of their peers, she explained, "But you

know I try to keep it where everyone has to go up there. It makes everyone accountable. It

makes me accountable. And it makes the students accountable too" (Rachel Follow1 #9).

Rachel believed her students' bad scores would motivate them to work harder on the next

assessment.

Extrinsic motivation was a popular topic for these three participants. While Naomi and

Rachel rewarded their students with food, freedom, and public recognition, Phyllis used priority

seating as a reward. Like Phyllis, Rachel used extrinsic motivation punishments by having her

students publicly show their performance level. Naomi taunted her students who did not meet

requirements by letting them witness the rewards given to the students who did.

Learner: Hindrances to Growth

Many factors can hinder a learner's growth. The participants in this study mentioned

absenteeism, outside factors, lack of interest, previous experience, and lack of willingness as

some of the hindrances their students face.

Absenteeism. Two participants in this study mentioned absenteeism as a hindrance to learning. Naomi and Rachel had the same beliefs about absenteeism being an insurmountable hindrance to student learning.

Naomi discussed reluctance and absenteeism as hindrances to growth; however, she believed her students should not fall behind if they were present and trying, "I don't expect my students to slip behind if the majority of the time they are in my classroom.... Now, if they spend six months at alternative school, then that's outside of my control" (Naomi Initial LQ6b1).

Rachel echoed the same sentiment. When discussing hindrances for her students, Rachel mentioned:

> Being absent a lot or in ISD…. If you send work down to the alternative school, they try their best to you know get the work back to us, but the teaching process hasn't taken place where you receive good instruction. There is only one teacher to multiple grade levels, so you just don't get the same (Rachel Initial LQ6b).

For these participants, absenteeism of any form was the largest hindrance to any student, but especially struggling adolescent readers. Both Naomi and Rachel believed the greatest hindrance to their students was absenteeism from their classrooms, whether it be in the form of suspension or placement in the alternative school.

Outside factors. Several elements can hinder growth. Naomi believed home factors hindered students' growth, while Phyllis suggested it was school factors.

Naomi believed that the majority of the hindrances affecting her students stemmed from outside of school issues, as she described them "outside of the teacher's control" (Naomi Initial LQ6b). Naomi believed there were several outside factors such as severe behavior and emotional issues, neglect, hunger, and fear that hindered student growth.

Phyllis believed her students' lack of growth stemmed from previous negative experiences with teachers outside of Phyllis' control. She referred to teachers who did not motivate, encourage, or inspire students to do their best. Phyllis explained:

> I would say, previous teachers. Maybe teachers didn't really know what to do with them, and they have put them down and made them feel like they are not capable of doing well on anything. So, then you gotta build that confidence.... They don't think they can do it, so they don't push to (Phyllis Initial LQ6b).

Phyllis believed hindrances stemmed from negative experiences with previous teachers that caused her struggling readers to have no confidence in themselves.

Participants suggested experiences with previous teachers (Phyllis), and home factors (Naomi) were the greatest outside hindrances to student learning.

Lack of willingness. Naomi and Phyllis believed their students lacked the willingness to participate in class. Their students chose to give up before they even began.

During one of Naomi's observations, students were working in groups. Naomi had one struggling adolescent reader in particular who was not working, and his group of more advanced peers was extremely frustrated with him (Naomi Observation 2). Naomi explained it this way:

> That's one of my struggling students.… He is in the minimal range. He has difficulty paying attention most of the time. If he is not interacting with a neighbor, he is zoned out.… But in that group—he was in the group with … two of the highest students in the class and they got tired of him not paying attention (Naomi Follow1 #11).

This particular student was a struggling adolescent reader with a short attention span and low work ethic. His group grew frustrated with his lack of participation and asked for help from Naomi. In the previous example, Naomi did not need to focus as much of her time, energy, and

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support on this particular student because he was receiving support from his higher-level peers. However, the student showed no willingness to attempt the assignment, which frustrated his group members. Naomi had to step in and give the group permission to move on without the student rather than allow him to cheat.

Phyllis mentioned many hindrances that her students face, "They just don't want to stand out in any kind of way, so they don't want to ask for that help or talk about any issues that they might be having" (Phyllis Initial LQ6b). Her students' lack of willingness to openly discuss their problems with learning or bring attention to their struggles was a major source of aggravation for Phyllis:

> That's a big issue for me personally as a teacher. I mean, if you are struggling, you gotta let me know how you are struggling. So, I guess be vocal about it. So, if they are not vocal either in reading or things that they are struggling with, then that's when I tend to intervene (Phyllis Initial LQ8).

Phyllis believed not informing the teacher of problems hindered student growth.

> Phyllis also described student lack of focus this way:

> So, this is an everyday occurrence. They give up and say I don't get it before you even get into it.… This student especially just does not want to focus on what we are reading. He wants to look around the room, and he will read the stuff on the walls. So, it's a focus issue, I think too. That attention span has gone from here to here [gestures] very small now (Phyllis Initial LQ2).

In Phyllis' mind, struggling adolescent readers were hindered by their attention spans, give up mindsets, and lack of focus.

Both Naomi and Phyllis retold accounts of students failing to focus in class. Phyllis wanted her students to admit to her that they were struggling.

Learner: Characteristics of Success

Learner motivation was a main focus of these participants. They believed that all students needed to be motivated to learn and succeed in the classroom.

Student motivation. All three participants suggested motivation as an important characteristic of student success. Students need to be motivated to succeed and do their best in the classroom. Teachers also have tools that they use to increase motivation. Naomi stated, "One that is motivated. One who understands the importance and has the desire to make improvement" (Naomi Initial LQ6a4). Phyllis also believed that student willingness was necessary for success, "They have to be willing to improve themselves. It can't just be put all on the teacher." (Phyllis Initial LQ6a2). Phyllis believed students could improve if they wanted to improve and were willing to put forth the effort to make it happen. Rachel spoke in similar terms about students' ability to improve. She said:

> Level of dedication, paying attention, and if they want it. They have to be a hard worker. Serious. Self-motivated. Self-determined because you may not have the best family life when you go home, but if you are able to [do] it for yourself, then you are going to do it. That inner motivation for themselves. No excuse attitude (Rachel Initial LQ6a4).

Rachel believed she would provide the necessary tools, but the student must bring the motivation.

All three teachers believed that students must be motivated and want to learn. They believed students must be motivated to succeed in the classroom.

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Tools to increase motivation. Naomi and Phyllis mentioned ways or tools they used to increase student motivation. Naomi used visuals and highlighting students' individual strengths and weaknesses, while Phyllis preferred more attention-grabbing means.

Naomi believed motivation was necessary for student success, so she incorporated visuals such as her data wall and top testers poster (See Appendix D) as well as her info sheet to help her motivate her students:

> The visuals of 'this is where you are' I think that's great motivators. Now I love the little
>
> paper that we do where they write down what they made on the nine weeks test, their
>
> areas they were weak in and strong in, and set goals for themselves.… For that one day
>
> they are usually really into it. They are like 'aww man I did bad on this. Oh, look I did
>
> good on this.' It really matters to them at that exact moment in time (Naomi Initial
>
> AQ7).

Visual displays of assessment data were Naomi's primary motivation tools.

In order to gain student attention and increase student motivation, Phyllis used unconventional means. She incorporated "Yo Momma" jokes into her tool kit as a means to increase student motivation to learn. The jokes grabbed students' attention and kept them motivated to learn. She said:

> Yo Momma jokes get them in it. They will come in, and they are looking for the Yo
>
> Momma jokes. I had some of them make Yo Momma jokes. I told them it just had to be;
>
> it just had to include a grade-level word, and I had some really good Yo Momma
>
> vocabulary. … I definitely think that it works because it engages them; it appeals to their
>
> generation. I love it (Phyllis Follow2 #1).

The jokes were not only motivating for the students but also exciting for the teacher and the students.

Two participants, Naomi and Phyllis, discussed the tools they used to motivate their students such as public recognition, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, and making learning fun and engaging.

Learner: Teacher Praise

Praise can be very important to a learner. The student can recall memories of past teacher praise during future learning endeavors.

When asked how she decided what to praise, Naomi responded, "If I see they are on it at that particular moment, I try to encourage that with praise….I do little things like fist bumps, high fives. Sometimes it is whole class. Sometimes it is individual" (Naomi Initial LQ7). Naomi praised her classroom students for correct answers and for holding each other responsible. During an observation, she praised a group for holding a student accountable for answering questions (Naomi Observation 2). While teaching central idea, Naomi praised a student for finding the correct central idea, "That's it! High five" (Naomi Observation 6). Naomi's praise was meant to encourage, based on proximity, and could take place as individual or whole class praise.

Phyllis believed praise led to confidence, so she praised continuously:

You pronounced that word right 'awesome job'. You got through that whole sentence without stuttering or pausing or hesitating before a word 'great'.... As long as I can see that they tried, I'm going to put a little smiley face or something. It doesn't always have to be something that I say.... So, it goes back to that confidence (Phyllis Initial LQ7).

I observed Phyllis using the praise she described, making comments such as "There we go" and "Look at you on point today" (Phyllis Observation 3) to praise various things such as pronunciation effort, word choices, and following directions.

Praise can be a very beneficial tool in increasing motivation. Rachel praised students for many reasons including nonacademic ones:

You may have a student who never says anything, and all of a sudden, they have an 'ah-ha' moment. And they raise their hand and give a great answer to a question. That needs to be praised. Maybe you have a student who is struggling with behavior, and they were able to get through a whole class period, and you didn't have to say anything to them. That deserves praise.… You know if somebody is needing some help and you offer to help a classmate out. It depends. It's not all academic. It's you know I praise for different things (Rachel Initial LQ7).

Rachel even told her students about how the principal praised them, "Mrs. Rachel, your classes showed out on the DCA!" She said, "We aren't going to stop there. When we take the next one, there will be more students in yellow and green" (Rachel Observation 3). After a lesson on sound devices, a student found a very difficult example of assonance, Rachel praised in multiple ways, "Very good. Good job" and gave her a thumbs up and made a proud face (Rachel Observation 5).

Teachers in this study used praise for different reasons. Naomi's praise used proximity to encourage individuals or her whole class. Phyllis praised effort, making good choices, and following directions. Rachel praised students who were shy when participating in class, had trouble with their behaviors, and lent a helping hand to others.

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HPL Theme Two: Knowledge

The Knowledge component of the How People Learn Framework asks teachers to think about what is taught, why it is taught, and what competency looks like (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000). Since this study deals particularly with reading, the participants discussed light bulb moments, the complexity of reading, and concrete reading strategies.

Knowledge: Light Bulb Moments

All three participants described a time when their struggling adolescent readers and sometimes other students had lightbulb moments.

When Naomi realized her students were completely lost in a poem, she changed her approach and gave them an easier way to figure out the meaning:

> We read the poem, and we talked about it, and they were like I just don't get it.… And I asked them what the words in the title meant and how did that relate to what the poem said, and you just saw it click for like ten people (Naomi Initial KQ5).

Phillis provided clues about slavery and Abraham Lincoln to help her kids understand the bigger picture in "Oh Captain, my Captain." Phyllis said:

> When we were just talking about it was kind of a far-off thing oh it's a captain it's a ship but when you put into real-life scenarios—Abraham Lincoln, the end of slavery, you know so the ship is the country you know so any way to relate it to their real life I feel like they—that helps (Phyllis Initial KQ5).

Once the students heard the hints, they started shouting out connections they were making to Lincoln and that time period.

Rachel gave her students hints or showed them which questions were incorrect:

> When we are working in groups, and they have four answer choices. I will come around,

and grade what they have, and if it is wrong, you mark it wrong, and they get one more

try. And then you ask them questions to get them on the right track or get them to read

something (Rachel Initial KQ5).

For these participants, sometimes one additional action, such as eliminating a distracting

answer, explaining the bigger picture, or discussing the title, helped students grasp a concept.

Knowledge: Complexity of Reading

According to these participants, reading is a complex skill that involves vocabulary

knowledge, comprehension, fluency, decoding, stamina, focus, and reasoning skills. These

participants believed struggling adolescent readers lacked foundational skills. Students also

struggled because of text complexity and the difficulty of the curriculum standards.

Limited foundational skills. All three participants believed foundational reading skills

such as fluency, decoding, and comprehension made reading a complex endeavor. The

participants suggested the gap only widened as struggling elementary readers progressed through

school. They believed the lack of these foundational reading skills translated into struggling

adolescent readers.

In Naomi's mind, there was little to be done when a struggling adolescent reader arrived

in middle school because they had already passed the prime time for learning to read. She said:

The students have very little chance of becoming successful readers past the third grade,

so by adolescent time, you are really working from a low point to try to get them caught

up, so you will probably not bring them up to grade level. But you may improve their

reading some (Naomi Initial LQ3).

Naomi believed they could improve, but it would be challenging for those involved, and the improvement would be limited. Naomi believed limited foundational skills were hindrances for her struggling adolescent readers:

Fluency. Their lack of fluency which ties into their lack of decoding skills. It's all kind of the same. It's all tied in, you know. And without the fluency, they don't have the comprehension. Without the decoding, they don't have the fluency (Naomi Initial KQ3).

For Naomi, the connection of fluency, decoding, and comprehension made reading complex.

Phyllis believed a struggling reader was a student who lacked fundamental foundational reading skills:

A student who was never really taught how to read. Specifically looking at the vocabulary, analyzing characters, and they are listening but not really understanding.…It's when you ask them to branch out on their own instead of you helping them along with it without you holding their hand through it. That's an issue (Phyllis Initial LQ1).

Thus, the lack of foundational reading skills hindered some of Phyllis' students. Phyllis believed struggling readers had not been taught the fundamentals and compared the lack of fundamentals to mathematics, "I mean it's kind of like math if you never learn how to add or subtract then you can't do a lot of the stuff. If you can't learn how to analyze a text, then it presents a lot of issues moving forward" (Phyllis Initial LQ3). According to Phyllis, reading was dependent on a fundamental knowledge of basic skills, and without those skills, the reader would struggle. During the lesson on the trial of Marco Polo, Phyllis had to correct a student twice for skipping lines of text and had to ask another student to slow down and read passionately since the section was supposed to be what his character believed (Phyllis Observation 6).

Rachel believed initial problems with foundational skills, like sounding out words while learning phonics and sight words in elementary school, followed students through their academic careers. She said:

> I think with elementary school they are dealing more with the phonics and sight words, so if they are struggling they are really having trouble sounding out words. Adolescent readers who are struggling, they have the same problem as well…. so you kind of run into the same thing where if they can't pronounce the words or they are struggling to read every third word, they are really not comprehending anything (Rachel Initial LQ3).

According to Rachel, having trouble pronouncing words made reading comprehension extremely difficult. She believed limited foundational skills created difficulty for her students:

> You have two kinds … They are good readers with the words, but you ask them a question, and they struggle. They are unable to give you a reasonable answer. And then you have readers where they are just struggling to read the words, putting the sounds together, and not reading fluently. You know that they don't understand that if they are reading like that, they don't really understand what they are reading. But if they hear me read it, then they can understand it, but reading it for themselves, they cannot (Rachel Initial LQ1).

Rachel mentioned decoding, comprehension, and fluency as reasons why students struggled with reading.

All three participants believed a lack of foundational knowledge would cause students to continue to struggle through adolescence. Limited foundational skills such as fluency, decoding, and comprehension caused issues for adolescent readers.

Vocabulary deficits. All three participants agreed that vocabulary made reading a complex skill to master. According to the participants, vocabulary deficits were evident by the time a student arrived in middle school. All three participants agreed that usually struggling readers could not decode or pronounce words.

Naomi believed vocabulary to be the biggest problem for her students, "Some of them have such limited vocabulary and even the words they do know they can't always decode them when they read" (Naomi Initial KQ2).

Similarly, Phyllis believed that students do not understand vocabulary:

Another issue is that I just don't feel like kids and vocabulary really mesh these days. They don't know how to pronounce the words. They don't know what they mean, so then you have to step back and really talk about the vocabulary in a text which takes away from the actual content (Phyllis Initial Transition Question).

Lack of knowledge of word meanings and pronunciations slowed down progress when it was time for reading and strategy instruction. Phyllis also believed reading was complex because of vocabulary skills such as figurative language, "Poetry. I know it is really tough because they take things so literally. You know they want it to be raining cats and dogs. They don't understand how to read into those figurative meanings" (Phyllis Initial KQ2). Since her students struggled with vocabulary and figurative meanings, Phyllis taught vocabulary through her Yo Momma jokes bellringer. During an observation her students defined the word incompetent using context clues, gave the connotation, and shared the part of speech (Phyllis Observation 1).

Likewise, Rachel believed a lack of pronunciation skills could cause disengagement and then ultimately a struggle to read:

When they get up here we just don't teach words anymore. So, their vocabularies are not

being expanded by a vocabulary list anymore. Some of them struggle just to pronounce

the words, or they don't know what the words mean. And they just get lost in the

reading. And then when you start getting lost, you start getting bored. And you just stop

reading (Rachel Initial KQ3).

During a lesson on central idea, Rachel's students had trouble pronouncing and understanding

the meaning of several words: constraints, innovator, psychological (Rachel Observation 4).

This inability to pronounce words hindered the progress of the lesson, but Rachel was able to

pronounce and define them quickly.

All three participants believed reading was a complex endeavor because students had

limited vocabulary, decoding ability, and pronunciation skills.

Complexity of text. Two of the participants believed the reading level and the

complexity of the text was too high for their students, especially their struggling adolescent

readers.

When Naomi's students had to complete a cold read on a passage and write an essay

response, they struggled because of the complexity of the text and prompt (Naomi Observation

3). When asked to describe how her students performed on the cold read, Naomi said:

Terrible because they had to read the passage and comprehend what was going on. So

many of them did not understand what the prompt was asking them to write about.… So,

and that wasn't just struggling readers, it wasn't just the lowest readers; it was a lot of

them (Naomi Follow1 Q14).

Naomi believed the complexity of the text and understanding the prompt hindered the majority

of her students, even the proficient readers.

Phyllis explained how the complexity of the text was difficult for her struggling readers, so she had to explain the text to them:

It is a really tough text, especially for the lower kids.... But their reading comprehension level is just is not even though Patrick Henry is an eighth-grade text; a lot of them don't read even remotely close to that Lexile level (Phyllis Follow1 Q3).

Phyllis' students struggled with the complexity of the language and their limited background knowledge. During this lesson, Phyllis reminded students that there would be complex words in the passage and asked them what they should do – pay attention. Phyllis gave the context of the passage and then explained the passage as they read. Sometimes she explained a section, and sometimes she asked the students to suggest what they thought it meant. She also asked them to explain words like "siren" (Phyllis Observation 1).

Both the reading level and the complexity of the text, created problems for struggling and average readers in both classrooms. These teachers did not choose their text for their instruction or assessment. Naomi and Phyllis believed that struggling adolescent readers had trouble with reading because of the reading level and the complexity of the text itself.

Curriculum standards. According to the participants, teaching reading was complex because they had to teach students how to understand the standards. Students may have understood the reading passage; however, they may have missed the question if they failed to realize what it was asking them to do.

Naomi believed reading was complex because reading involved reasoning, and most students did not know how to reason:

You try and help them understand the point of this question.… Because a lot of times it's not necessarily that they don't have the skill to answer the question, they may not

understand how to the root of what is being asked. ... You try and reason through the reading why a character does something or why the author wrote the setting that way (Naomi Follow1 Q6).

For example, Naomi had her students work in groups on a bonus point activity to practice reasoning through questions. She told her students, "My motivation is not for you to have bonus points. I want you to learn and understand how to answer those questions" (Naomi Observation 2). She placed each question on the board and then provided tips, definitions of terms, the misunderstandings of other students, and hints before letting the groups work on each question. Students also had the autonomy to choose their own answers after consulting with their peers.

Naomi believed the content was hindering her struggling readers because she did not have the authority or the time to make changes:

I don't have any authority over the content in my classroom.… Everything we do in the classroom is geared toward them passing the test that is all on grade level.… The support comes from the ability to scaffold. When I see that they are not comprehending, I can drag it back a little and try to catch up. But it has to be the majority of the class. I don't go backwards for two or three children out of twenty-five (Naomi Initial KQ7).

Naomi believed that the standards and the content hindered her students due to her lack of autonomy and the limited time for scaffolding.

Phyllis also taught her students to reason through the questions by teaching the standard. She said:

So, we had a PowerPoint that breaks down here is the standard, here is the vocab from the standard, what do each of these words like the major words from the standard mean,

here is some like question stems how to how you might see it on the test, how to answer it, things like that (Phyllis Follow1 Q5).

Teaching the standards was witnessed on several occasions during observations. Phyllis believed that students needed to understand the standards, so the questions would make sense, "The purpose of going over the actual standard is just to break it down. Because if they don't know what they are being asked to do then it just it doesn't matter to them" (Phyllis Follow1 Q5).

Phyllis also found it challenging to balance the requirements of the standards, the complexity of the text, and the needs of the students:

Having to stick to standards just doesn't allow for the freedom to really look at text and really read it.… I mean, you are trying to read a text, answer questions about it on top of teaching at standard on top of an activity, and it is just too much (Phyllis Initial KQ7).

Even though she wanted to pull other concepts from the text, she was unable to due to time constraints and the district's isolated teaching practices.

While Naomi and Phyllis believed the standards could hinder students due to time constraints and their lack of reasoning skills, Rachel believed the content necessary:

Well it. I believe that it doesn't hinder them. Um. The content that is taught is um in the curriculum on seventh-grade level, so I think that all of the content is there to help them. And so, um everything that I have seen related to the curriculum for seventh grade is something that they need to know how to do (Rachel Initial KQ7).

Similar to the other participants, Rachel taught through a standard using a graphic organizer and a cartoon as text. Through questioning and discussion, she helped students understand what the standard was asking them to look for when it mentioned interactions and influences (Rachel

Observation 6). She encouraged the students to define the terms on their papers as well as provided questions to ask themselves.

All three teachers taught the standards and how to reason through the questions. Two of the teachers in this study believed the standards and content hindered their struggling students due to the lack of autonomy their district allowed and the constant need to teach standards. The third teacher, Rachel, believed the content and the standards were beneficial because this was what her seventh-grade students were supposed to be able to do at this point.

Knowledge: Concrete Strategies - Reading

Participants in this study discussed a variety of concrete strategies for their struggling adolescent learners. Discussion and breaking down concepts were deemed very important by the participants.

Best practices. Best practices are considered a teacher's best tools for providing instruction to students. These three teachers had different overall strategies; however, they all helped students through discussion and breaking down the text. These teachers used their best strategies to help students succeed.

Discussion. Discussing text was a promising concrete strategy for these participants. Participants in this study used whole class, partner, and small group discussion.

Turn-and-talk was a favorite strategy of Naomi's because it encouraged her students to justify and discuss their answers with each other:

Well, I could go over it and explain it, and they would change their answer, or they could discuss with a neighbor and have to justify and have to hear the other person's justification for the answer. And so, it creates a dialogue. … It also gives them if they

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don't really have a clue if they really got stuck on that, it gives them an out before its time to vote. So, they can feel more confident (Naomi Follow2 Q10).

Turn-and-Talk provided struggling students an opportunity to hear the reasoning for a correct answer from multiple viewpoints – peer and teacher. Naomi allowed them to discuss with their peers before showing their answers through her voting strategy. During a lesson on understanding how the text structure works in a text, Naomi asked her students to turn and share their answers with their neighbor, and a few students changed their answers. Naomi said, "I'm glad you changed yours. That means your chat helped" (Naomi Observation 6). Naomi believed in making students justify, "I make them justify their answer and think it through because um they get a deeper understanding when they have to explain" (Naomi Follow1 Q2). Naomi wanted her students involved in group discussion, so she said words like "interesting" and "hmmm" when checking their answers (Naomi Observation 1). By encouraging thinking and discussion, Naomi allowed her students to learn from each other.

Phyllis encouraged student discussion by having them put difficult or very formal text in their own words with their peers:

> I mean you have got language that we don't even use these days, so it really helps for them to put it in layman's terms.… They never use formal language. So, to kind of to see the difference and to tell them how to go from this to what they are used to, I think helps. It kind of bridges the gap (Phyllis Follow1 Q4).

Phyllis later incorporated the jigsaw strategy and discussion when she realized her struggling readers in her first class were not learning:

So second period I started breaking up the text, and they did the jigsaw.… Sometimes

hearing it from another person your age rather than a teacher who is using all these big

vocabulary words kind of helps them to relate to it a little better (Phyllis Initial KQ6).

By having her students read the passage using the jigsaw strategy and discussion, they were able

to grasp the meaning, learn from their peers, and put the story in their own words. Phyllis also

used discussion as a teaching tool as a whole class (Phyllis Observation 1, 2, and 5) and as peers

in a table group (Phyllis Observation 3, 4, and 6).

When discussing if it was possible for struggling adolescent readers to improve, Rachel

believed they could if they were provided the right amount of discussion and strategies:

Yes. If you put them around the right student and if you ask them the right questions for

discussion and you show them the right strategies, and it is repeated over and over and

over again using the same strategies but using different reading passages and material

each week you will see a big improvement (Rachel initial LQ5).

Rachel believed her students needed the necessary tools such as questioning, discussion, and

peer support. When teaching interactions and influences, Rachel led a classroom discussion

through questioning. She had students circle interactions, underline results and direct effects of

interactions, and highlight the influences, as they discussed these elements. Ultimately, they

worked with a partner to complete a graphic organizer with the information they gathered from

the class discussion (Rachel Observation 6).

Discussion seemed to be a favorite strategy of these participants. Naomi and Phyllis used

specific strategies like turn-and-talk and jigsaw, while Rachel used more of a guided discussion

through questioning.

Breaking down a concept or text. Sometimes the text, standard, or concept was too broad, so students needed things broken down into smaller, more attainable pieces. Naomi broke a hard concept down into a smaller task. Phyllis had her students break down a text or concept using graphic organizers and smaller steps. Rachel encouraged her students to mark the text in order to make it easier to understand.

Naomi's students were struggling, so she broke the objective summary task down into smaller pieces and gave them some clues:

What would be included in an objective summary? So, I said, 'let's think about what this is about. Because what is going to go in a summary is only the most important information, so the title of it was "What is an orbit?"'… So, I just gave them some clues. You know look, this is what it is looking for. Find the answers that reflect what this has already told you. And then they felt like they had a task you know a specific task to tackle (Naomi Follow2 Q1).

Naomi gave her students the tools to answer a complex question by helping them break it down. During an observation while Naomi reviewed the central idea, she asked a student to say the central idea; however, Naomi reminded her to look for an overall idea stated in the text and to read aloud a sentence that was the central idea (Naomi Observation 6).

By breaking a large task into smaller steps, Phyllis' students were able to be more successful. Phyllis' students responded well to steps similar to a math problem:

Steps to me really help them focus on ok here is what I do first, then here is what I do, and then it doesn't let them get really lost.… It's kind of a strategy learning how to break down a passage and really looking at what it is talking about rather than just reading it

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and not understanding it. This is what I tell them to do for key concept or main idea

(Phyllis Follow2 Q7).

Phyllis used a strategy of small steps to break down the process of finding the central idea

(Phyllis Observation 5). First, students skimmed the passage and circled repeated words. Then,

they used the repeated words to determine the central idea by choosing three of the repeated

words. Later, Phyllis also used graphic organizers when breaking down the text into smaller,

more reader-friendly sections:

Graphic organizers to scaffold um to just kind of help them break a text down into parts.

I think that helps to break the text down, so it's not so much information just coming at

them. Anyway, to take it apart, I guess. Break it down into smaller pieces. Because

when you throw that big stuff at them, it just mrrrhmp [sound effect] they check out

(Phyllis Initial KQ4).

Phyllis helped students break down the text by using graphic organizers. During a guided

practice group assignment for a difficult standard, Phyllis encouraged her students to complete a

graphic organizer for a passage based on categories, comparisons, and analogies (Phyllis

Observation 4).

Rachel expected her students to be active readers who marked on the text as they read it,

"Because I think with reading, you are supposed to be doing something. I really do, or else it is

just boring" (Rachel Follow2 Q12). When teaching interactions and influences in a class

discussion, Rachel had students circle interactions, underline results and direct effects of

interactions, highlight the influences, and ultimately complete a graphic organizer with that

information (Rachel Observation 6). She required them to underline, circle, and write keywords

in order to make the text more engaging. During an observation, Rachel had to break down her

question about the central idea to help a student answer it (Rachel Observation 4). Rachel told the confused student to "Go back to the title, go back to the sentence – what goes along with creating new things?" She also reminded her, "When thinking about central idea always go back to the title." While Rachel did not formally address breaking down concepts during her interviews, she did utilize this strategy in her classroom.

Breaking larger concepts, text, and standards down into smaller pieces helped the participants' students master the content. These teachers encouraged their students to break things down when they began to struggle.

Additional strategies. All of the participants in this study mentioned additional strategies that they used with their struggling adolescent readers. Additional strategies mentioned included phone-a-friend, modeling, previewing questions, bringing reading to life, and a teacher-created reading strategy.

Naomi mentioned additional strategies she used with their struggling adolescent readers: Sometimes I don't understand why they answered a question that way, and I'll ask them to explain their thinking. In fact, I do that when they get it right and when they get it wrong.… Sometimes if they are struggling and they are not willing to answer at all, I will tell them to 'phone a friend'. Then they can call on someone else to help them out (Naomi Initial CQ4).

Naomi asked students to explain, she asked digging questions, and she provided them with a way out. Naomi had a student who was not paying attention. When he answered the question, his answer was completely unrelated. She told him to 'phone a friend' (Naomi Observation 1). She also probed several students: one to justify his response, one with a hint "who has to go through a trial," one with "think about what it says here," and finally one with "is that how the character

works through the problem" (Naomi Observation 1)? Phone-a-friend allowed her student to

receive help but also be held accountable for listening to the friend's response.

Besides phone-a-friend, Naomi also incorporated other strategies. Modeling was

beneficial to Naomi's students:

> I guess modeling is probably the best thing I can do. Especially on the smartboard, what
>
> they have on their paper is what they see on the board. So, we can break it down into tiny
>
> steps and even the learners that have difficulty or are not auditory learners. It covers so
>
> much. It gets the auditory, the visual, and even the kinesthetic because I tell them to
>
> underline, circle, and they are seeing on the board and doing it on their paper, so it
>
> incorporates a lot of different learning styles in the modeling. We do it together. They
>
> answer things independently. They have the option to turn-and-talk, so they feel more
>
> confident before they ever go over the answer. I think those are some effective ways, or I
>
> hope they are (Naomi Initial KQ4).

To Naomi, modeling helped all students learn. Naomi modeled how she would mark on the

passage and even acted out the passage like a skit when teaching theme (Naomi Observation 1).

> Phyllis taught her students to read the test questions before the passage:
>
> We have kind of taught them to read the question before they read the text. So, I don't
>
> know I like them being able to do that when it is a specific standard. But if like question
>
> one only asks you to read paragraph 3, then that's all they are going to read. They are not
>
> going to read the whole thing. So, it kind of takes it out of the context you know (Phyllis
>
> Initial KQ2).

Phyllis encouraged her students to preview the questions before reading passages to help guide

their reading.

Rachel believed reading could seem boring to students:

Well, some kids don't know how to bring the reading to life. A lot of the reading

selections can be boring if you are just reading it in the same, you know, boring

monotone….You have to be interested in what you are reading, and you have to be able

to bring it to life for yourself, and some kids have not they just don't know how to

(Rachel Initial KQ2).

Rachel believed reading should be brought to life so students would remain interested in what

they were reading.

Rachel also developed a reading comprehension strategy to help her students when

reading long passages, "I used the ACTIVE reading strategy where I was trying to teach them to

be active readers and pointing out different things about the text" (Rachel Initial KQ4). Rachel's

teacher created strategy required students to take notes and think about story elements in a

fictional text or create an outline for a nonfiction text. Rachel used her ACTIVE reading strategy

while working through multiple choice questions about a poem (Rachel Observation 3). The

students actively read the text, circled the title and identified it as a poem, took their time to

count the twenty-four lines, identified the keywords in the question, ventured through and made

notes, and then eliminated the wrong answers. Rachel also used her ACTIVE reading strategy

when teaching central idea in a lesson about professional dancer Martha Graham (Rachel

Observation 4).

These participants mentioned phoning-a-friend, modeling, previewing questions, bringing

reading to life, and using a teacher-created reading strategy.

Planning for struggling adolescent readers. Two teachers in this study did not

specifically plan for their struggling adolescent readers. Phyllis occasionally pulled alternate

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reading selections for her struggling readers. Instead, teachers adapted their teaching as needed and in the moment. A remediation program was in place and used by all students; however, it was separate from classroom instruction.

Naomi did not specifically plan for struggling adolescent readers:

As I get response from the classroom I can adjust how much scaffolding they get, how much modeling they need as a whole group as well as individually.… So, it's more of off the cuff instead of specifically written.… If I see that the students are struggling, then I try to slow it down and model more and allow for more interaction (Naomi Initial KQ1).

Naomi believed that impromptu modeling, scaffolding for everyone, and turn and talks were the most effective means of working with struggling adolescent readers. During an independent practice assignment, Naomi visited with each of her struggling readers to assist them (Naomi Observation 4). To one struggling reader, she said, "So this article is about how this person comes up with new ideas. Does your answer make sense? I would pick an answer about a person. I would also evaluate part b if you make changes."

Naomi believed modeling was the best way to work with struggling adolescent readers:

Modeling good fluency and intonation the way you pronounce, the way you add excitement or variety to voice as opposed to monotone.… Modeling think-alouds as you read. Focusing on important elements and how they work together. There is not much time for one-on-one instruction other than very small snippets of 15-30 seconds of working with a student (Naomi Initial LQ2).

Naomi did not separately plan for the needs of struggling adolescent readers. Instead, she used a district-mandated program called iReady as remediation and adapted instruction spontaneously

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and as needed in the classroom (Naomi Initial LQ6a). Naomi's students received modeling, student interactions, and computer-based remediation.

Phyllis believed the reading level for most of her required text was too high for her struggling readers, so she supplemented with lower-level text:

I am not supposed to do this, but a lot of times, if there is a lower Lexile version of a text on the same topic, then for my kids that I know have a lot of issues.... I have to kind of group them to where it's all struggling readers working on that passage, so they don't feel like ... I am singling them out … but then the problem there is when can you get them to that higher Lexile text (Phyllis Initial KQ1)?

She illegally incorporated lower-level text because she believed her struggling readers could not handle grade-level text. She did wonder how she could transition her struggling readers to grade-level text. Phyllis' students had access to iReady remediation and were most likely encouraged to use it; however, she did not address it in interviews.

Rachel did not specifically plan for her struggling adolescent readers:

I expect for all of them to meet me at the seventh-grade level. This is seventh grade, so you are being taught on a seventh-grade level.… But you know they have to be able and be willing to work for it. They are getting the support they need from iReady, which caters to their level and the classroom instruction on a seventh-grade level (Rachel Initial KQ1).

She did not plan instruction for her struggling readers other than the iReady remediation; instead, she expected her students to be on grade level.

Naomi and Rachel did not specifically plan for struggling adolescent readers. Naomi adapted her instruction as needed and personally assisted students briefly if necessary. Both

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Naomi and Rachel used iReady as a remediation tool. Phyllis had access to iReady remediation.

Phyllis secretly chose lower Lexile text to use with her struggling readers.

<center>**HPL Theme Three: Assessment**</center>

The assessment component of the How People Learn Framework involves teachers'

beliefs about assessment and feedback (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000).

Participants in this study were asked about reading assessment, including diagnostic, formative,

summative, and accountability. They were also observed in their classrooms with specific

assessment factors in mind.

Assessment: Reading Assessment Methods

Participants in this study used diagnostic, formative, and summative reading assessments

to determine student understanding.

Diagnostic assessment. The participants in this study had a variety of means for

diagnostic assessment. All participants had access to iReady diagnostic data, which was the tool

Naomi used exclusively. Phyllis, on the other hand, preferred to observe her students reading

aloud as well as understand their genre knowledge and writing abilities. Rachel used both the

iReady diagnostic data and alternative means such as listening to her students read aloud to make

decisions about her students.

Naomi believed the most useful types of assessment data were diagnostic data that was

broken down by standard. She said:

> If I wanted to access their test levels from last year [state assessment results], I can, but
>
> that takes more time because it is not sorted already like the iReady is. So, it [iReady
>
> diagnostic] is just the most convenient. This is such a valuable tool because it breaks it

down into literature, informational, and vocabulary. So, I have a good understanding, and I can look deeper into the data in iReady (Naomi initial AQ1).

The iReady diagnostic data allowed Naomi the option to see data broken down by standard so she could identify the strengths and weaknesses of her students. Naomi used iReady diagnostic data to help her plan for struggling readers. She explained:

Well, the ones that score on a third- or fourth-grade level based on the iReady diagnostic when they are supposed to be on seventh grade, I know that those students are gonna need a little more help. ... I have lower expectations of their outcomes and have to know prior to class that they are going to need me to break it down a little more than say my advanced class (Naomi Initial AQ2).

Naomi used the iReady diagnostic assessment to help her plan instruction and learn the strengths and weaknesses of her students.

Phyllis preferred to use diagnostic means such as oral reading and assigning a writing topic when making determinations about students at the beginning of the school year:

I make everybody read out loud within that first week. We have started to read a text, and I have called on every single person in the room, and it's like a lower text, so I can really see who hesitates and who kind of stumbles on words.… I give a writing thing right at the beginning a lot of times that can kind of show me where they are with the words they use (Phyllis Initial AQ2).

Rather than focus on the district-mandated iReady diagnostic to provide student performance data, Phyllis preferred to witness it firsthand. She placed little value on numerical data (Phyllis initial AQ7). She used her own diagnostic assessments to help her tailor her instruction to meet the needs of her struggling students. Phyllis also liked to know the types of students she had in

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her classroom. In her initial interview, she explained how she wanted to know if they could follow directions and if they knew the basic genres of literature (Phyllis initial AQ1). Her forms of diagnostic assessment gave her information about each students' classroom background and knowledge of literature.

Rachel used both the iReady diagnostic like Naomi and alternative means like Phyllis to assess her students. Diagnostic scores from iReady helped Rachel see who her struggling readers were, and the program also provided the necessary instruction on their levels, "The diagnostic scores for iReady. It tells what level they are on. If I am teaching on seventh-grade level, they are getting instruction on third-grade level. It is just helping to bridge the gap" (Rachel Initial AQ2). Rachel also used more of an intrapersonal approach to initial data collection at the beginning of the school year:

> I ask them to write something. And within the writing, I can see how they are writing. But also, within the writing, I ask them to assess themselves um to see if what they need to grow in and what they need a big improvement in.… And then I assess for reading too. We will read something, and I will have them to answer a question or two to see what kind of responses I get (Rachel initial AQ1).

Rachel believed a writing assignment and a few comprehension questions were the best ways to get to know her students and their strengths and weaknesses at the beginning of the school year.

All participants had access to iReady diagnostic data. Naomi used iReady exclusively as her diagnostic tool. Phyllis preferred to observe her students reading aloud, following directions, and writing. Rachel used both iReady and questioning as diagnostic tools.

Formative assessment. Formative assessment was an important tool for these participants. All three participants utilized observation as a formative assessment tool. Naomi

and Phyllis incorporated a means of polling their students so they could quickly determine student understanding. Rachel preferred worksheets and bellringers as formative assessment.

Naomi used formative assessments such as bellringer voting and observation to help her determine student understanding and understand how to plan her next instructional move. When asked to explain her multiple-choice answer voting system, Naomi had this to say, "You can tell very quickly how much of the class got it right" (Naomi Follow2 Q9). The formative voting allowed Naomi to see quick results and then adjust her instruction to clarify misunderstandings. She could clearly see which answers were obviously wrong, and which answers were tricky through the students' hand responses. Students held up one finger for "A," two fingers for "B," and so forth. Naomi also used fist-to-five to assess student beliefs about their own understanding by using a simple visual representation of student feelings of competence about the topic (Naomi Follow 2 AQ9). The students used their fist to show Naomi how well they understood the topic, which helped her know when to adjust instruction.

During observations, Naomi used multiple forms of formative assessment in her classroom. She used bellringer voting on two instances (observation 1 and 6). She orally quizzed students about the theme (Naomi observation 1). Naomi used observation of student progress in finding the central idea in the iReady workbook (Naomi observation 4).

In terms of formative assessment, Phyllis preferred quick data that enhanced student engagement:

It [Plickers] helps to engage the kids because it uses technology and it is something they can hold onto to answer. That's the benefits for the students. But for me it gives me really quick data. So like they hold up those cards. I scan the room. I know whether

they have mastered the standard we are talking about in that question or not (Phyllis

Follow1 Q1).

Plickers is similar to clickers, but it is a smartphone application that uses QR codes. As

witnessed through observation, each student held up a Plicker card in the matching direction of

their answer choice, and the application produced quick results for Phyllis. Phyllis could then

project the results to the smartboard for the class to view (See Appendix D). The application

provided Phyllis with immediate results to help her adapt instruction.

Phyllis was a proponent of this type of numerical data; although, she professed hatred for

numerical data in general (Phyllis initial AQ7). While Phyllis did use numerical data in the form

of Plickers (See Appendix D), during classroom observations, she relied on her own observations

of student participation and attention to help her gauge the effectiveness of her instruction. For

example, during the first observation, she noted, "Your answer tells me you weren't paying

attention" (Phyllis observation 1). Thus, she based her beliefs about student performance on what

she witnessed in the classroom in regards to student participation and facial expressions.

Phyllis used several forms of formative assessment in the classroom. She utilized

Plickers for the results from the bellringer (Phyllis observation 1), and her students completed a

text structure and a reading passage quiz (Phyllis observations 2 and 3). Phyllis also

incorporated observation multiple times in order to check student responses for her activity cards

(Phyllis observation 4), circling of keywords (Phyllis observation 5), and completion of a graphic

organizer (Phyllis observation 6).

Rachel assessed formatively through worksheets and bellringers, "Assessments like

worksheets you know the bellringers things like that that are not for daily grades but is still

assessing what they know. It kinda helps me judge where the kids are" (Rachel Initial AQ3).

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During observation of Rachel's classroom, she used two forms of formative assessment: observation assessment of student work during a partner activity (Rachel observation 1) and a worksheet (Rachel observation 1).

Both Naomi and Phyllis used voting as a primary form of formative assessment, while Rachel preferred worksheets. All three participants used observation and bellringers as forms of formative assessment in this study.

Summative assessment. All three participants used an internet-based testing platform for their summative assessments. Naomi and Phyllis also utilized writing assessment as a means to assess reading summatively.

Naomi used a variety of assessment methods in her English classroom. She used summative assessments in the form of unit google classroom tests and cold read tests. Naomi discussed the design of her cumulative summative assessments, "The unit tests where they will have three or four standards they are testing on, and it is cumulative, so they are tested on old skills. It could have everything on the test by the end of the semester" (Naomi initial AQ3). It was common practice at this middle school to test cumulatively, teach all the required standards before Christmas, and then spend the remaining semester reviewing. Another type of summative assessment that Naomi used was called a cold read test. The students were expected to read a new passage and address a prompt through writing. During an observation, Naomi had students complete a bonus point activity using a previous unit test with her guidance (Naomi observation 2) and a cold read essay test (Naomi observation 3). In a state test driven district, Naomi found a way to provide initial feedback on a summative assessment and still have her students interested in working on old assessments (Naomi Observation 2). The bonus point activity allowed

students to learn how to answer the question, understand their mistakes, and become better test takers. She explained:

> The bonus point activity not only does it give you a chance to go back through the test
> and help them understand the question and the reasoning behind it, but you know behind
> each question but um it also gives them an opportunity to earn points back rather than just
> doing a curve where you say I just added 20 points (Naomi Follow1 Q7).

Naomi created a way to provide feedback, reteaching, and revision for extra credit. Naomi wanted her students to understand where they went wrong and how they could do better next time.

> For the majority of her weekly summative assessments, Phyllis preferred an online testing platform similar in structure to the state assessments:

> I mainly use Edulastic. Edulastic is really similar to the testing platform that they use
> with the state. Text on the left, question on the right, scrolling where they kind of get
> used to all that.... And it has like drag and drop type questions (Phyllis Follow2 Q13).

Using Edulastic for summative assessments allowed students to become familiar with and practice in the format of the state assessment and provided Phyllis with data. Phyllis also assessed through writing. For her summative assessment after the Marco Polo trial activity, Phyllis assessed through an essay. After witnessing the in-class trial, the students picked a side and wrote an argumentative essay. Students used a graphic organizer to help them organize their responses (Phyllis Follow2 Q12). Since the skills were evidence, claim, counterclaim, and rebuttal, an essay allowed Phyllis to determine if students understood the skills as well as the reading passages.

Rachel's primary summative assessment was the google classroom test, and the results of these tests could be monitored not only by her but also by the entire administration, including the superintendent. Rachel discussed her weekly summative assessment in her classroom, "Google classroom is a digital test. The administrators can see their results every two weeks. You know how they are performing through google classroom" (Rachel Initial AQ3). Rachel utilized the Google classroom weekly tests when she made decisions in her classroom, "I like to see the percentage of students who got [a question] correct" (Rachel Initial AQ6). Google tests allowed her to see percentages for each standard and each question on the tests. She used the comparison from week to week to see how students were growing. During the third observation, Rachel used the data from one of the weekly google classroom tests to help students understand the test, the format of the questions, and when they chose distractor answers. This allowed both Rachel and her students to see where the misconceptions and problems were on the test. Knowing the percentage correct for each question helped her make decisions and form beliefs about how well her students, and particularly struggling readers had mastered certain standards.

All three participants used an online unit or weekly summative assessment in the form of Google classroom or Edulastic. Naomi and Phyllis also mentioned writing as a summative assessment. Both Naomi and Rachel found it necessary to teach through summative assessments to help students understand the questions as well as their strengths and weaknesses related to answers they provided on the assessment.

Assessment: District Practices

The data wall was an essential fixture in this particular school district. Data walls were incorporated in every subject area classroom, beginning in third grade. The district was very data-driven, holding data meetings, encouraging the use of data walls, and highlighting the need

to identify the bottom 25%. When discussing the data walls with students, two of the teachers, Naomi and Rachel, explained each student's performance level and their assigned goal. Phyllis displayed her data wall; however, she preferred to rely on observational data.

Naomi obeyed her district's data wall requirement. She used instructional time to discuss student goals and their results, as shown on the data wall. Naomi had this to say about discussing the data wall with her students:

I spend like whole class periods discussing the data wall. Over the course of a day every class period talking about goals, talking about where they are, and where they need to be. … It was like almost every student in the school if they had got six more questions right than they had gotten right the year before, then they would meet their goal, and we would have been an A school.… We mapped out the test results, and we looked at their strengths and weaknesses on their um information sheet. It had for each standard how they did, and it also had how they scored on the first nine weeks test, and we talked about um because they had gotten their test scores back just recently with their report cards. And we talked about where their scores were and where that would put them on the board [data wall] and what their goal was (Naomi Follow2 Q3).

Naomi not only discussed the data wall and their performances with her students, but also she helped them determine their strengths and weaknesses based on their first nine weeks test using her strengths and weaknesses information sheet. Her students were able to see how they performed and set goals for the next assessment.

In addition to the data wall, Naomi's administrator required a list of her 25% students be sent to the office, which she found to be a waste of time and unfair to the rest of her students:

We have to fill out those forms with students we are going to move from this level to this

level. I am just copying down names.… I play their games.... It's a waste of my time.

What it means is we are not going to focus on Janie because she has no hope of moving

to the next level. We are going to spend all our focus on Johnnie because his is only a

few points away from the next level, and he can get our school another point (Naomi

initial AQ7).

The frustration with this mandated practice was evident in Naomi's words. She wanted all her

students to be a priority – not just those who qualify to move up in the future. During

observations, Naomi did not play favorites. She used her flippy chart to help her call on students

at random. She also checked on all students instead of focusing solely on the bottom 25% as

encouraged by her administration.

Phyllis' room had a data wall on display with confidential magnets placed across the

board in specific levels. While she did not believe in numerical data, she did adhere to the

district-mandated data wall policy. It was more of a decoration than a true part of the classroom

experience. Phyllis found numerical data trivial because she understood what her students knew

better than the results of one test:

I just don't want to put a number to a kid because that doesn't tell you what kind of

student they are. They may have had a bad day.… I just don't like data. I don't look at

it. I know my kids. I know what they are capable of. I know what they are not capable

of. … I don't need a number to tell me that they didn't get that (Phyllis initial AQ7).

Phyllis used her own judgment based on observation of student performance that she revised

throughout the school year to form her beliefs about the capabilities of her students rather than

relying on the district-mandated data wall. She preferred observation rather than numerical data.

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She used data the way she wanted and followed district guidelines about data displays as required. Phyllis found little weight in accountability results and numerical data. While numerical data can help inform teachers, Phyllis felt as if it was not a true representation of what her students could do. Phyllis believed that observational and formative data were more beneficial to her because she saw which students understood and which students were struggling. She did not believe in one test determining student performance, "I think that it was just what they were able to do at that moment or they were just a really good guesser or not so much" (Phyllis initial AQ6). Phyllis had doubts about the effectiveness of numerical data based on one assessment. She doubted it could truly gauge the understanding and skills of her students.

Rachel utilized that data wall in her classroom by using instructional time to address student performance, as shown on the data wall. When discussing the data wall, Rachel mentioned how some of her students were worried about placing their magnets on the board because they were unsure of where they would be placed. She explained:

> You know so just kind of um it shows them you know it makes them feel disappointed and so that they'll do better. Or it shows them that they are right on target and it makes them proud of themselves.... The kids already knew their score. It was just. You know they didn't know the goal that the school gave for them so um so um their magnets went where. (Rachel Follow1 Q6)

Although her students worried about their magnet placement and their projected goals, Rachel saw this as a motivational exercise that could encourage students to try harder next time. During one of her observations, Rachel had students working on an independent assignment while she discussed student goals and current placement of the magnets on the data wall. Students then placed their magnets on the data wall (Rachel observation 2).

This particular school district required the use of data walls and numerical data to drive instruction. Naomi and Rachel obeyed and spent time discussing the data wall with their students. Naomi even used an information sheet to show students their strengths and weaknesses based on the results from the assessment depicted on the data wall. Phyllis used her data wall more as a decoration mainly to meet her administrator's requirements because she believed numerical data were not as useful as other means. Like Phyllis' decorative data wall, Naomi completed her bottom 25% list to meet requirements. For both of these participants, Naomi and Phyllis, requirements simply had to be completed; not necessarily incorporated into classroom practice.

Assessment: Types of Feedback Provided by Teacher

Teacher feedback can be crucial to student understanding. All participants in this study used verbal and written feedback. Naomi used touch feedback, while Phyllis graded everything and provided feedback in the form of smiley faces. Rachel believed in immediate feedback.

Naomi provided one-on-one and whole group feedback. She used feedback in the form of verbal, written, and gestures. Naomi described the assessment feedback that she provided:

> Some one-on-one feedback like just a hand on the shoulder or a high five or a fist bump if they get it right.… Or positive feedback as well as about did very well. I provide a lot of that on-one-on as they are writing. I go around and look at their papers (Naomi Initial AQ4).

The feedback she provided was dependent on the type of assessment she administered. Sometimes Naomi's feedback was very specific, or sometimes it was simply a touch. During classroom observations, Naomi also provided feedback on how to improve, "You said this [pointing] is the central idea. Make sure your answers support this right here" (Naomi

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observation #4). Within the same class period, Naomi provided feedback to the same child, "Either you picked the wrong idea or the wrong support" (Naomi observation #4). Naomi also provided written feedback on student work.

Phyllis provided feedback in the form of grades on every single assignment:

And I grade everything. I tell them at the beginning of the year. (Whispers pretending to be a student) Are you going to grade this? I grade everything. Everything. Otherwise it's just busy work, and you don't have a true representation of how you are doing in the class. Plus, it kind of helps them out if they didn't do so well on this one. Maybe this will help bump it up (Phyllis Follow2 Q11).

By grading every single assignment, Phyllis gave students a complete picture of their performances in her classroom. The grades functioned as feedback to the students by showing them how they did, based on the total points possible. During an observation, Phyllis' students graded a partner's formative quiz paper; however, she did not discuss the grades with her students (Phyllis Observation 2). Phyllis went over the answers and called on students to justify as they graded the papers.

Phyllis described the type of assessment feedback she provided:

All kinds summative, formative. You know I sometimes just like with the praise just quick little things ok well that's good or ok well not quite where we are let's kind of take it a different direction. … I give verbal feedback. Written feedback. Do smiley faces count? I do a lot of smiley faces or frowny faces (Phyllis Initial AQ4).

Phyllis provided verbal, pictorial, and written feedback. Only verbal feedback was observed. Phyllis provided feedback through grades as well as other verbal and written feedback.

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Rachel incorporated written, verbal, and immediate feedback. Rachel discussed the types

of assessment feedback that she provided in her classroom:

When we are working in groups they get immediate feedback um I can walk around, and

grade their papers um one at a time, and you know give them just immediate feedback.…

And you have the ones where when they take their google classroom test, their test grade

shows up immediately as soon as they finish (Rachel Initial AQ4).

Rachel provided feedback that was immediate through grades. She also tried to incorporate

verbal and written feedback when she could.

All three participants used verbal and written feedback. Naomi used touch as a means to

provide feedback, while Phyllis used images like smiley faces. Rachel made sure her feedback

was given immediately through an online testing format or group work.

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HPL Theme Four: Community

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The fourth component of the HPL Framework is community (Darling-Hammond &

Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000). I asked teachers in this study about community factors such as

norms, class climate, and class environment. They were also observed in their classrooms with

specific community factors in mind.

Community: Norms and Procedures

Classroom norms are actions that take place normally inside the classroom. For instance,

self-directed learning, social learning, and raising hands for permission to speak are all examples

of norms in a classroom. Other community factors inside the classroom are routines and

procedures. Routines and procedures are established and consistent. Some examples of routines

and procedures are work submission procedures, group discussion procedures, and transitions.

Calling techniques. Two of the participants utilized a random calling technique, while one knew the importance of randomly calling on students, but failed to do it.

Naomi tried to call on all students and not just those who caught her attention or knew the answer to her questions. In terms of random calling, Naomi used what she called a flippy chart to call on a specific row and seat number combination. She spun her flippy chart and chose a random card to read aloud. This row seat combination told them the chosen student for a particular question or task. Naomi used her flippy chart technique two times during observation (Naomi Observation 1 and 6).

Phyllis utilized random calling by incorporating her wheel. When Phyllis spun the spinner on the wheel, it would land on a number. The number corresponded to a seat in the classroom. Then Phyllis chose that student for the question or task. There was also a hot seat selection indicated by a red piece of paper hidden underneath a student chair. Phyllis explained:

> I know one thing that I do that I started last year is the wheel over there. I had issues randomly calling. I had tried popsicle sticks and stuff like that, but I didn't really like it and so.… That kind of helps keep them on their toes, I guess, and they know that they can get called on even if they do struggle. So they better be prepared (Phyllis initial QK2).

Thus, the wheel provided a calling method that put everyone on an equal playing field. Anyone could be chosen at any time regardless of how many times they had already been chosen. According to Phyllis, the wheel eliminated the problem of only calling on students once in the class period. The wheel could call students as many times as it landed on their numbers. Multiple callings were also witnessed through observation. The wheel chose one student four times in the same class period. Phyllis remarked to the student, "The wheel must like you today"

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(Phyllis observation 3). Phyllis used random calling with her wheel when asking for student participation in discussion, questioning, and reading aloud.

One of the participants had trouble with random calling and had a habit of choosing certain people. Rachel explained:

You know I do have a problem with that. I think I pretty much um—I should have names in a bag and randomly call, but um sometimes, if they raise their hand, I will call on them. But I am missing calling on the ones that try to hide, and you know I can improve on that.…Just whoever's hand it up, and if I don't want anyone to raise their hand, I just call on someone. But sometimes I can call on um the same ones, and I think you know how you know somebody has a loud voice. And so, I am like I am going to call on this student to read because they read with a loud voice. I am not going to call on this student because it is going to be hard to hear them (Rachel Follow2 Q9).

Although she knew she had trouble with random calling, Rachel was content to continue her normal system. Unfortunately, this seemed to be the case in Rachel's classroom, at least some of the time. During classroom observations, Rachel tended to call on the same students to participate in class, especially during her literary and sound devices lesson (Rachel observation 5). During this observation, Rachel called on the same student multiple times to give examples of literary and sound devices. The male student had his hand raised each time; thus, she rarely called on anyone else in the class. Other students would just shout out answers because they were not getting called. Students calling out was the norm for this participant's classroom. Thus, Rachel called on certain students because of what she believed they could do and did not call on others because of her beliefs about what they could not do.

Participants in this study had different ways of calling on students to participate in class. Naomi and Phyllis used random calling by incorporating a flip chart and wheel of seat numbers, respectively. Rachel called on students she believed could answer her question or read well.

Classroom participation methods. All three participants believed in open discussion; however, they disagreed on the amount and timing of structure.

During observation of Naomi's classroom, I witnessed a structured yet open discussion environment. Naomi used a random calling tool she called flippy chart; however, she encouraged open student discussion (Naomi Observation 1 and 6). Naomi's students were eager to join in classroom discussions and understood when the discussion would change to individual student responses. Her students would hold lengthy discussions justifying their choices and providing reasoning, while others would offer counter-arguments to refute responses. Naomi used both open discussion and random calling in her classroom to help encourage her students to participate in the classroom discussion.

Phyllis began the school year with a more structured participation system; however, she preferred a relaxed discussion atmosphere as the school year progressed. Phyllis explained:

> They know that I like things really structured so they know that it's not just a big free for all shout out answers do this. I mean, they know controlled chaos.…By second nine weeks, I kind of I like for it to be more of discussion.… I like for them to be able to say their thoughts on it and not feel restrained by a question (Phyllis Follow1 Q10).

Thus, although she used more of a structured participation approach at the very beginning of the year, Phyllis slowly incorporated a more discussion-based approach as the year progressed. During observations, Phyllis' classroom was more of a discussion-based atmosphere. While she did call on the occasional student, she preferred for the students to speak out in response (Phyllis

Observation 1-6). Phyllis began the year very structured and then became more flexible and incorporated open discussion as the year progressed.

Rachel preferred discussion and noise unless her students needed more structure. Admittedly, her students did not really have training on raising their hands or discussion participation. Rachel explained:

> I have just never been the type of teacher where it has just been quiet, and you can hear a pin drop in my room. And I don't want to have them scared like that either. And so, when we are going over something now if it's getting wild and crazy then it is like ok stop raise your hand.…They really don't have any training in that when they come in here (Rachel Follow2 Q16).

Observation corroborated this response. Rachel's students spoke over each other, read aloud even when another student was selected, and even stopped class to argue (Rachel Observation 1, 3, and 6). Rachel ran an informal classroom with an open classroom participation method that allowed noise and conversation. Her students were open and free to speak unless they became out of hand and needed a more structured approach (Rachel Observation 1-6).

All three participants encouraged student participation differently. Naomi preferred an open, yet still structured, discussion, while Rachel preferred an open discussion with little to no structure. Phyllis began with a structure and moved to an open discussion as the year progressed.

Class structure. Middle school English classrooms have different structures. Part of developing a community involves helping students know what to expect from their classroom and their teacher.

Naomi's weekly format was very flexible and open to the needs of the content as well as her students. Naomi explained how her class worked when she discussed what students should know upon entering her classroom:

> I go really fast.… That doesn't mean the material goes too fast. It just means that the pace of the classroom is fast. Because you can do a whole lot of scaffolding and be moving through the material slowly but still working at a fast pace. Because otherwise you start to lose their attention. They need a lot of energy, movement in the classroom to hold their attention (Naomi initial CQ1).

Naomi moved at a fast pace to keep up the momentum and hold attention. While she did not stick to a structured weekly schedule, she did move fast, so her students remain engaged.

Phyllis had a very consistent classroom lesson schedule that varied little. Phyllis explained, "So just establishing that routine. They always know Monday we get a new standard. Tuesday, we gotta listen to her. Wednesday, we can talk it out" (Phyllis initial QC3). Each day's regular schedule with her students occurred during observations, as described above (Phyllis Observations 1-6). Phyllis taught the standard including vocabulary and question stems on Monday, she modeled the standard with a text on Tuesday, led guided practice in a group with a new text on Wednesday, provided an interactive activity and quiz on Thursday, and reviewed and tested on Friday (Phyllis initial QC3). This structure provided her students with consistency and normalcy each week. During one observation, Phyllis had to flip her schedule to incorporate teaching another teacher's class along with her own. It was clear that something was different about that day. The students seemed just a little bit shaken by the change in their regular routine (Phyllis Observation 4).

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Rachel was focused on student-centered learning this year and had structured her class atmosphere around her students. She discussed how her classroom structure of student-centered teaching impacted her community of learners:

I'm being forced from teacher-led to student-centered, and I'm finding that it does work so....We are all learning together. You will see them working more, and you don't see students falling asleep. But you have to make sure that everybody is on task and they are discussing the that they are following the lesson. And when they are doing that, they are learning at a higher level (Rachel initial CQ2).

I did not witness a student-centered learning approach during formal observations; instead, her approach seemed to be more teacher-led (Rachel Observation 1-6).

Participants in this study structured their day-to-day classrooms differently. Naomi believed in a fast-paced and flexible structure that allowed for adapting to the needs of the students. Phyllis adhered to a very consistent daily schedule. Rachel professed her use of a student-centered approach; although, observations proved otherwise.

Other norms. Participants in this study used norms to help their classrooms function efficiently. Two had similar norms relating to transitions, while the other trained her students to work in a group setting.

Naomi had other procedures in place to help make the day-to-day classroom operations run smoothly. Naomi used a countdown procedure to help students with transitions. She counted down from five to one (Naomi Observation 2, 3, 5, and 6). Naomi used the countdown procedure as a means to help with transition, provide a timeframe for student movement, handing in papers, and gaining attention. Naomi also had procedures in place for bellringers:

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We have a very set procedure on bellringers. Like we hand out those nobody gets up. Somebody just picks one up, and they count out enough to pass them down, and hand them to the next person, and they count out enough to hand to the next person, and they pass them down. So, no one has to be out of their seat walking around the classroom (Naomi Initial CQ3).

The procedures for transitions, passing in papers, and bellringers helped Naomi keep the class running smoothly with limited downtime and distractions. Naomi used bellringers during each of the observations. Although, during one observation, she flipped her schedule and had her students complete the bellringer at the end of the class period to accommodate students leaving early on a football trip (Naomi Observation 4). Naomi used classroom procedures to create a fluid environment to help keep her students on task and learning during their short time together.

One norm for Phyllis' classroom was tables. Most of her students have always sat in student desks, so she trained them to function in her classroom. Phyllis explained:

I have to kind of work on them with that because they are so used to sitting you know in little rows and not having that—I don't know—being able to interact but at the same time you need to stay on topic and not have those squirrel topics that where you are talking about what you were eating for dinner last night (Phyllis initial QC3).

Norms like the introduction of tables and discussion procedures took time to instill with students. Phyllis incorporated tables in her classroom because she wanted to have an atmosphere conducive to discussion and sharing ideas.

In terms of other norms that were prevalent in her classroom, Rachel mainly discussed her transition procedure and exit tickets. She explained:

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When I count down from 10 to 1… when I start counting down that they can find a

partner and when I get to 1 they have to be with a partner and get started with working on

whatever it is that we are working on.…Counting down from 10 to 1 to get the room back

into order. They know that whatever we are working on is an exit ticket....That is my

way of making them accountable (Rachel Initial CQ3).

Using a transitional time frame helped Rachel keep her students accountable for following

directions in a short amount of time. The exit ticket also provided accountability. These norms

in Rachel's classroom helped her keep it in order. Rachel used her countdown procedure several

times during observation (Rachel Observation 4 and 5), and she used an exit ticket (Rachel

Observation 3). The countdown procedure helped students transition from instruction to partner

work in one case and helped them pack up in another. Exit tickets were short assignments that

had to be submitted before leaving the classroom. Rachel used exit tickets and transitional

procedures as norms to help establish routines in her community of learners.

Naomi and Rachel both used countdown norms to help students with transitions. Naomi

used an entrance ticket or bellringer, while Rachel preferred an exit ticket. Phyllis' norms

involved teaching students how to continue learning while in a table group setting.

Community: Class Climate

Another important aspect of the classroom community is the classroom climate. While

there are several ways of establishing a classroom climate, the participants in this study focused

on three avenues: using humor, creating a safe space, and getting to know the students.

Jokes. Two of the participants used humor in their classrooms to build community. One used humor to provide engagement and movement, while the other used humor to lighten student frustration.

Naomi utilized jokes not only for her students, but also for herself. When asked why she incorporated jokes, Naomi explained that jokes and laughter helped students maintain focus and even provided movement:

> To keep their attention. Um. Straight lecture can be really boring you gotta find ways to spice that up. Uh. I get bored, so jokes are my way of entertaining myself while I do the lesson, especially by sixth period.… It's just part of my personality, but it really helps to maintain their attention, and um it gives them some activity too (Naomi Follow1 Q3).

Thus, humor helped Naomi retain attention, provide movement, and limit boredom. During observations, Naomi used humor in almost every visit. She mocked a thinker by placing her hand under her chin, turning her head to the side, making a crazy face, and then smiling to get him to return to task (Naomi Observation 3). Naomi used jokes and humor as a means to keep her students involved in the lesson and also alert.

Phyllis enjoyed teaching with a sense of humor even when students made mistakes. Here she explained how she handled mistakes with humor in her classroom:

> I hate to say making fun of them but to [laughter] to just kind of let them know what they are doing wrong in a funny way. I guess. I don't know I like to think of myself as funny. They don't always agree, but just to kind of to keep a sense of humor in there.…But just trying to hate on them without actually hating on them (Phyllis Initial CQ4).

Phyllis believed humor and jokes were ways to lighten frustrating moments and allowed the student to get on task without compromising his or her self-esteem. During observations, Phyllis

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made a face and remarked to a student, "You know you can't stay mad at me." She then made a cheesy smile and laughed. The student laughed too (Phyllis Observation #5). Phyllis incorporated humor in the classroom climate to correct students but also build a rapport with them.

Naomi was a jokester and incorporated humor to gain student attention, decrease boredom, and provide movement through laughter. Phyllis used humor as a way to lessen the severity of mistakes and difficult moments. Rachel did not mention humor in interviews or use humor during observations. This is not to say Rachel's class did not enjoy the occasional moment of laughter. Laughter occurred naturally instead of it being used as a tool to build community.

Safe space. Creating a safe space for students to feel comfortable discussing, reading, and participating in classroom activities was an important part of creating a positive classroom climate.

Creating a safe environment for oral reading was a priority for Phyllis:

I had a kid who told me after I called on him one day to read…he just looked at me in the face and said I'm not gonna read that. I said oh ok ok, and I asked another student to help him out. And once they got started on something else, I took him outside and kind of talked to him about you know I expect you to read you know this is a safe space nobody is going to laugh at you (Phyllis Initial LQ4).

Phyllis wanted her classroom to be a safe place where students could make mistakes without fear of ridicule. During an observation, Phyllis reminded her students, "If I ask you to read, read loud and proud. There are no judgments. If you mess up, who will help? Me" (Phyllis Observation 2). Thus, Phyllis held all of her students accountable for reading aloud and participating because

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they had her support. Phyllis created a safe space so her students could feel comfortable enough to read aloud and answer questions.

Rachel created a safe space in her classroom for students:

And if you um hear anyone say anything negative, you address it right then. You know because that can really um influence them not to try. And so, you just make it a comfortable place, safe place where they can you know read something or say how they feel about or answer a question (Rachel initial LQ4).

Rachel tried to make her a classroom safe space where students learned and did not feel bullied or embarrassed. During observations, Rachel's classroom was a safe space that allowed students to work with a partner or work alone, depending on which way was more comfortable to them (Rachel Observation 1). Rachel had a private conversation in the hallway with an argumentative student rather than allowing the student to act foolish in front of her peers (Rachel Observation 5). Before the hallway conversation with the argumentative student, Rachel deescalated the situation calmly and asked her to wait in the hallway. Rachel created a safe space in her classroom, where students could feel comfortable to participate.

Both Rachel and Phyllis tried to create a safe space for students to read aloud and participate in class without ridicule. Both used private conferences to help students who were needing additional support. Naomi did not address creating a safe space for her students during interviews or observations.

Building relationships. Creating a classroom community through teacher-student relationships involved handling misbehavior, helping to make students comfortable, and making students feel special.

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Using student and teacher relationships to help create a positive classroom climate was important to these participants. Part of this involved helping students feel special. Naomi explained:

> I tease and pick and joke around, and I try to include all of them equally. Not just favorites or not just the outspoken ones. I like to pull in the quiet ones and try to make them feel a part of it. The turn-and-talk builds community because it has to be the person they are sitting next to, which may or may not be a person they know or like (Naomi initial CQ2).

Naomi tried to put every student on an equal playing field in her classroom. She wanted them all to feel special and important, especially the shy ones. She also incorporated classroom discussion and partner work, so her students felt a part of the community by engaging with other students in the classroom. Naomi used row groups (Naomi Observation 1 and 5) and turn and talks (Naomi Observation 6) to build community through conversation. Part of building a community in Naomi's classroom involved time to interact with peers as well as interacting with her. Naomi created a positive classroom environment through building relationships with and between students.

On the other hand, part of the classroom climate involved dealing with misbehavior. Naomi described how she handled it:

> Oh anytime they are turned around and talking to somebody or trying to be a clown. … I draw attention to the fact that they don't know what the question is. I can't help them to be successful answering the question immediately or follow up questions if they don't give me their attention. If necessary small punishments. But usually singling them out works most of the time (Naomi initial KQ6).

Naomi handled misbehavior by calling attention to it and addressing it immediately. During observations, Naomi assigned writing, moved student desks, corrected behavior with hand signals, and verbally reprimanded students. Naomi believed that keeping her students accountable for paying attention and being on task was a necessary part of the classroom community.

Developing a community involved providing encouragement and building teacher-student relationships. Phyllis explained:

> I hate to say positivity but just giving them words of encouragement. Like even if they struggled to read something aloud or to understand what this text is asking, you know well that's alright, we are going to work on it. That's ok (Phyllis initial AQ5).

Phyllis provided encouragement to one of her students struggling on a text structure quiz, "This is kind of tricky, so really think about it. You can do it" (Phyllis Observation 2). Providing encouragement built community because it helped develop trust. Phyllis built teacher-student relationships through encouragement and positivity. She wanted to show her students they could be successful even though they struggled.

Part of developing a classroom community meant building trust through teacher-student relationships. Rachel believed that getting to know her students, developing trust, and helping them feel valued was important:

> Over the course of the year, you get to spend fifty minutes a day with them, and you learn their personalities.…Giving them the tools that they need to be successful you know at the end of the year, developing that student-teacher relationship, that's you know rewarding.…But you have to really develop a good relationship with them in order to teach them (Rachel initial ending #1).

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Rachel built a community of learners by getting to know her students on a personal level.

Rachel also believed in honesty. When discussing how to critique students, Rachel believed in an honest approach:

> Well, I have found that kids want you to be honest with them and they want to be better.… You always give them something good before you give them the critique, and they are able to receive it better. But if you just critique, they may feel bad, so just make sure you say something you know good about what they are doing and then gently move into the critique (Rachel initial LQ8).

Rachel believed in being honest with her students and softening criticism with kindness. Rachel used honesty and kindness to soften criticism. During an observation, Rachel told a student, "You have a green magnet. Your goal is to be in green, but you made blue. I need you to work harder to get into green" (Rachel Observation 2; Appendix D). The student's goal was green, but his performance was in the blue, which was one level lower than his projected score. By providing teacher support and honest communication, Rachel created a positive classroom climate. Rachel's honesty helped her develop a teacher-student relationship built on trust.

Building teacher-student relationships was very important to these participants. Naomi tried to make all her students feel special as well as build peer relationships and teacher-student relationships. Naomi also took misbehavior seriously. Phyllis believed in providing positive encouragement to her students. Rachel preferred to get to know her students as well as build trust through honesty.

Community: Classroom Environment

One element of the classroom environment was seating. Seating arrangements provided structure to the class environment.

While most of the participants used individual student desks, Phyllis preferred tables. Phyllis explained why the use of tables helped create a community:

> Tables help. I love tables. There are some teachers who hate tables. I love them because it fosters that environment of ok if I'm struggling, maybe the person across from me isn't. If they are struggling, we know we need to call the teacher to kind of help with it (Phyllis initial CQ2).

Phyllis' classroom contained six student tables with four chairs (Phyllis Observation 1-6). Phyllis believed her classroom environment was made better through the use of tables because it fostered conversation and community.

Another way Phyllis created a classroom environment was by setting the mood through lighting:

> I like to set mood lighting where I turn one of the lights off because if the lights are super bright then they don't want to I don't know. That sounds weird, but I have noticed a difference in the activity level from when the lights are on really bright to when I have kind of got it, yeah. It sets the tone (Phyllis initial KQ2).

During observations, Phyllis did keep part of the lights off (Phyllis Observations 1-6). Phyllis used lighting to set the mood in her classroom environment. She also had blue fabric over the light fixtures to soften the fluorescent lights.

Organization was also very important to Phyllis and her classroom environment:

> Red pens and the plicker cards. So, the plicker cards stay in there just organization, you know, because they would be all over the floor and everywhere else if I didn't have a basket.... If we do stuff with glue sticks or scissors where we have to cut and paste stuff,

I'll put that stuff in there, but it just helps keep them organized and me too (Phyllis

follow1 Q12).

Pink baskets containing Plicker cards, red pens, and other items were in the center of each table

in Phyllis' room during each observation (Phyllis Observation 1-6). Phyllis provided and

maintained the organization of supplies needed in her classroom in order to keep an orderly

classroom environment.

Rachel's students sat in desks and had a seating chart. Certain rows of desks were turned

towards the center of the room, while others faced the front of the room. Rachel changed her

seating arrangement halfway through the observation process due to student behavior:

It was more behavior related. The other way, I had enough room to walk around for the

proximity. You know how they um rate you, or um or they want you to walk around the

room, and it was easier to do it that way. But the behavior or them just facing each other

just didn't work. It worked last year but not this year with this group of kids (Rachel

follow2 Q1).

During observations, the seating arrangement in Rachel's room changed because having her

students face each other was not working as well as it had in previous years (Rachel Observation

4). Rachel modified her classroom desk arrangement based on student behavior.

Phyllis created a classroom environment through table seating, organization baskets, and

lighting. Rachel changed her classroom seating arrangements due to her students' behavior.

Naomi did not address her classroom environment during interviews; however, she had her

classroom arranged where student desks around the sides of the classroom were facing the center

of the room and other students. The middle rows faced forward to the smartboard. This seating

arrangement seemed to allow for easy discussion since the students could see each other.

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Community: Teacher Expectations

Part of creating a community in the classroom involved having consistent teacher expectations. Naomi held high behavioral expectations, while Phyllis held high academic expectations.

When the school moved the bubble students around, Naomi worried about moving one of her behavior problems into her advanced group. Naomi told the student her expectations before the move, and it proved successful:

And one of them that moved to advanced class um was one of the behavior problems I was having. And she was feeding off the others around her, and um and I told her when they moved her to the advanced class, I said you are not going to be able to play and goof off like you do in my seventh-period class. I said this fifth-period class they are serious about learning, and they are serious about their grades. I said they are not going to think your behaviors are cute at all. I said, so I just want you to know that I expect a lot of change out of you. And she walked in that room, and the first two weeks she was scared to peep. But she is getting a little more comfortable but and that is good. I don't want her to be uncomfortable, but I want her immaturity, her silliness, her attention-seeking behaviors to stop because she is rude (Naomi Follow2 Q4).

Naomi expressed her expectations to the attention seeking student before having her move into another class. By presenting her expectations early, the student knew how to behave in the new classroom community.

Phyllis held high expectations for her students. When discussing her policy on homework, Phyllis explained her expectations for her students:

I don't really like homework. I feel like they do enough during the day, and it is just stressful on a parent to have to go home and worry about stuff like that. But they know that if they don't get it done if they don't work hard getting it done here, then they finish it at home. And I grade everything (Phyllis Follow2 Q11).

Phyllis mentioned during multiple observations that work not completed during class was homework (Phyllis Observation 1, 3, and 6). This promise of unfinished work becoming homework seemed to hold students accountable for working while in the classroom. Phyllis held students accountable for classroom work by holding high expectations of their work ethic.

Naomi and Phyllis held high expectations for their students. Naomi held high expectations for behavior, especially for students who were generally behavior problems. Phyllis held high expectations for the completion of classwork. Any work not completed in class was automatically considered homework. Rachel did not discuss teacher expectations in interviews.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the beliefs and practices of middle school teachers of struggling adolescent readers. I addressed teacher responses according to each component of the How People Learn Framework. Findings showed that teachers believed struggling adolescent readers were social individuals who lacked foundational skills to combat the rigor of the content and the curriculum standards. Teachers used motivation techniques, discussion strategies, various assessment tools, and relationship building methods to combat hindrances. In the next chapter, I discuss these findings as well as provide implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I review the purpose of the study and the methodology. Findings from Chapter IV are discussed in connection to the relevant research. Finally, I address the implications and recommendations for future studies.

Review of Findings

Purpose of Inquiry

The purpose of this research was to understand middle school teachers' beliefs about struggling adolescent readers as well as those teachers' best practices for working with struggling adolescent readers. Two questions guided my research:

1) What do middle school teachers believe about struggling adolescent readers?

2) What do middle school teachers of struggling adolescent readers do during instruction?

Methods and Procedures

I conducted a qualitative case study based on data including interviews, observations, and documents from three middle school English teachers. I chose three English teachers as participants based on principal recommendation. I conducted three interviews and observed teachers six times during the first semester of the school year. I used the HPL Framework (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000) as the theoretical framework for this research study and to guide the creation of interview and observation protocols as well as data analysis.

Findings

  I used the HPL Framework as a lens for my study, which served as the basis for data collection, analysis, and presentation of the findings. Here, I briefly summarize the data analysis within each component of the HPL theory. Then I list the major findings.

  The learner component encompasses what the learner brings into the classroom as well as teacher beliefs about learners (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000). The participants in this study discussed many aspects of adolescence. They understood that adolescents are social beings who need contact with peers of their choosing and that adolescents need support and motivation to succeed. The teachers told me that lack of willingness, home factors, or school factors hinder adolescents in their classrooms. The most notable finding was the participants' use of external regulation. In this study participants used rewards and punishments to encourage student performance on assessments.

  The knowledge component deals with what is to be taught and learned—the content and pedagogy (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000). In terms of knowledge, the teachers in the study discussed how their adolescents had limited foundational and vocabulary skills, which caused them to struggle with complex text and curriculum standards. There were two important findings based on the knowledge section of the HPL. First, in this study teachers had a low opinion of a student's ability to grow if he or she lacked foundational skills. Second, these teachers preferred to use discussion strategies to assist struggling readers because it provided an avenue for students to hear explanations from their peers.

  The assessment component of the HPL theory deals with how teachers formatively and summatively assess students and provide them with feedback (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000). All of the participants used numerical assessment data as a main source of

assessment information; although, not all of the participants believed that numerical data were their primary assessment tool. The most interesting finding of the assessment section dealt with the various implementations of data walls as required by the district administration. While the district required all tested-area teachers, including the teachers in this study, to incorporate data walls into their instruction, these three teachers had very different ways of adhering to the requirement in terms of how publicly and frequently they used their data walls.

The community component encompasses those things that enhance the learning environment to help students thrive (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NRC, 2000). The findings showed that teachers in this study worked to have effective procedures in place as well as to provide a safe learning environment. Within the community component, I found that all three teachers supported building positive relationships with and between students.

Overall, there were five findings worth exploring further:

1. Participants used and were even encouraged to use external regulation to encourage student performance on summative and accountability assessments. (learner)

2. Participants believed the lack of foundational reading skills may cause students to continue to struggle through adolescence. (knowledge)

3. Participants used discussion strategies to enhance instructional practices. (knowledge)

4. The district required data walls, but the participants incorporated them in various ways depending on their beliefs. (assessment)

5. Participants believed building positive relationships with and between peers may enhance the classroom learning environment. (community)

Discussion

Next, I discuss the five findings in detail and in connection to the literature.

External Regulation

Participants in this study believed rewards and punishment were the best ways to motivate students to perform on summative and accountability assessments. This stance was reinforced by the district's administrators. Teachers used external rewards and punishments in very public and visible ways. For example, Naomi's unsuccessful students witnessed other students receiving rewards that the unsuccessful students did not earn. Her successful students received their movie reward, while she and her unsuccessful students worked in a neighboring classroom. The school's architecture allowed the movie and the students' enjoyment to be heard clearly in the next room. Phyllis and Rachel's students were allowed to witness their peer's shame. Phyllis used her student's weekly test scores to determine student placement at her tables. Therefore, her students or guests could easily see how other students performed on the previous summative assessment. Her tables were named Advanced, Proficient, Passing, Basic, and Minimal. Rachel's use of a data wall forced her students to show their performances publicly. She would even call them into the hallway to give students with bad outcomes a "pep talk" in the hallway before placing their magnets. Even when her students begged not to go before the class, she reminded them that everyone would have a turn, and hopefully, they will never have to experience this feeling again. Negative motivators like losing the movie reward, sitting at the minimal or basic table, or publicly presenting your bad grade were commonplace for these participants. They were excited during interviews as they described the great motivational tools they were using to improve test scores. They believed their students were more motivated than ever to score higher on their assessments.

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Although evidence suggests that tangible, extrinsic rewards and punishments do not work in the long run and have a diminishing power over time to motivate behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000), these participants believed they were using "tangible rewards" and "punishment avoidance" to motivate their learners to perform on the state assessment. I believe it is partially because they felt like it was the best way to get students to show growth and partially because they were encouraged by colleagues and administrators to use these methods.

Their actions are not consistent with research on motivation. Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) encompasses a hierarchy of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These participants seemed to be encouraging external regulation, which means an individual is motivated by external factors like receiving tangible rewards (positive) or avoiding a punishment (negative) (Alivernini, Lucidi, & Manganelli, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Naomi and Rachel used tangible rewards such as food, movies, and free time to encourage their students to perform on accountability assessments. All three participants also used punishment avoidance rewards to encourage student achievement on accountability assessments. Both types of rewards were likely to undermine their students' intrinsic motivation (Alivernini et al., 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). These types of rewards are dependent on the giver and do not continue once the need is over (Alivernini et al., 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Once the test is over, the motivation is gone.

Limited Foundational Skills

All three participants believed that students lacked strong foundations in reading. Naomi believed there was a slight possibility of improvement, even if students had limited foundational knowledge. She believed it would be extremely difficult to make substantial gains after third-grade. Phyllis compared reading foundational skills with mathematics. Without the basics, she believed it would be difficult to master later concepts. Rachel believed a student's lack of

foundational skills made reading and especially comprehension difficult. She believed students

who could not decode words would be unable to read fluently, which would make their

comprehension suffer. The lack of foundational skills was one of the reasons I was interested in

studying teacher beliefs and practices for struggling adolescent readers. I experienced similar

problems when I was a teacher. Students who had been passed to the next grade often arrived in

middle school with limited foundational skills, which made teaching more advanced skills

difficult. Many adolescents need help mastering foundational skills like fluency and vocabulary

instead of solely focusing on comprehension; although, foundational skills are not an

instructional priority of secondary teachers (Clemens, Simmons, Simmons, Wang, & Kwok,

2017).

However, the literature does not support the belief that struggling readers who lack

foundational skills must be doomed to low reading performace for the rest of their lives.

Participants in this study seemed to believe there was little they could do to address students'

reading difficulties. Evidence suggests that struggling adolescent readers benefit from the help of

supportive teachers, opportunities to read, explicit strategy and vocabulary instruction, and other

practices (Allington, 2012; Hall et al., 2011). However, if teachers do not believe that

adolescents can learn and become fluent readers, struggling middle school readers may not

receive the support they need.

Strategies for Promoting Discussion

All three participants in this study mentioned discussion as a best practice for working

with all students, not just struggling adolescent readers. These participants mentioned turn-and-

talk, jigsaw, and questioning as effective discussion strategies.

Naomi preferred to use the turn-and-talk strategy. Turn-and-talk is a procedure that allows students to share their thoughts with a peer (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). She wanted each of her students to work with a partner to discuss and justify their answers. Harvey and Goudvis (2007) explain the purpose of turn and talk, "The purpose of this is threefold: To process information, to enhance understanding, and to maximize engagement" (p. 54). Naomi believed the turn-and-talk procedure provided struggling students the opportunity to hear from a classmate before it was their turn to share their answers in front of the class. Harvey and Goudvis (2007) suggest, "Less confident kids have a chance to first rehearse their thinking and feel more confident to share it" (p. 54).

Phyllis believed her students needed the opportunity to put text in their own words. She incorporated strategies like jigsaw. Harvey and Goudvis (2007) state, "Jigsawing is both authentic and engaging because kids assume the responsibility for reading a small amount of text carefully and then teaching what they have learned to others" (p. 54). Phyllis placed her students in groups and assigned them a part of the text to read together and put in their own words. Students then switched groups. After switching groups, each student shared his or her portion with his or her new group and ultimately heard the entire passage in everyday language. Frank, Gross, and Standfield (2006) suggest, "By more participants assuming responsibility for various segments of a text, greater clarification of the content occurs. This shared ownership in the discussion of the text gets everyone engaged in the dialogue" (p. 116). By having all of her students work in groups to put the text in their own words, they were able to discuss and assist each other. When it came time to share their summaries, they presented what they had practiced with their original groups. Hearing the passage in everyday language helped Phyllis' students understand the text.

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Rachel encouraged discussion through questioning. Rosenshine (2012) suggests:

> Questions allow a teacher to determine how well the material has been learned and
>
> whether there is a need for additional instruction. The most effective teachers also ask
>
> students to explain the process they used to answer the question, to explain how the
>
> answer was found. Less successful teachers ask fewer questions and almost no process
>
> questions. (p. 14)

Rachel used questioning and class discussion to teach interactions and influences. As Rachel asked questions, her students returned to the text to find the interactions, influences, and results. As students answered her questions, they had to reference the location in the text, and they marked it accordingly. They also worked with partners to complete an interactions and influences graphic organizer based on a new passage.

All of these discussion strategies allowed students to engage with the texts and the content being in the text. They may not have helped struggling readers to become more proficient at reading, but they did allow students to engage with the material and be active participants in the class, consistent with the teachers' focus on creating a positive learning environment.

Data Walls

Data walls received a mixed review from the teachers who participated in this study. Naomi used a data wall as a discussion starter. She preferred to have her students map out their strengths and weaknesses on a chart of her creation and then compare their results to the data wall. Naomi placed the magnets herself, and the students knew their magnet numbers for reference. This method was relatively private but still posted student performance data for all to view. Phyllis said that she believed a data wall was useless, which was the same opinion she had

of any type of numerical data. Rather than relying on the results of one test, Phyllis preferred to

base her judgments on formative, specifically observational, data. She used the data wall more

as a decoration for the administrators to view during tours and observations. In sharp contrast to

her colleagues' practices, Rachel believed data walls motivated her students to work harder. She

had her students publicly place their magnets regardless of how well or poorly they performed.

The district required all state-tested area teachers, beginning with third grade, to post and

utilize a data wall. For classroom teachers like Naomi and Phyllis, the students could view a

relatively private overview of their performance as a class by glancing at the data wall. They

could see if most magnets or data points were above or below proficient. In Rachel's classroom,

however, students publicly placed their magnets on the data wall one at a time and in full view of

their peers, causing multiple reactions and emotions. Some students bragged to their friends,

while others felt shame. The students in all three classes would have similar feelings and

reactions when viewing their magnet placements; however, Rachel's students felt these feelings

in front of their peers at a time in their lives when they were vulnerable and developing socially.

There are two types of data walls. One type of data wall is private and used by the entire

faculty to see the complete picture of each student, whole classes, and the school (Hengle, 2016;

Nabaa-Mckinney, 2019; Sharrot & Fullan, 2012). The other type of data wall is placed in

classrooms, so teachers see the data of just their students (Cuban, 2018).

The teachers' use of public, classroom-based data walls was not consistent with

recommendations about best use of data walls to improve overall instruction. According to

Hengel (2016), "Data walls are a visual representation of integral data that members of your

organization have access to" (para. 2). There are recommended practices for school data walls.

They should match the school's mission statement, contain both academic and non-academic

information, and be located in a secure environment that is easily accessible by the faculty, but keep the data private (Hengle, 2016; Sharrot & Fullan, 2012). This type of data wall provides a holistic view of each student, provides teachers with feedback about their instruction, and gives faculty the ability to view individual student data within the school context. Sharrott and Fullan (2012) believe data walls provide valuable conversations that stakeholders can use to meet the needs of students and the goals of the school. In order to understand the whole child, Hengle (2016) suggests using grade level color-coded data cards for each student. These cards should include test scores, a list of services provided, "office discipline referrals, attendance, ... common assessment scores, GPA, credits attained, or data from online learning platforms" (Hengle, 2016, para. 4). This type of data wall ensures the faculty is aware of student needs, school and student goals, and faculty decisions. According to Hengel (2016):

> The use of data walls can be a dynamic learning tool that also serves a purpose to inform the decision -making process. The visual depiction provides a quick representation across multiple data measures to ensure that your student's needs are being met by staffing, aligning curriculum and instruction, and providing proper programming. (para. 6)

Data about the effectiveness of data walls is mixed. In a mixed methods dissertation focusing on the implementation of school data walls, Nabaa-Mckinney (2019) found that second-through seventh-grade students in her data wall cohort did better with school data wall implementation than the other cohort, while eighth-graders did worse. Principals in this study supported data-driven instructional practices, but they preferred formative and summative assessment data rather than relying on state test data (Nabaa-McKinney, 2019). Teachers in this study believed data-driven instruction was beneficial to their teaching practices; however, data walls were time consuming to create, inconveniently located for everyone, and limited the time

they had to complete other tasks (Nabaa-Mckinney, 2019). A school-wide, faculty-used data wall was not used or mentioned by any of the participants in the current study.

The second type of data wall is a classroom data wall created by individual teachers with only his or her students listed. According to best practice recommendations, in a classroom, the data wall markers should be confidential. Cuban (2018) suggests, "Usually, students have numbers or aliases assigned to mask their identity. Of course, most students find out who is who" (para. 2). The participants in this study used this type of data wall. They each had a classroom data wall with confidential magnets, or markers, to represent students. The magnet color indicated the goal that the school district set for the student. The magnet placement represented the score the student earned on either the accountability assessment or one of the district common assessments. Teachers changed the data wall continuously to match the results of the most recent assessment. Instead of creating a visual image of the whole student as described in the first type of data wall, these data walls simply reflected one test result and the school district's goal for each student.

Data walls create a "trilemma" (Cuban, 2018). According to his blog post, Cuban (2018) believes the trilemma is "the clash of values that teachers hold dear: holistic development of children and youth, obligation to mind what school and district officials require to be done in classrooms, and professional autonomy to do what is best for student learning" (para. 10). This "obligation to mind" seems to be the case with these participants, especially Phyllis and possibly Naomi. Naomi would most likely consider her bottom 25% list to be an "obligation to mind." Rachel seemed to view the data wall as a motivational tool, and she may or may not have seen it as an obligation. Cuban (2018) suggests that data walls are used as a sacrifice to satisfy

mandates and used the term "satisfice" to describe teachers' attitudes toward data walls. Cuban (2018) believes:

> For schools and teachers, "data walls" are *satisfices*. It is a compromise that *satisfies* the
> value of professional autonomy–teachers create and tailor the displays of data in their
> classrooms. "Data walls" meet the professional obligation of doing what the district and
> principal wants, i.e., focusing on improving students' grasp of content and skills on the
> state test. (para. 12)

Building Relationships

Positive teacher-student relationships are beneficial to adolescents (Andrews, 2013; Scales, 2010). All three teachers believed building relationships with their students would enhance the learning environment. Naomi encouraged relationships between students by using humor to laugh with her students. It was important to her that they all felt included in the lesson and the fun. She also utilized partner work and discussion to provide ample opportunities for students to build relationships with each other while learning. Naomi wanted her students to enjoy each other and learn as well. She believed group work was an opportunity to socialize while learning, so she used group work often. Phyllis built relationships through words of encouragement when students were struggling with concepts or needing extra support. She also provided a support system with her table seating arrangement so struggling students could ask a peer for assistance. Rachel focused on getting to know her students and making them feel valued. She sought to develop an atmosphere of trust and honesty, so her students would feel comfortable in her classroom. She wanted to be more than just their teacher. Rachel wanted to be someone who cared about them.

The teachers' actions are consistent with the literature about classroom environments. Students who experience positive teacher-student relationships and a positive school community tend to perform better in school (Crosnoe et al., 2004; Niehaus et al., 2012; Roesner et al., 1996). Positive classroom communities and relationships can be built through humor and smiles as well as consciously using names, listening, and watching tone (Bean & Harper, 2005; Johnson, 2012). Positive school relationships helped to ameliorate some of the negative consequences of low expectations, extrinsic rewards, and data walls. For the most part, students seemed comfortable with teachers in this study and laughed and joked in class. Teachers felt positive about their relationships with students and their classroom environments.

Implications

School leaders have a major impact on what happens in the classroom. District policies, although well intended, such as data walls and extrinsic motivation rewards, could have a negative impact on teachers and students. Teachers in this study implemented the practices advocated by their administrators, to the detriment of their students. Administrators may need to reevaluate policies that could negatively impact teachers and students. In this study, the school district required data walls to be on display in classrooms to help motivate teachers and students to meet or exceed the goals set by the school district. Unfortunately, the public display of magnet placement caused some students and teachers to feel uncomfortable in the classroom. All classrooms starting in third grade were required to display and maintain data walls with anonymous student information in this district. While the magnets were numbered and anonymous, the public parade of placement was not. Would it not be more beneficial to use strength and weakness forms like Naomi to provide a full picture of what students can do?

Surely viewing a well-rounded picture of both diagnostic, formative, and summative data would be more beneficial than a data wall showing one score and one goal.

External regulation was also heavily relied upon due to the pressure to meet accountability standards. In this district, teachers and administrators extrinsically rewarded students for meeting their district assigned goals, moving performance levels, and showing growth. So much emphasis on student rewards decreased instructional time while teachers read off lists of names, passed out permission slips, previewed rewards with students, and held reward promotion assemblies. Extrinsic motivation does have a place in student motivation, but should it have such a large role?

District control over time and autonomy in the classroom was problematic. In this particular district, teachers must have all grade level content taught by Christmas and then begin to review for the remainder of the year. This "hurry up and teach it" mentality left many students lost in the shuffle, and many teachers concerned about their limited ability to assist their struggling learners. Teachers in this district had common assessments and lesson plans, which told them what, how, and when to teach. If students fell behind or misunderstood concepts, there was no time to reteach. The iReady program became their standard tool for remediation. Has this district placed too much emphasis on preparing for state assessments and lost sight of helping struggling students?

One implication of this study is that district policies are not implemented consistent. Different guidelines have different impacts on teachers, even within the same school district. Teachers used data walls differently, used different rewards and consequences, broke some rules as they saw fit and did the best they could. Naomi fed her students constantly. Phyllis secretly used lower Lexile passages. Rachel just kept teaching regardless of student understanding

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because she believed district policies were best. One implication is that administrators who are interested in consistent implementation of reforms may want to regularly visit with teachers and understand variation in implementation across contexts. Another implication is that administrators' recommendations may not be the best fit for teachers and students, and that teachers' beliefs are combined with school rules to "satisfice" requirements. Teachers may not change their practices if their underlying beliefs about learners, knowledge, assessment, and community do not change.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study took place in one high achieving middle school in the rural south. The community was supportive of education and public schooling. It would be interesting to extend this study by comparing findings across districts in the same region or other geographic locations with similar or different beliefs. Conducting research at sites with different demographics would also be beneficial for future research.

This study took place during the first semester of the school year. More research is needed to understand teacher beliefs and practices later in the year when teachers know students better, frustrations are higher, and student growth is evident.

Teachers in this study were frustrated in the lack of time they had to help struggling students within the confines of a class period of instructional time. Future research could include interviews about and observations of small group sessions with struggling adolescent readers.

Since this study centered on ELA teachers, future research could address other reading intensive subject areas like social studies. For example, studies of whether social studies teachers incorporate similar strategies and assessments as ELA teachers, or studies for subjects

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that are not heavily tested would contribute to our understanding of instruction for struggling adolescent readers.

This school district and these participants used rewards and punishments as the predominant motivation technique to motivate all students. Future research could be conducted to determine the effects of external regulation on struggling adolescent readers.

Participants in this study felt they lacked autonomy and control over their classroom decision making. Future research studies could look at the impact of lack of autonomy on teacher performance.

Two of the findings from this study, data walls and external regulation, were encouraged by school leaders and administrators. Research could be conducted to determine how school leader decisions impacts reading and struggling adolescent readers.

Conclusions

In this study, teacher beliefs did not always match teacher practices. Sometimes teacher practices were in conflict with research, and sometimes their practices were in conflict with their belief systems. In most aspects of their teaching practices, participants in this study had to reconcile what they were doing, with what they believed, and with what they were required to do. Cuban (2018) used a new term that not only described his beliefs about data walls but also matched the feelings of these participants. Cuban (2019) referred to data walls as a "satisfice," which means a way to satisfy the administration without sacrificing too much. The practices that these participants used were "satisfices." They failed to see the shame they were building through punishments, data walls, and seating arrangements.

Their practices were also counterintuitive. The use of rewards and punishments only undermined any intrinsic motivation that existed within their students. Rewards and

punishments only reinforced the desired behaviors and performance until the student reached the outcome. The shame and embarrassment created through rewards and punishments, data walls, and grade-based seating arrangements damaged any community that they built through jokes, smiles, and relationship building. The administrators indoctrinated the participants to use these strategies, and they failed to see how these strategies went against the research findings on motivation and adolescents.

Participants had to reconcile their administrators' requirements with their actual beliefs about what is right for students and what research says. Thus, participants made a compromise and satisfied as much of it as they could. While all three participants reconciled using a data wall in different ways, there were ways to make it less shameful, like Naomi's approach. The participants in the study professed beliefs about the importance of building relationships with and among their students. However, in the same breath, they motivated students in ways that were shameful. Their administrators' focus on the data wall and extrinsic motivation misconstrued their views. Participants forced students to publicly display their performances through their use of data walls, seating arrangements, and movie rewards and punishments. They believed these methods were the best plan to motivate their students, and they knew that they needed to build relationships, but they did not see that one was inhibiting the other.

Teacher beliefs influenced their actions, especially their beliefs about the limited foundational skills of struggling adolescent readers. Participants struggled with balancing what they wanted to do with their students and how to manage it with their lack of autonomy. The district where the study took place was extremely standards-driven. They had a common curriculum, common lesson plans, and common assessments. One or two individuals created materials for the entire grade level. These common materials forced Phyllis to use lower-Lexile

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text with her struggling readers secretly. Common materials and district pressure also caused Naomi to feel like she could not slow down and help her struggling readers because she knew everything had to be taught by Christmas. All three participants were encouraged to teach the standards so their students could perform well on accountability assessments. Phyllis taught the standard, question stems, tips, tricks, and reasoning for each standard. Naomi and Rachel used group activities to teach through old common assessments by showing students how to reason through the questions, find keywords, and justify their responses. The push for standards-driven instruction came from district administrators who desired to increase accountability scores using practices that were not supported by the literature. The HPL framework revealed the complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in the context of administrative mandates and a high stakes accountability environment.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

<u>Interview Protocol</u>

Opening: What made you want to become a teacher?

Introduction: What led you to choose a middle school teaching position?

Transition: Describe your experience working specifically with reading in a middle school setting?

Learner questions (12)

1. In your opinion, what is a struggling reader?
2. Describe your experiences working with struggling adolescent readers.
3. What is the difference between a struggling elementary reader and a struggling adolescent reader?
4. What supports do you have in place for your struggling adolescent readers in terms of their developmental needs (physical, emotional, social, and intellectual)?
5. Is it possible for a struggling adolescent reader to improve?
6a. If yes, what support/strategies/beliefs/etc. should be in place?
   - What is the teacher's role in supporting improvement?
   - How many grade levels can a struggling reader be expected to improve if _____ is in place?
   - What are the characteristics of a teacher who best supports the growth of a struggling adolescent reader?
   - What are the characteristics of a student who can make improvement?
6b. What specific characteristics hinder such growth in a struggling adolescent reader?
   - Can the student slip further behind or should we expect stability? Can you expand upon this?
7. How do you decide what to praise?
8. How do you decide what to critique?

Knowledge questions: (7)

1. How do you plan instruction for struggling adolescent readers?
2. In your opinion, what makes reading difficult in general?
3. What makes reading hard for struggling adolescent readers?
4. What are some of your best practices for struggling readers?
5. Describe your most recent/a previous experience when you realized a struggling adolescent reader was learning?
6. Describe your most recent/a previous experience when you realized a struggling adolescent reader was not learning? OR What do you do when instruction is not working?
7. How does your content support or hinder the success of struggling adolescent readers?

Assessment questions: (7)

1. What do assess right away at the beginning of the school year?
2. How do you figure out who needs extra help in reading at the beginning of the school year?
3. What are examples of different methods of reading assessment you use in your classroom? (peer, self, diagnostic, prior knowledge, summative, formative, progress monitoring, universal screening, benchmark)

4. What types of feedback do you provide? (detailed to help improve, pass or fail, limited, verbal, written)

5. Can you provide an example of feedback you have given that helps struggling adolescent readers enhance their understanding of the content/concept presented? (follow-up interview)

6. What types of data are useful to you?

7. What types of data are not as useful? Why?

Community questions: (4)

1. What is important for an outsider or a new student to know about your classroom environment?

2. How do you build a community of learners at the beginning of the year?

3. What are some norms you have established for your classroom? (group participation expectations, spoken rules that provide stability and control)

4. How do you react when a student makes a mistake?

Ending #1: What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Ending #2: What is the most rewarding part of working with struggling adolescent readers?

APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION GUIDE

Characteristics	Evident	Specific examples:
1. Learner-centered		

<u>Teacher Talk:</u>
Words said to
   • individual students
   • small groups
   • whole class		

<u>Teacher responses:</u>
   • tease for poor performance
   • tease for mistakes
   • tease for being slow
Other: _____		

<u>Teacher responses:</u>
   • Student provides support
   • Students praise each other
Other: _____		

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Teacher response: • learner developmental needs Other:		

Observation # _____ Participant ID: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Characteristics	Evident	Specific examples:
2. Knowledge-centered		

<u>Reading instruction:</u>
 	
Describe activity/assignment
  • What does the teacher assign?
  • Focus on information and kinds of activities that help struggling adolescent readers develop in-depth understanding and knowledge of Reading.
  • Learning objectives that clearly state what the student is expected to know, understand and be able to do.
  • Learning is engaging
 	
Other: _____		

<u>Interactions:</u> How does the teacher interact with students?		

• Who speaks to whom and for how long? • Who initiates interaction? • Describe teacher talk. (Tone of voice) Other: _____		
Discussion: Opportunities for discussion to draw out pre-existing knowledge		
Classroom Practice: • Differentiation • Promotion of concrete strategies • Grouping • Modeling • Inclusive environment Other: _____		

Check for Understanding: - Explain topics students do not understand - Check for understanding - Correct mistakes/misconceptions Other: _____		
Use of Praise: - Effort – structured ways such as awards, rewards, grading practices - Ability – told they are smart - Verbal - Physical - Recognition by teacher - Recognition in front of peers - Display - Eye contact		

• Affirmation • Smiling • Nodding Other: _____		
Characteristics	Evident	Specific examples:
3. Assessment-centered		

Formative:
   • Ongoing
   • Dynamic
   • Quiz
   • Observation
   • Clickers
   • Hand gestures
   • Individual response boards
   • Writing
   • Discussion
   • Peer-assessment
   • Self-assessment
   • Rubrics
Other: _____		

Summative: • Test • Essay • Journal • Portfolio • Project • Rubrics Other: _____		
Supports for Struggling Adolescent Readers:		
Feedback: • Effort • Ability • Specific on how to improve • Reward		

• Praise • Mastery grades • Total points • Criticism • Connected to goals of learning • Marking Other: _____		

Other Assessments:
• Interest inventories
• Pretests
• Universal Screening
    ○ AIMS
    ○ MAZE
    ○ STAR
• Diagnostic
    ○ IREADY
• Progress Monitoring
    ○ Work samples
    ○ Running records
• Benchmark assessments
    ○ DCA
    ○ IREADY
Other: _____		

Characteristics	Evident	Specific examples:
4. Community-centered		
Norms: • Students are self-directed • Learning is social and interconnected • Raising hand for permission • Etc. Other: _____		
Routines: • Established • Consistency • Work submission • Group discussion procedures • transitions Other: _____		
Connections between lesson and community:		

Posters/signage geared toward students:		
Interactions with SAR:		
Interactions with whole class:		

Physical learning environment: • Resources available • Open • Clean • Practice • Functioning equipment • Room arrangement allows teacher to monitor behavior • Preparation evident Other: _____		
Climate: • Respect • Support • Safety • Teacher knows names • Kindness • Humor • Smiling • Tone of voice Other: _____		

APPENDIX C

DATA ANALYSIS PICTURES

KNowledge
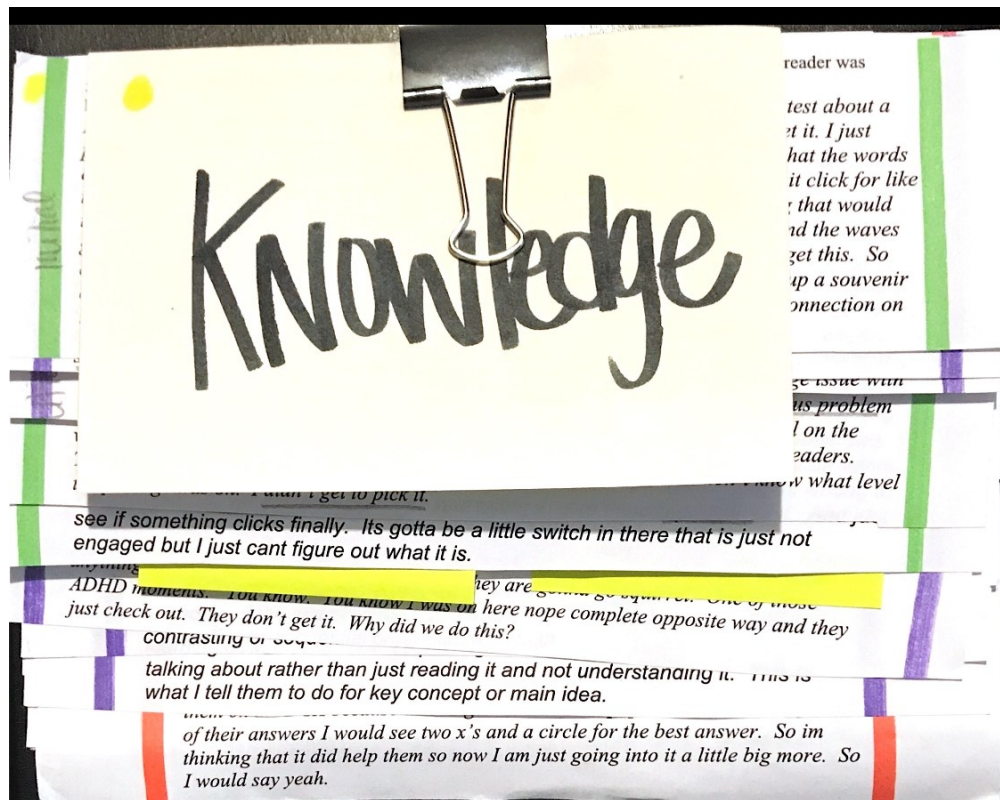
reader was

test about a
et it. I just
hat the words
it click for like
that would
d the waves
zet this. So
up a souvenir
onnection on

ge issue with
us problem
l on the
eaders.
w what level

see if something clicks finally. Its gotta be a little switch in there that is just not
engaged but I just cant figure out what it is.

ADHD moments. You know. You know I was on here nope complete opposite way and they
just check out. They don't get it. Why did we do this?
contrasting or seque

talking about rather than just reading it and not understanding it. This is
what I tell them to do for key concept or main idea.

of their answers I would see two x's and a circle for the best answer. So im
thinking that it did help them so now I am just going into it a little big more. So
I would say yeah.

4. What supports do you have in place for your struggling adolescent ... in terms of their developmental
needs (physical, emotional, soc...

That's what I like the grou... [handwritten note] *Group work because it lets
them as I kinda mentioned ... they really tend to shut down
and they don't want to do a... because it kinda fosters that
oh well we are right there ... ding or what we are doing.
Um I have im trying to thin... stuff so some of our text we
do on the computer so they ... e that with it so we do
technology a lot of them tim... and we will marker and
break it down that way and ... ues with the text or an
activity that we are doing. ... ring a long test but not
during class. I mean of cou... tissue" or something like
that. But for the most part I ... to make sure that they are
not just struggling and shutt... know what I mean.*

[Handwritten blue note:]
Learner
* Adol charact
— Social group/tables
— phy, stretch break
— kinest computer needs
— T circulation

5. Why is important to allow students the opportunity to choose their own partners?

For me um I want them to be (comfortable). *Um I don't want to group them with someone
that they really don't know and that's not a bad id... You know you
get to know another one of your ... omfortable.
Some kids don't like working in a ... Some kids
they want to work with others bu... tify those kids
and say why don't you go work w... know you
want and that's just always been ... want as
long as they know how to behav... are
* (comfortable that is when they I th)* ... omfortable*

[Handwritten blue note:]
Learner
* Adol characteristics
"Learn best when
Comfortable"

*and they are around people you know their friends that they like. But if they are with
someone that they really don't know or they feel uncomfortable with it is just they are
just going to be sitting there.*

6. Talk a little about student behavior in groups and your expectations. "I'll wait until you are done"; "I'm
not interested in what's going on…"

*I don't really know… remember that event. Um. But in groups behavior expectations [pause].
R: I believe they were writing on each other's papers. I: Oh gosh. Yeah and that is sorta coming
back. Yeah that was over there next to my desk. It was four boys and uh most of the boys in
that group actually are borderline proficient. It was not one of my groups that you would
ex... were jus... ere
w... y were ju... nd
th... ust two p... as
st... re that m...*

[Handwritten blue note:]
Learner
* Adol charact
— playful in groups
— writing on paper
— will goof around in
groups but
should work two

[Handwritten pink note:]
Community
* Safety
respect personal
Space

*ce... w you w...
so... part of it... like
th... Uh. So I...
pl... e spend w...
pl... r person... ers,
kicking each others feet, and things like that. So personal space has got to be respected at times
like that. That was not the time or the place for that kind of behavior. Um. Other groups they
were like you said the ones talking about shoes I mean that didn't bother me so much because
they were discussing the activity and the answers. And they were getting their work done. So
you gotta have some you know level of leniency as far as you put them together and don't
expect them to talk is just ridiculous.*

APPENDIX D

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PICTURES

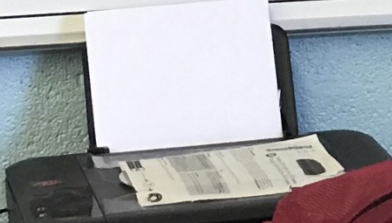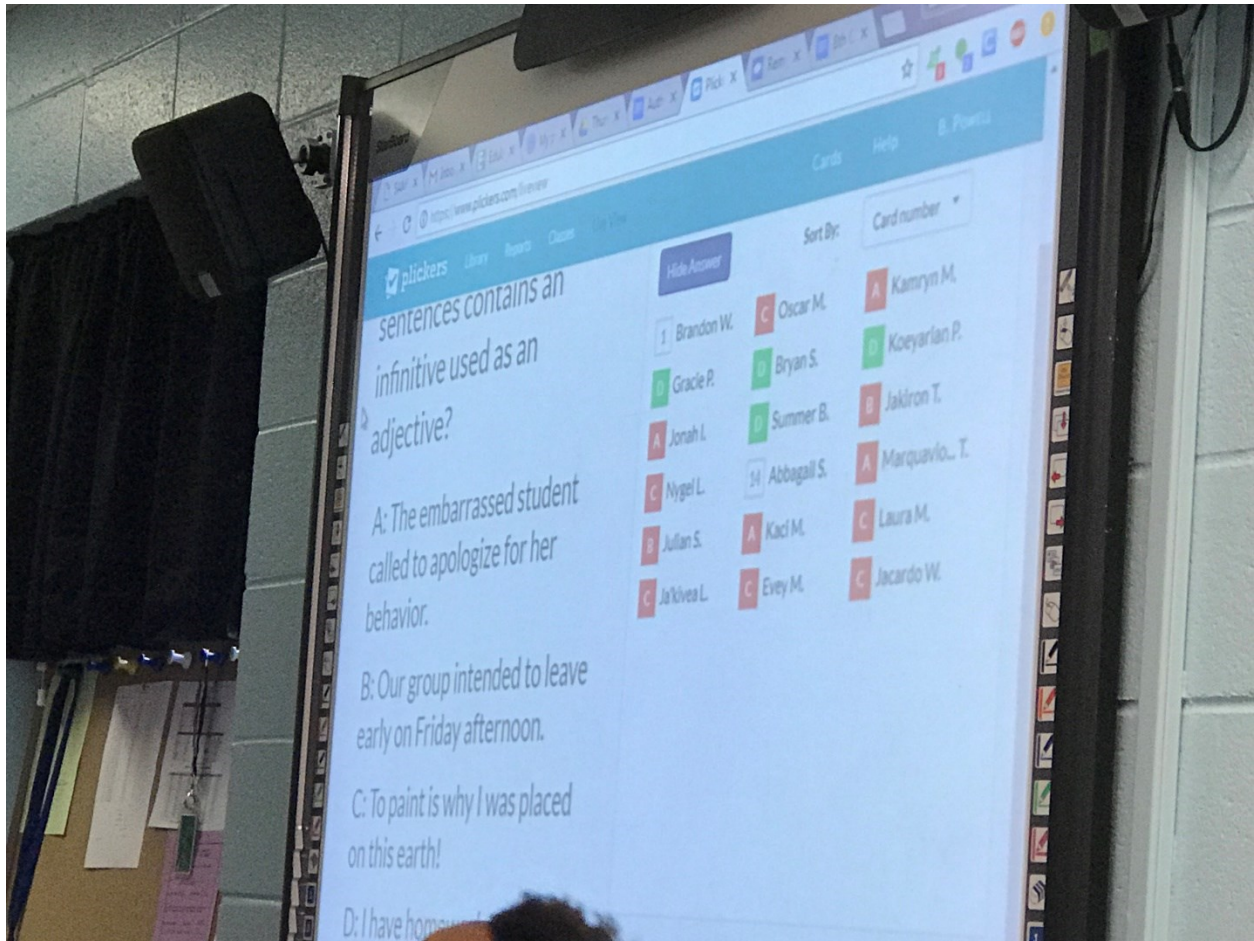# DATA WALL

SUBJECT/GRADE: ELA 7th

SCORE RANGE:	SCORE RANGE:	SCORE RANGE:	SCORE RANGE:	SCORE RANGE:
0-25 26-35	36-42 43-49	50-60 61-74	75-84	85-100

1A 1B 2A 2B 3A 3B

10 63 11 74

72 35

27 10 21 13 8 17 1 9 32 8 26
8 71 24 15 42 32 39 25 60 14 42
10 41 7 23 51 37 9 17 28 57 44
21 55 58 50 20 36 36 3
19 3 4 12 27
12 56 6 20
16 49 43 5 13 37
64 26
7 31 15
41 38 72 34
36 51 75
67 59 45 39 21
58 11

1st Grade 2nd Grade 3rd Grade 4th Grade 5th Grade 6th Grade 7th Grade 8th Grade

NOT PASSING!   Passing for State Test → → → →
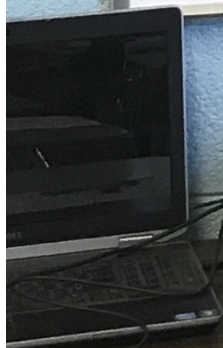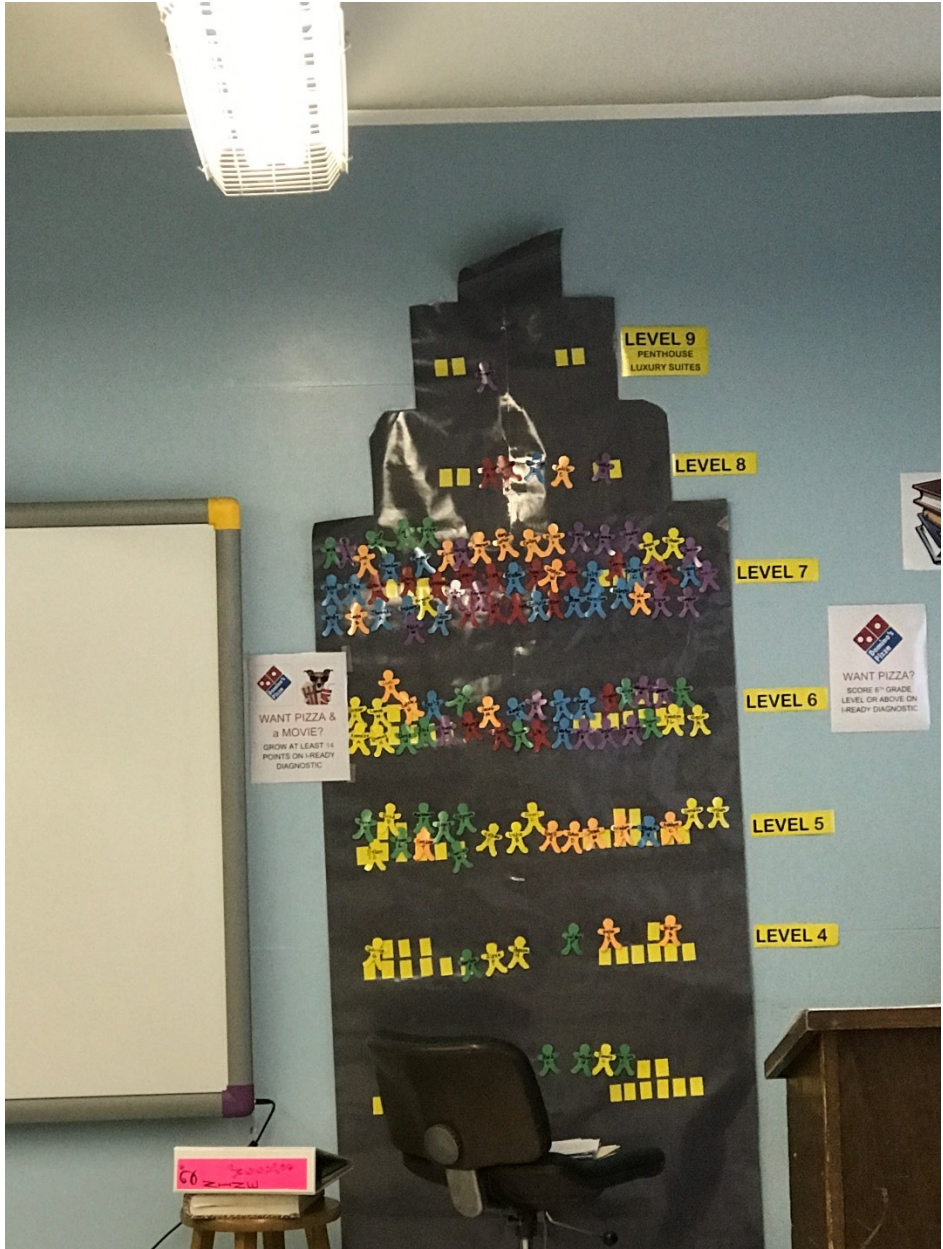
APPENDIX E

IRB EXEMPTION LETTERS

Approval Notice for Study # IRB-17-415, The beliefs and practice of middle school teachers of struggling adolescent readers: An exploratory study using the How People Learn framework

Brenner, Devon <dgb19@msstate.edu>   Tue, Jun 9, 2020 at 8:11 AM
To: Katie Thomas-Hood <katiethomas1211@gmail.com>

Begin forwarded message:

From: <nrs54@msstate.edu>
Subject: Approval Notice for Study # IRB-17-415, The beliefs and practice of middle school teachers of struggling adolescent readers: An exploratory study using the How People Learn framework
Date: August 10, 2017 at 2:02:57 PM CDT
To: <dgb19@msstate.edu>, <ace24@msstate.edu>, <lkt29@msstate.edu>, <lns9@msstate.edu>, <mka143@msstate.edu>, <smb748@msstate.edu>

Protocol ID: IRB-17-415
Principal Investigator: Devon Brenner
Protocol Title: The beliefs and practice of middle school teachers of struggling adolescent readers: An exploratory study using the How People Learn framework
Review Type: EXEMPT
Approval Date: August 10, 2017
Expiration Date: July 31, 2019

The above referenced study has been approved. To access your approval documents, log into myProtocol and click on the protocol number to open the approved study. Your official approval letter can be found under the Event History section. For non-exempt approved studies, all stamped documents (e.g., consent, recruitment) can be found in the Attachment section and are labeled accordingly.

If you have any questions that the HRPP can assist you in answering, please do not hesitate to contact us at irb@research.msstate.edu or 662.325.3994.