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**BECOMING A LITERACY TEACHER: FROM TEACHER PREPARATION  
THROUGH THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF LITERACY TEACHING**

by

**Laurie Elizabeth Leslie**

**A Dissertation**

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Philosophy of Education**

**Faculty of Education**

**Lakehead University**

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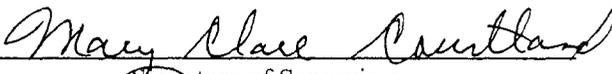
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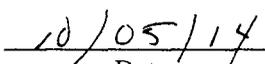
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#### **BECOMING A LITERACY TEACHER: FROM**

#### **TEACHER PREPARATION THROUGH THE**

#### **FIRST TWO YEARS OF LITERACY TEACHING**

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies.



Supervisor: Mary Clare Courtland



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Date: March 23, 2010

## Abstract

Preparing teachers to teach literacy effectively is a lengthy and complex process. It begins long before students are accepted into preservice education programs and continues throughout their careers. This three-year longitudinal study investigated how elementary teachers implement literacy programs, the successes/challenges they face in doing so, the strengths of their preservice preparation and inservice support and recommendations for improving preservice preparation and inservice support for literacy teaching. Year 1 participants included three literacy instructors teaching elementary Language Arts Methods and 10 student teachers. Participants in Years 2 and 3 were literacy teachers (five in Year 2, four in Year 3) teaching grades ranging from Junior Kindergarten through Grade 6. The data indicated that preparation for teaching literacy needs to be expanded to target the more diverse range of scenarios in which novice literacy teachers find themselves versus the 'ideal,' or 'assumed' scenarios, which may or may not exist. As well, the data suggested a need for Faculties of Education to support seamless learning by collaborating with school partners such that preservice in-class and in-field and inservice teaching experiences are consistent. The frameworks put in place by Faculties of Education to support student teachers and associates during in-field placements, as well as the establishment and nurturing of partnerships, have potential to support seamless learning in and beyond the preservice year.

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I extend deep gratitude to Dr. Mary Clare Courtland, my advisor, mentor and friend. I am not certain she realizes the extent of the influence she continues to exude on the 'me' I am becoming.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### MAKING MEANING: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

*...the role of the qualitative researcher is of critical importance because the researcher is the research instrument. If we can help describe how we use our intuition and creativity in our research projects, all of us benefit. Like the artist who uses paint and brushes or the dancer who uses movement, the qualitative researcher uses many techniques as tools to ultimately tell a story. For us, words and the power of the narrative are essential. By understanding how we use intuition and creativity, we may widen our vocabulary of understanding the role of the qualitative researcher. (Janesick, 2001, p. 533)*

Meaning-making involves active and dynamic processes. Facilitating these meaning-making processes for myself, as well as others, prompted me to spend considerable time pondering the format of my dissertation. The room for choice and innovation is both exciting and overwhelming. Like Caulley (2008) and Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), I, too, strove to develop a 'creative' research report, one that holds the reader's attention. In this particular case, I believed this might best be accomplished through a combination of traditional and alternative formats. Such a blending of formats provided both a voice and style for intertwining the content and form of my research in a seamless, intimate, and involving narrative (Richardson, 2001).

In writing this dissertation, I embraced the notion of writing as inquiry. Richardson (2001) suggests that writing enables us to create alternate perspectives and views of reality. She maintains that researchers, despite the guise of scholarship or the omniscient voice of science, are constantly writing and rewriting their lives. Similarly, Elbaz-Luwisch (2002) suggests that the very nature of writing, "the formulation and bringing into being of ideas that were not there before being written" (p. 406), fosters new awarenesses about oneself and the world. Janesick (2001) suggests that writing as a form of discovery can encompass various genres, including letter writing, essays, collages, poetry and journaling. According to

Janesick (2001), journal writing offers a forum for researchers to refine ideas, beliefs and responses to their research, therein serving as a rigorous documentary tool. Both Janesick (2001) and Richardson (2001) see potential for 'writing as inquiry' to inform research processes and broaden understanding of method and substance by means of crystallization.

Smagorinsky (1997) maintains that the act of composing artistic text, written or otherwise, is both reciprocal and transformative in nature. He suggests that composing represents individual thinking processes and mediates these processes into new understandings. According to Smagorinsky (1997), individuals seldom approach the process of composing with a fully developed view of the final product. As the composition develops, new and deeper understandings emerge. Armed with these reassurances, I approached the act of composing.

### **Overview of the Study: Purpose and Design**

The formulation of my personal reflections on the experience are based on analysis of data collected as part of my three-year longitudinal study of factors that shape, support and hinder the preparation of elementary teachers for the demanding role of teaching literacy. The purpose of this research was to describe: how literacy educators were implementing literacy programs; the successes and challenges they faced in doing so; and their reflections on the strengths of their preparation for literacy teaching and recommendations for improving the preservice program.

The study was part of a larger national literacy study on teacher education that described the professional development of literacy teachers from their professional year through their first two years of literacy teaching. Dr. Clive Beck, OISE/UT, was the principal investigator. The larger study involved three Canadian universities: OISE/UT, University of

Alberta and Lakehead University. Dr. Mary Clare Courtland was the co-investigator at the Lakehead University site. Dr. Courtland invited me to work with her as local co-researcher.

My dissertation focused on data collected at the Lakehead University site. The research process, discussion and findings are presented alongside poetic descriptions of my own academic and professional growth and transition from elementary literacy teacher to teacher educator. Individually and cumulatively, my experiences afforded additional vantage points for informed reflection on the successes and frustrations that both new and experienced teachers face in learning to teach literacy and language arts. The integration of personal narrative poetry and prose into the doctoral dissertation was intended to yield further insights into the nature of teacher preparation for teaching literacy.

The design of the study was mixed method (Patton, 2005). Data were collected at OISE/UT and University of Alberta during the period 2003-2004 through 2005-2006. Data collection at the Lakehead University site began in January 2005 and continued through August 2007. In Year 1 of the study at the Lakehead University site, a survey was conducted with approximately 100 student teachers enrolled in the professional year of the Bachelor of Education program, with a Primary/Junior [P/J] focus. In addition, the three literacy instructors teaching P/J Language Arts Methods and 10 student teachers took part in semi-structured, audiotaped interviews.

I became involved in Year 2 of the study. Participants in Years 2 and 3 were literacy teachers (five in Year 2, four in Year 3) teaching grades ranging from Junior Kindergarten [JK] through Grade 6. The participants were novice teachers involved in their first two years of literacy teaching. During Year 3 of our study, one of the three literacy teacher educators was re-interviewed in her role as an additional qualifications reading course instructor.

Data methods included the following elements: semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2005); e-mail correspondence and analysis of documents such as the preservice instructors' course outlines and the teacher participants' long range lesson plans; language arts timetables; professional growth plans; sample individual lesson plans; and materials on professional development. Data analysis was constant-comparative and ongoing (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Overarching objectives for Years 1 through 3 of the national study were as follows:

Year 1 - To study factors affecting preparation of elementary literacy teachers in the preservice program.

Year 2 - To examine the views and practices of first year literacy teachers, the detailed nature of their language arts programs and the extent to which they implemented approaches modeled and/or advocated in preservice.

Year 3 - To investigate influences on and changes in teachers' use of approaches to literacy teaching from first to second year in-service and the relation of these to the literacy courses taken in the preservice program. The overarching objectives for the national literacy study (Beck, 2001) were reflected in my research questions.

### **Rationale**

Literacy is a regional, national and global concern. Educators, school boards and ministries of education are engaged in intensive efforts to raise student literacy levels (Beck, Brown, Cockburn, & McClure, 2005). The Organization for Economic and Co-operative Development [OECD] International Adult Literacy Survey statistics released in June 2000 disclosed that 40% of adult Canadians were found to be significantly below minimum skill levels. There are several possible contributing factors. Increased transnational migration and

globalization of communication continue to render former models of literacy education less effective (Dlamini, 2001; New London Group, 1996). Cultural and social diversity among students, changing values, media bombardment, technology, and the emergence of new and multiple forms of literacy intensify challenges related to the teaching and learning of literacy (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Gee, 2000). Despite well-researched assertions that schools are not meeting current literacy demands to prepare students for life in an ever-changing world, many education systems have not changed with the times (Lankshear, Gee, Knobel, & Searle, 2002). Effective teacher preparation and professional support of classroom teachers are critical to meeting new and changing demands on literacy education.

Improved preparation of teachers is linked to heightened professional satisfaction, increased incentive for long-term teaching, and higher levels of student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Duffield, 2005). According to Darling-Hammond (2000), better-prepared teachers enter and remain in teaching at higher rates and are found to be more effective than their lesser-prepared peers:

Those who enter with little professional preparation tend to have greater difficulties in the classroom, are less highly rated by principals, supervisors, and colleagues, and tend to leave teaching at a higher-than-average rate, often reaching 50% or more by the third year of teaching. (pp. 47-48)

Darling-Hammond (2000) attributes lower levels of student learning, particularly for those students most in need of skilled teachers, to lack of adequate teacher preparation. Beck, Brown, Cockburn and McClure (2005) suggest that Canadian teachers and preservice students often describe their preservice preparation as inadequate, generally due to their perceptions that it was overtly theoretical in nature and lacking practical application.

Student learning is directly related to what and how teachers teach; and what and how teachers teach is heavily influenced by the knowledge and skills introduced and fostered in

teacher education programs (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Kosnik & Beck, 2009). Studies highlight a general lack of direction in teacher education (Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Beck, Kosnik, Broad, Caulfield, MacDonald, Tenebaum, Kitchen, & Rowsell, 2007; Beck, et al., 2005; Stotsky, 2006). Frequent gaps between the theory and practices implemented in preservice literacy education (Borg, 2003; Kosnik & Beck, 2007), and teacher candidate exposure to less effective teaching models during school placements (Beck & Kosnick, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1999), undermine adoption of the very approaches being advocated in preservice education. This is carried beyond the preservice program. Lack of mentorship and lack of administrative support are among factors associated with impeding new teachers from developing effective programs for literacy learning (Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, & Place, 2000).

Beck, Brown, Cockburn and McClure (2005), Beck et al., (2007), Feiman-Nemser (2001), and Stotsky (2006) identify a need for further research into the content, delivery and format of preservice programs to ensure adequate teacher preparation and early years support for meeting the challenges associated with teaching literacy in a changing world. Beck and Kosnik (2000) and Courtland, Leslie, Karpiuk and Petrone (2006) also see the need for further studies describing the experiences of beginning or novice literacy teachers in their early years in the education profession. Grant and Gillette (2006) identify a need for teacher educators to commit to “the type of longitudinal studies of our candidates’ effectiveness in our programs and in the classroom that will help us to understand the impact of our work” (p. 298).

My longitudinal study extends beyond and contributes to the current literature on teacher preparation for teaching literacy in providing a more complete and detailed

examination of teacher preparation from preservice through early years inservice while also examining my own growth as a teacher educator.

### **Personal Ground**

The decision to select student teachers and literacy instructors and to focus on teacher preparation for teaching literacy reflects my professional and personal interests in the field of literacy education and is connected to the overarching objectives set for the larger national literacy study (Beck, 2001). In addition to serving as co-investigator in the teacher preparation study at Lakehead University, I have also served as local co-researcher in a national study of student teachers' perspectives on Canadian identity and their understanding of ideology in multicultural picture books (Johnston, Bainbridge, Courtland, Hammett, Ward & Wiltse, 2006). An ongoing study, the picture book research focused on preservice elementary teachers' use of Canadian multicultural picture books for promoting deeper understandings of Canadian identity within the classroom.

I entered graduate studies as a mature student with extensive experience as a classroom/special education teacher, teacher-librarian and language arts curriculum leader. As a classroom/special education teacher, I particularly enjoyed helping students learn to read and write in a variety of genres. Oral language development and listening skills were also emphasized in my classes. As a curriculum leader, I was keenly familiar with language arts-related materials available within my board of education and other neighbouring boards. I regularly provided professional development to teachers and administrators on board-created materials and writing scales designed to support students in the writing processes. However, newer literacies, including digital and multimedia, picture books and graphic novels received minimal or no attention. This deficit was due, in part to their newness, my

own lack of familiarity, or, as with multicultural picture books and graphic novels, lack of availability and inservice within our board of education.

My approach to teaching and learning was based in social constructivist principles, though I did not know this term at the time. I tried to actively involve students in their own learning by capitalizing on individual interests whenever possible. I also tried to view each of my students as capable learners and made an effort to get to know their personal and academic interests, strengths and weaknesses in order to inform my development of curriculum. Although my teaching philosophy has changed over the years to accommodate new understandings (in English literacy acquisition/teaching and learning, multicultural literacy, transmediation, critical literacy, social justice theory and multimodal literacies, for example), I retain many of the beliefs and values I formulated early in my teaching career.

My experiences within the field of education led me to observe differences in the needs, interests, preferred learning styles and abilities of my students as they entered and progressed through elementary school language arts programs. Though I spent hours developing language arts units, specifically designing them to be relevant to my students' age level/interests and abilities, at times, some of my students appeared disengaged. Pre-packaged thematic units and novel studies I acquired through board offices and teacher resource stores, while time saving from a teacher perspective, seemed to offer limited appeal and/or educational value to my students. Programming for literacy was further complicated by the manner in which board-advocated literacy programs were repeatedly tossed aside for something 'better' a few years later.

Every year, new students would arrive from other countries. It was after working with three young boys from Holland that I grew particularly frustrated by the extent to which

education of immigrant, non-English speaking children relied on assimilation. It was as though the language and life experiences they had acquired in their homelands had no place within the Ontario curriculum I was charged to teach. Eventually, my desire to improve student literacy levels through meaningful, socially responsible curriculum led me to graduate studies.

For years and years, I had performed my teaching duties obediently, seldom questioning the validity of the Ontario curriculum and its relevance to my students' lives. Proclaimed an effective language arts teacher by my board of education, I was invited to provide professional development opportunities to other educators and administrators in various language initiatives adopted by the board. In graduate studies, I was forced to re-examine the changing nature and role of literacy education, and Western models of education, in particular. I had not considered the notion that the language arts curriculum and my delivery of that curriculum might have negative social, cultural, historical and political ramifications for some of my students.

In addition to research design and methodologies, frameworks, paradigms and strategies, graduate studies also exposed me to new information on critical literacy, equality and empowerment and a host of other life-altering content. Though I cannot change the privilege of my status as a white female with a supportive spouse, I can be aware of my actions/ reactions and responses, and more sensitive to the 'other,' his/her experiences, and our interconnections or lack thereof. I have also come to see the importance of teaching language arts and literacy to student teachers in such a way that they, too, might use texts (print and non-print) to expand their own students' understandings of significant global

issues such as multiculturalism, racism, and environmental degradation, in a manner that promotes social activism and change.

Through my coursework, discussions, readings and early research experiences, I devoured studies, articles and other information related to the teaching and acquisition of language arts and literacy. Eventually, I became interested in relationships between students' literacy learning and teacher expertise. This focus carried into and was fostered by my work as a graduate assistant and then contract lecturer. As a graduate student, working as research assistant to Professor Mary Clare Courtland, I was afforded opportunities to develop and test my emerging pedagogical understandings. A seasoned educator/researcher, Dr. Courtland provided a model I could emulate and strive to achieve. She was patient and persevering in the face of my resistance to the theoretical and encouraged me to take risks with my teaching.

Later, as a contract lecturer, I was elated to be back in the classroom, my own classroom, instructing student teachers in curriculum design and implementation for teaching language arts and literacy. My preservice language arts and literacy classroom provided opportunities for my own action research into teacher preparation. The classroom offered a forum for further connection of the theoretical with the practical.

I formed strong ties with my preservice students. Many contacted me during their early years as inservice teachers. Often, they were uncertain how to link the 'bits and pieces,' learned in-class and in-field during their preservice experience, to form cohesive language arts programs. I was able to see ways in which my own practices and lack of expertise as an educator/researcher had contributed to my students' confusion. Perceived weakness can be a tremendous motivator. This one, combined with my involvement in the national study on teacher preparation, heightened my authentic interest in learning more about the

characteristics of 'adequate' teacher preparation. Studying teacher preparation for teaching literacy became an almost selfish pursuit. It continued to satisfy the 'me' grounded in the practical (hard to shake years of classroom teaching) and the 'me' striving to be more theoretical (as an academic/researcher). It offered potential for informing and developing my own expertise, my students' expertise and ultimately, the literacy levels of their students. Providing opportunities to examine the larger picture (literacy education), alongside the parts (components deemed effective for teaching/learning literacy), my study contributed to my overall understandings of the field of literacy and my sense of scholarship within. The deeply personal nature of this study continues to influence the cognitions, approaches, tools and strategies I bring to the design and implementation of literacy courses at the Faculty of Education.

### **Research Questions**

1. How might a teacher education program better prepare student teachers to design and deliver optimal literacy programming for students of diverse backgrounds, interests, needs and abilities?
2. What is the nature of the transitions, successes and challenges novice teachers experience between their preparation for literacy teaching and their first two years of literacy teaching?
3. How am I constructing my identity as a literacy instructor / teacher educator at a Faculty of Education?

Burbules (2004) stresses the importance of being sensitive "to the multiple, conflicting, and often unintended effects of what we are doing (in our research): to be monitoring them as we are involved with the activity, not simply focused on our intended

outcomes” (p. 7). I approached the design of my research questions from this critical stance. In the original proposal for the national literacy study from which this study developed, overarching objectives were communicated; however, the research questions were not made explicit. This absence of research questions permitted me to personalize the research in its earliest stages in context with the overarching aims of the national study, but without being tied to or influenced by specific, pre-stated research questions.

Development of my research questions was facilitated by a cooperative assignment in my research colloquium course, an on-line course taken during my second year in the Joint Philosophy of Education [PhD] Program. Working in small groups, we were invited to share the underpinnings of our research and discuss possible research questions with our peers in the hope that these discussions would ultimately inform our selection of research questions and choice of diction therein. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have received excellent nurturing feedback from three generous coursemates (\*Thank you to Sylvia Moore, Susan Hamel and Jenni Donohoo).

### **Theoretical Perspective**

The conceptual framework for this study was grounded in social constructivist theories of learning (Rogoff, 1995; Vygotsky, 1986), including theories more specifically tied to the teaching and learning of literacy and language arts. These include: reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1982), situated and multiliteracies (Eisner, 2002; Freire, 1985; Gee, 2000; Kist, 2005) and critical pedagogy and social justice (Courtland, Leslie, Karpiuk & Petrone, 2008; Eisner, 2002; Robinson, McKenna & Wedman, 2004). I shall briefly describe each of these frameworks in this section.

### *Social Constructivist Theories of Learning*

A social constructivist perspective situates literacy as a process involving individual and social constructions of meaning within various sociocultural settings (Bainbridge & Malicky, 2004). Language is used to learn as well as to interpret, respond to and share experiences with others (Vygotsky, 1986). According to Wells (2001), “Knowledge is constructed and reconstructed between participants in specific situations, using the cultural resources at their disposal, as they work toward the collaborative achievement of goals that emerge in the course of their activity” (p. 180). Vygotsky (1978) suggests that individuals are able to extend their knowledge to deeper levels by working collaboratively through the development of shared meanings.

Rogoff (1995) contends that sociocultural theory embodies the existence of three planes of sociocultural contexts for learning: the community or cultural plane; the interpersonal or social plane; and, the personal plane. Thus, literacy learning depends upon meaningful social interactions with others, and occurs through a variety of activities and contexts.

### *Reader Response Theory*

Reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978) contributes to our understandings of the ways in which reading facilitates interpretation of our world. Rosenblatt (1978) describes the act of reading as a meaning-making transaction between the reader and the text. The role of the reader is critical to the making of meaning. Rosenblatt identifies two distinct stances: efferent—reading to extract information, and aesthetic—reading to derive pleasure. According to Rosenblatt, aesthetic reading is a two-stage process. Initially, as the reader engages with the text, s/he experiences a broad range of feelings, ideas, memories and attitudes. This

interplay between the text and the reader's consciousness becomes an experience through which the reader lives. In the second stage, the reader organizes, sorts and classifies the feelings, ideas, memories, and attitudes initially experienced. This process, identified as "response," is a result of reflection and reinterpretation of the text. Sumara (1996) and Courtland and Gambell (2000) argue that the construction of meaning incorporates both efferent and aesthetic stances in a fluid manner, rather than as discrete processes.

Readers' engagement with and responses to texts are mediated by many factors, including prior knowledge, experiences, interests, world views, and readers' previous and contemporaneous readings (Courtland & Gambell, 2000). Though the initial response to reading is individual, social constructivist learning processes, such as shared response and reflection, contribute to the social constructions of meaning. The reflective dimension of critical thinking, amplified through shared response, leads readers to further explore issues of concern, clarifying understandings, enriching interpretations and, possibly, altering their conceptual perspectives (Eisner, 2002; Courtland, Leslie, Karpiuk, & Petrone, 2006).

#### *Situated and Multiliteracies*

Friere's (1985) definition of literacy as knowing how to read the word and the world recognizes literacy as situational and reflects the importance of developing literacy through active participation in a variety of activities.

According to Bearne (2003), even the definition of what counts as text has expanded to incorporate newer multimodal literacies. Where text was once conceived as print, the definition of text has expanded to include newer literacies and additional sign systems such as conversation, radio or television broadcast, advertisements, text messaging, photos and more (Lankshear et al., 2002).

Eisner's (1994) definition of literacy as "the ability to encode or decode meaning in any of the forms of representation used in the culture to convey or express meaning" (p. x) also suggests that literacy needs to encompass a variety of symbol systems. Advocating for cognitive pluralism, Eisner (2002) criticizes the dominant emphasis, within educational institutions, on verbal and written symbolic systems:

We have created a culture in schooling that is so heavily pervaded by verbal and written performance systems that we take such performance systems for granted. In the process we forget that the culture at large depends on a much wider array of human competencies. We regard alternatives that are nondiscursive as "enrichment activities". We assign them to margins of our concerns; they are events that are "nice to have" but not really of educational significance. (p. 148)

Eisner (2002) argues that symbol systems are cultural resources employed in mathematics, music, literature, dance, drama, and so on. He believes humans have capacity to employ multiple symbol systems to acquire, store and retrieve understanding, and to express their knowledge about the world. He criticizes the way in which written performance systems govern presentation and response, as well as evaluation practices in today's classroom settings. He suggests if the goal of education is to deepen individuals' understandings, then schools need to support development of multiple forms of literacy.

Gardner's (1999) research on multiple intelligences emphasizes the variety of means by which humans are capable of constructing and expressing meaning. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences proposes that there are a minimum of eight separate human intelligences: (i) verbal linguistic; (ii) logical-mathematical; (iii) musical-rhythmic; (iv) visual-spatial; (v) bodily-kinesthetic; (vi) interpersonal; (vii) intrapersonal; and (viii) naturalistic. According to Gardner, each individual is equipped with intellectual potentialities to varying degrees in each area.

Eisner (2002) relates emphasis on plurality of representations to Gardner's (1999) emphasis on plurality of intelligences. According to Eisner, the relationship between knowledge types and forms of intelligences is important:

If the kind of mind that children can come to own is, in part, influenced by the kinds of opportunities they have to think, and if these opportunities are themselves defined by the kind of curriculum schools themselves provide, then it could be argued that the curriculum itself is a kind of mind altering device. In this view it's easy to see how curriculum decisions about content inclusion and content exclusion are of fundamental importance. (p. 81)

### *Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice Theory*

Critical pedagogy theorists advocate examination of the place of language in relations of power (Tompkins, Bright, Pollard, & Winsor, 2008). Critical and social justice theorists describe a world of unequal power and resource distribution through which certain groups of individuals are either privileged or oppressed based on ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality and social class (Robinson, McKenna, & Wedman, 2004).

Literacy skills are embedded in diverse social, political and cultural practices. The valuing of certain literacies over others reflects historical structural assumptions associated with the validation and marginalization of individuals and entire societies (Delpit, 2003; Dlamini, 2001; Papen, 2004). Researchers, including Courtland, Leslie, Karpiuk, and Petrone (2006) and Noddings (2005), see potential for literacy curricula to address and respond to issues of cultural sensitivity, morality, environmentalism and global understanding.

Eisner (2002) maintains that educational institutions often perpetuate the marginalization of students and societies. He suggests that current emphases on verbal and mathematical reasoning bias societies' conceptions of human intelligence and impede the development of socially valuable interests and aptitudes. He argues that some students, by nature of their preferred ways of knowing the world, are advantaged from the beginning of

their schooling, while other students, with preferences outside the valued intelligences, struggle. Eisner advocates for curriculum based in cognitive pluralisms. Cognitive pluralisms, he argues, allow for differentiated curriculum, wherein students' individual needs and interests are recognized and valued in the teaching and learning of literacy. Eisner (2002) suggests that pluralism has emerged, in part, through competing views of what schools should teach and why.

Without de-valuing the importance of reading, writing and oral language, this study supports in-school development and practice of multiple literacies within the frameworks of social constructivist learning theory, cognitive pluralisms and critical and social justice theory. Literacy is described herein as situational communication, a product of social, historical, cultural, political and economic contexts and a vehicle for promoting regional, national and global communication and for enacting positive change in society.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study provided a detailed examination of teacher preparation from preservice through to early year inservice. The findings have the potential to inform the ways in which Faculties of Education, teacher educators and faculty administrators approach programming, timetabling and implementation of courses for preservice literacy education. Results have potential to transform literacy courses at Faculties of Education at the individual instructor level but also have the potential to influence ways in which Faculties of Education, school boards and schools approach ongoing professional development for supporting literacy education and mentorship programs for beginning teachers.

### Limitations

*It [The self] is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not always identical to itself... in each case one plays, one establishes a different relation to oneself.*  
(Foucault, 1997, p. 251)

The findings of this study are limited to the experiences of the respondents. If, as Foucault (1997) suggests, the self is indeed a form that reinvents itself only to interpret life, feelings, beliefs and values in new and different ways, we cannot assert and identify the relationship between self and truth (Peters, Olssen & Lankshear, 2003). Thus, the findings of this study are snapshots over time, and are not generalizable on their own, although they may be transferable to similar contexts and settings (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

A second limitation of the study is the diverse range of locations of the inservice teachers in the sample. This diversity in location necessitated use of email correspondence to facilitate communication with the sample. Email correspondence resulted in slow response time. In addition, the diversity in locations made it difficult to observe/interview respondents on site, as per the initial plan specified in the larger study. Three respondents preferred to be interviewed at Lakehead University. Respondents located overseas were interviewed by telephone. This limitation is countered by a possible advantage inherent to this situation.

Despite the setbacks associated with an 'atypical' inservice sample (atypical by comparison to other participant universities in the larger study whose inservice sample secured teaching positions locally), the diversity of inservice teacher locations also stands as a desirable feature in the study of teacher preparation for teaching literacy. The diverse locations of the inservice teachers in the study sample broaden the study context in that they provide information on respondents situated outside the typical urban settings described in

other studies on teacher preparation for teaching literacy. As such, the diversity in location has potential to expand the transferability of the findings to other similar locations.

This chapter provided an overview of the research problem, rationale and personal grounding for the research, theoretical perspectives, and significance of the study. Chapter Two reviews literature in three areas specifically related to this study: (i) government reform agendas for improving education; (ii) planning for effective preservice literacy teacher preparation; and (iii) socialization of early year inservice teachers. The research design and methodology are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Findings of the study and their interpretation are presented in Chapters Four and Five. The discussion in Chapter Four focuses on Year 1 of the study, giving careful consideration to effective preservice preparation for literacy teaching. Chapter Five discusses the findings and their interpretation as these relate to inservice support for effective literacy teaching. Chapter Six articulates the conclusions, implications, and recommendations of this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

*Our mental processes and experiences are closer to a maze than a motorway, every turn yields another turning, not symmetrical, not obvious when we enter. (Winterson, 1996, p. xiii)*

Literacy is a complex concept. Consequently, a vast amount of research has relevance to this study. The literature review focuses on literature in three areas: government reform agendas for improving education; planning for effective preservice literacy teacher preparation; and socialization of early year inservice literacy teachers. Each is discussed below.

#### **Government Reform Agendas for Improving Education**

Literacy education drives and is influenced by government reform initiatives (Bryan, 2004; Kosnik & Beck, 2007) aimed at heightening student literacy levels. Comprehensive examination of the literature on teacher preparation for teaching literacy necessitates an understanding of the ways in which political contexts influence literacy and the teaching of literacy. Understanding the nature of past and ongoing initiatives provides insights into the politics of literacy and the ways in which specific models of education (including preservice education), literacies, approaches, strategies and tools become valued over others within Western society.

Government reform agendas for improving teacher education generally encompass one or more of the following four approaches: i) professionalization agenda – designing teaching standards geared towards raising the status of teaching as a profession (Zeichner, 2003); ii) deregulation agenda – learning on the job through teaching apprenticeships, therein privatizing and deregulating teaching and eliminating the need for university-based teacher

education programs (Ballou & Podgursky, 2000); iii) social justice agenda – better preparing teachers to meet the needs of culturally diverse student populations to produce a more just society (Villegas & Lucas, 2002); and iv) over-regulation agenda – micromanaging teacher education programs at government levels (Cochran-Smith, 2001). Each agenda is associated with positive as well as negative outcomes.

The history of school reform shows major similarities across educational issues faced by developed nations such as the United States, Great Britain and Canada. Curriculum decisions, teacher training and accountability emerge repeatedly in the debates on reform. A desire for heightened student literacy levels compels government agencies towards reform. Fisher (2004) acknowledges general consensus, among researchers and stakeholders, that high student literacy levels are needed and desirable. He contrasts this against minimal consensus for how best to achieve high literacy levels, or even what the term ‘high literacy levels’ really means. A major difference across developed nations is the path chosen towards achieving higher literacy levels. Where the United States and Great Britain have designed and implemented national teaching standards, Canada has elected a more localized, provincial model.

Kosnik and Beck (2007) attribute increased attention to the content, structure and effectiveness of literacy preparation within teacher education programs to the emphasis on literacy learning in the ongoing political debates on school reform. The researchers suggest that research into literacy education and teacher preparation for teaching literacy informed by the knowledge (both theoretical and practical) and needs within the education system, offers a powerful, effective vehicle for guiding system-wide reform. This implies that Faculties of Education are in the envious position of initiating, guiding and monitoring reform of teacher

preparation for teaching literacy, therein positively influencing literacy reform in the process. Darling-Hammond (2000) contends that “the history of school reform has illustrated that innovations pursued without adequate investments in teacher training have failed time and again” (p. 28). The literature suggests that major investments in teaching, from university to school level, must accompany government initiatives if reform is to be successful (Bruinsma, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fisher, 2004).

*Recent Reform Agendas: The United States, Great Britain and Canada*

*American Reform: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future*

In the United States, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 1996) sought sweeping changes to preparation, licensing and recruitment of teachers, thus shifting power to private organizations. The NCTAF promotes longer teacher training, including emphasis on master's degrees and five-year programs, as a foundation for enhanced teacher preparation for teaching literacy. Ballou and Podgursky (2000) charge that the NCTAF, comprised of representatives from various education groups, including the presidents of the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, is a self-regulatory commission seeking to promote its own interests over the welfare of the public. They accuse the NCTAF of ignoring relevant studies in reviewing the literature, failing to exercise critical judgment in acceptance of research findings, and even misrepresenting data. Whereas Ballou and Podgursky (2000) accept that the studies cited by the NCTAF support 'better training,' they contend that there is no evidence to suggest the pedagogical nature of this training or the need for it to follow teaching guidelines set out by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Additionally, Ballou and Podgursky argue that extending teacher preparation programs may deter some prospective teachers from entering the profession. According to Ballou and Podgursky, findings presented by the NCTAF represent a biased agenda designed to shift regulatory power out of the public sector into the private.

Darling-Hammond (2000) supports the NCTAF and refutes Ballou and Podgursky's (2000) accusations. Darling-Hammond suggests that the demands of new subject matter and diverse student bodies necessitate deeper content knowledge, more sophisticated pedagogical and diagnostic skills, and broader repertoires of teaching strategies for teachers. As such, she agrees with the NCTAF's (1996) findings that reform is unlikely to succeed without significant investment in teaching.

*British Reform: National Literacy Strategy*

In Britain, implementation of the National Literacy Strategy [NLS] (Department for Education and Employment, 1998), a framework for teaching, attempted to raise literacy standards across the country. Citing evidence that higher expectations for literacy education left teachers "groping in the dark" (Bryan, 2004, p. 144), the NLS proposed to tighten approaches, skills and assessment, offering a new discourse for teaching literacy. Bryan (2004) argues that the NLS served as a vehicle through which politically defined purposes might be realized in education. In an analysis of data from observations and interviews of staff at three primary schools in England, Bryan found that the emerging model of teacher professionalism in Britain is determined by two key entities: the government, and the head teacher. Individuals most responsible for implementing the NLS, classroom teachers, have little or no representation in the decision-making processes.

Fisher (2004) argues that extrinsic reform models such as the NLS need to be accompanied by opportunities for teachers to develop and reflect upon new teaching pedagogy if the goals of large-scale reform are to be fully realized. In her three-year study of 20 elementary teachers' literacy programs following initiation of the NLS, Fisher described ways in which teacher pedagogy interferes with adoption of new teaching methods. Where teachers continued to develop in their literacy teaching for the first two years, reporting increased confidence in their programming and teaching, many teachers reverted to their original pedagogical stances in year three. Fisher suggests that large-scale implementation necessitates ongoing teacher support.

*Canadian Reform: Ontario Provincial Curriculum Guidelines and Testing*

In Canada, education falls under provincial/territorial jurisdiction. Curriculum guidelines are established at provincial rather than federal levels. An example of Canadian provincially-legislated education and reform is the Ontario Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1997). The Ministry of Education administers the system of publicly funded elementary and secondary school education in the province of Ontario. Curriculum documents define what children are expected to be taught within Ontario public schools. New documents are developed yearly to support curriculum implementation. New curricula in social studies, as well as various subject areas in French Immersion, were introduced as recently as 2005. According to the Ministry of Education website (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/>), the most recent guidelines for language arts, Grades 1 to 8, were implemented in 1997 and revised in 2006.

In Canada, as in the United States, there is no uniform assessment system. Each province develops and implements its own assessment tools. All provinces, excepting Prince

Edward Island, currently utilize some form of large scale assessment for both elementary and secondary school students. Miles and Lee (2002) maintain that large scale assessments used in Canada lack strong reliability and that validity data are often developed haphazardly, without consideration of research related to accepted test development standards. According to Miles and Lee, very few provinces currently provide or report having gathered data on the reliability or validity of their assessment practices, yet they continue to use them to make major decisions about individual students, teachers, programs and schools.

In Ontario, the quality of education is assessed yearly by means of provincially produced and administered standardized testing for Grades 3 and 6 (reading, writing and mathematics), Grade 9 (mathematics), as well as Grade 10 (The Ontario Secondary Literacy Test). The Grade 10 literacy test is a minimum competency test that is a graduation requirement in the province of Ontario. These tests are distributed and assessed through the Education Quality and Accountability Office [EQAO], an independent agency of the Ontario government.

Although the Ontario Ministry of Education supports EQAO testing as a means for providing accountability to its stakeholders, many researchers (Delpit, 2003; Eisner, 2002; Fox & Cheng, 2007; Lotherington, 2004) contest the use of standardized forms of testing. Eisner (2002) suggests standardized testing measures a narrow range of skills, produces easily misinterpreted results that do more harm than good to schools, teachers and students, and reduces the essence of teaching to scripted teaching. Delpit (2003) articulates ways in which scripted, low-level instruction, characteristic of teaching to the test, not only inhibits higher order thinking skills, but also fosters reductionism whereby “teachers and students are treated as non-thinking objects to be manipulated and ‘managed’ ” (p. 14).

Lotherington (2004) maintains that current standardized testing practices in Ontario fail to recognize students' emergent multiliteracies. Respondents in Lotherington's study were Grade 3 students from two Toronto area schools. Both schools were inner-city elementary schools in Toronto, highly multicultural and socioeconomically disadvantaged. Both schools were described as having been designated "pedagogically innovative in their uses of information and communications technology by federal and provincial education agencies" (p. 311). Students from these schools performed relatively poorly on the Grade 3 EQAO testing which tested reading, writing and mathematic skill levels. Lotherington attributes this failure to perform to the outdated, "linear, static, culturally and linguistically limited" (p. 317) concept of literacy tested by the EQAO. According to Lotherington, testing by the EQAO fails to recognize and assess the expanding literacies valued and incorporated in students' literacy education (education fostered through both in and out-of-school experiences). Province-wide literacy tests, she argues, construe literacy as "paper-based, English language dependent, culturally and historically Anglo-centric" (p. 309). Lotherington urges for fair assessment, based on inclusive practices that validate students' acquisition of new literacies.

Fox and Cheng (2007) examined the test-taking accounts of 22 first language (L1) learners and 136 second language (L2) learners from seven Ontario secondary schools immediately following administration of the March Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test [OSSLT]. L1 test-takers reported engaging in test-taking literacy behaviours somewhat different from the literacy activities that typically characterize their reading and writing within the classroom. L2 test-takers, who generally rely on dictionaries and the internet to support their in-class literacy activities, reported that the OSSLT became a test of vocabulary

or language proficiency rather than a test of literacy. Fox and Cheng accuse the OSSLT of underestimating second language learners' knowledge, skills and abilities as a result of linguistic and cultural interference. The researchers propose a number of recommendations: (i) that all test-takers be permitted to use a dictionary during testing in the same manner these are used during in-class activities; (ii) that test standards be altered to take differences between L1 and L2 learners into account; (iii) that more precise information regarding test-takers' backgrounds (first language, culture, age of arrival in Canada, time in Canada, etc.) be collected as part of the test and analyzed to improve literacy proficiency; and, (iv) that alternative assessment methods (portfolios, classroom observations, narrative profiles, for example) accompany scores on the OSSLT to improve the quality of information regarding students' literacy practices and capabilities. Fox and Cheng suggest that further research be undertaken to examine ways in which the OSSLT privileges first language learners over second language learners.

Bruinsma (2006) describes a general lack of preparedness in Canadian teachers for teaching literacy. He advocates for the development of national standards in Canada, similar to those established in Great Britain and the United States. In his study of preservice literacy preparation in Canadian universities, Bruinsma conducted a survey of 36 accredited teacher education institutions, all members of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada [AUCC]. Of the 36 universities invited to respond, 23 submitted completed surveys. The results suggest a wide disparity, across Canada, of the availability, content and duration of literacy courses offered to preservice students; however, the study requires further investigation. A major limitation of the study is the lack of follow-up to the initial survey. According to Bruinsma, an absence of national literacy standards in Canada forces provinces

and territories to develop their own guidelines. Bruinsma supports implementation of national literacy standards to facilitate better preparation of literacy teachers and quality of programming for teaching literacy.

### *Moving Towards Change*

#### *Setting Standards for Teacher Educators*

Researchers (Beck et al., 2005; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Linnakyla & Valijarvi, 2005; Volante, 2006) value variety in the skills and knowledges possessed by teacher educators. They dispute, however, whether or not teacher educators should be governed by standards and, if so, which standards should be selected to characterize teacher educator expertise (Klecka, Donovan, Venditti & Short, 2008; Murray, 2001; Robinson & McMillan, 2006; Smith, 2005). Klecka, Donovan, Venditti, and Short (2008), along with Robinson and McMillan (2006) are in agreement that active involvement in teaching, scholarly applications, collaborations, learning and leadership are among the competences that teacher educators should strive to maintain. The Association of Teacher Educators [ATE] developed a list (<http://www.ate1.org/pubs/home.cfm>) of nine standards to facilitate “a more orchestrated approach to selection, preparation, and renewal of teacher educators” (p. 3) in the United States. Included in its list of standards are: teaching, application of cultural competence and social justice, scholarship, professional development, leadership in program development, collaboration with stakeholders, public advocacy, contribution to teacher education as a profession, and contribution to the creation of overall visions for teaching. The ATE website defines each of the nine standards attributed to “accomplished teacher educators” (p. 1) and identifies indicators and artifacts to support their personal application.

Smith (2005) maintains that many of the 'so-called' standards relate to tacit aspects of teaching or implicit concepts such as teacher educators' work relative to behaviour, actions, beliefs and thinking and that these standards can only be documented by the teacher educators themselves. In her study of 40 novice teachers and 18 teacher educators at a teacher education institution in Israel, Smith asked both groups to characterize good teacher educators, their professional knowledge and the ways in which expectations of teacher expertise differ for elementary teachers and teacher educators. She found that teacher educators and novice teachers view modeling of constructivist teaching methods and recent experience in teaching in schools as the most important characteristics of good teacher educators. Smith suggests that standards be used as guidelines with room built-in for accommodating individual routes to achieving professional competence. She explains that the field of teaching, as it relates to teacher educators is currently in its infancy and requires further consideration.

#### *Change and Teacher Educator Identity*

Robinson and McMillan (2006) suggest that teacher educators experience added pressure in that many are preparing student teachers for schools very different from the ones they themselves were educated in as young people:

The increasing complexity of the world of teaching and learning is demanding that teachers are able to act as professionals, interpreting and analysing educational events, acting in a variety of situations, reflecting on their own performance, and acting collaboratively with others. (p. 328)

They argue that preparing student teachers to meet such competences necessitates that teacher educators share a similar philosophical and pedagogical orientation to their student teachers. Robinson and McMillan (2006) articulate a need for further research to give consideration to teacher educators and the identities they construct for themselves.

Welmond (2002) warns that teacher educators' identities, grounded in widely accepted notions of teachers' rights and responsibilities, influence their different visions of teacher effectiveness. He argues that policy makers, interested in promoting a new definition of teacher effectiveness, may meet opposition from teacher educators unless desired changes are linked to the present teacher identity landscape. Smith (2005) suggests a need for universities to revisit their models for promotion within Faculties of Education. She explains that teacher educators are often accepted into teacher education institutions because they are good, experienced teachers with advanced academic degrees. Smith, along with Murray (2001), notes discrepancies in the characteristics of teacher educators that are most valued by student teachers, teacher educators and Faculties of Education. The researchers maintain that education faculties' emphasis on publication as the main criteria for promotion of teacher educators undervalues the importance of other characteristics of 'good' teacher educators, most specifically, their ability to teach and model effectively. Whereas teaching excellence is highly valued in the promotion of elementary teachers, it becomes less and less valued (in favour of academic excellence) as teacher educators aim for advanced academic ranking within Faculties of Education. Smith suggests a need to further examine differences between pre and inservice training for teacher educators as well as student teachers.

### **Planning for Effective Preservice Literacy Teacher Preparation**

Many researchers have described the adequacies and inadequacies of preservice preparation for teaching literacy (Ballou & Podgursky, 2000; Beck, Brown, Cockburn, & McClure, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Preservice preparation for teaching literacy is influenced and compounded by multiple factors. Included in these are: (i) the complex nature of 'literacy' as a concept (Eisner, 2002; Freire, 1985; Gardner, 1999; Gee, 2000); (ii) the

perceived lack of direction in literacy education (Beck et al., 2005; Borg, 2003; Delpit, 2003); and, (iii) the frameworks adopted by Faculties of Education for supporting student teachers during in-course and in-field training (Beck et al., 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Fishman, Marx, Best & Tal, 2003; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Loughran, Brown, & Doecke, 2001). These three factors are described in greater detail below.

### *Understanding the Complex Nature of Literacy*

How we define literacy influences in-school programming for literacy, including decisions surrounding which literacies and whose literacies we choose to support in class. Defining literacy as an ever-expanding concept of communication, that is, ways of thinking, interpreting, responding, and sharing ideas and information about the changing world around us, encourages individuals, literacy educators included, to develop new situational contexts for literacy (Gee, 2000; Kist, 2005; Street, 2001). Terms such as media literacy, content literacy, computer literacy, environmental literacy, critical literacy, balanced literacy, and others, have emerged to describe alternate, situational ways of knowing. Recognition of literacy as situational (Freire, 1985; Gee, 2000) reflects the importance of developing literacy by “actively participating in the world, as critic and as creator” (Monkman, MacGillivray, & Leyva, 2003, p. 245). Lawless (2005) contends that there is “never a point at which we can stop, point and say, ‘There, that’s what it (literacy) is’” (p. 205). In response to the changing world, literacy continues to evolve. While exciting, this malleability of the term ‘literacy’ creates numerous challenges for ensuring thorough and meaningful preparation of preservice candidates (Beck, Brown, Cockburn, & McClure, 2005).

### *Traditional Literacy*

Despite research supporting the emergence of new literacies, governments and their various organizations, institutions of learning, businesses, and Western society, in general, continue to privilege a more traditional definition of literacy defined as reading, writing and oral language, with English being the dominant language of learning and instruction (Jarolimek, Foster, & Kellough, 2005; Tompkins, 2003; Bainbridge & Malicky, 2004). Researchers argue that traditional literacy produces and perpetuates valued knowledge systems and practices of the dominant class to the exclusion of others (Dlamini, 2001; Guerra, 2004; Monkman, MacGillivray, & Leyva, 2003; Noddings, 2005).

Delpit (2003), like Dlamini (1998) and Battiste (2005), contends that the attraction to traditional literacy within educational institutions is misguided and founded in oppressive, colonialist principles. Delpit explains that the attraction to traditional literacy can be traced to a set of defining characteristics: traditional literacy, in its standardized form, offers an attractive package because it is measurable (through standardized testing), teachable (within school, home, political, and economical environments), and easily reported to parents and stakeholders. In her 2003 address to the AERA, Delpit challenges educators to develop intentional communities, communities that attend to the cultural beliefs, interests, and intellectual, political and historical legacies students bring to the classroom.

Guerra (2004) also criticizes the hidden biases inherent in traditional literacy approaches. He argues that traditional literacy, in providing instrumental access to English reading, writing and oral language, denies access to the cultural discourses and interests in which students regularly partake outside the classroom. Guerra maintains that restricting ways of knowing to English reading, writing, and oral language, grants superiority to English

language learning to the exclusion of other languages and cultures, in addition to excluding alternate ways of knowing the world and/or rendering them less significant. He criticizes the way in which literacy is presented in the classroom as a “decontextualized set of skills that do not change from one social setting to another” (p. 5).

*Literacy as a Situated Practice*

Gee (2000) maintains that literacies “only make sense when studied in the context of social and cultural (and we can add historical, political and economic) practices of which they are but a part” (p. 180). The New Literacy Studies Group, of which Gee is a member, uses the term “situated literacies” (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000) to describe the interconnectedness of literacies, and suggests that more than one literacy is being practiced at any given time by members of any community. Kist (2005) also contends that literacy cannot be separated from the cultural, historical and everyday discourses of people’s lives.

According to Kist (2005), to do so is to “miss most (if not all) of what is happening” (p. 6).

Masny and Ghahremani-Ghajar (1999) propose that literacies can be divided into three groups: community-based, personal and school-based. According to the researchers, the term ‘multiple literacies’ best applies to the interconnections and co-dependencies between and across these three groups. That is, students engage in school-based literacies to the degree to which these literacies are enculturated into their ways of thinking, talking, valuing and behaving. The level to which students are able to access school-based literacies depends upon the degree to which their personal and community-based literacies are represented within the culture of the school. Tension is inevitable as institutions attempt to change while at the same time hold on to a school culture that represents mainstream values. As a solution, the researchers propose a pedagogy of difference wherein students’ cultural, racial and

religious differences are validated within their school-based literacy practices to enable students to regain voice, power and self-worth instead of experiencing marginalization.

Street (2001) also conceptualizes literacy as a social practice. He explains that literacy is about people's knowledge (past and present), their identities, and the choices they make between different literacy practices, including reading, writing and everyday literacy activities (i.e. creating lists, listening to radio). Street suggests a need for in-school literacy instruction to pay greater attention to socio-economic, historical and cultural contexts.

### *New and Multiliteracies*

Criticisms of 'traditional' literacy education are not limited to discourses on English language education and its production and perpetuation of colonialist values. The literature also describes the ways in which traditional literacy activities exclude the newer literacies students bring into their classrooms (Albers & Harste, 2007; Alvermann & Hong Xu, 2003; Booth, 2002; Gee, 2000). According to Albers and Harste (2007), Alvermann and Hong Xu (2003) and Gee (2000), students continue to acquire diverse new literacies by engaging in pop culture, interactive media such as internet communications, video games, software applications, and technological devices including cell phones, game boys, Xboxes, and other multi-media hardware.

Lotherington (2004) suggests that changes in linguistic and sociolinguistic conventions of language, particularly English, and in digital literacy practices, are a result of shifting borders of the encoded world of literacy away from the printed format associated with traditional literacy teaching and learning toward a visually encoded and decoded symbol system known as hypermedia. Eagleton (2002) maintains that hypermedia, with its flexible use of text, images, audio and video clips, animation, and virtual reality, requires an ability to

orchestrate and transmediate among traditional and new literacies. Semali and Fueyo (2002) define transmediation as responding to cultural texts through multiple symbol systems, including, but not limited to: art, movement, sculpture, dance, and music, as well as words.

Albers and Harste (2007) articulate the notion that increased interest in the arts reflects shifting views of how literacy is defined and what it means to be literate: "In today's classrooms, educators must be prepared to work with how messages are sent, received, and interpreted, as well as how media and technology position us as viewers and users of multimedia texts in the world" (p. 6). Albers and Harste see a need for students to be "agents of text" (p. 7). They question how educators might better support students' participation and critical literacy development through active involvement in the arts, multimodalities and the new literacies. They argue that literacy entails more than writing to prompts and responding to comprehension questions. Rather, literacy needs to take into account the diverse cultural experiences, knowledges and favoured modes of expression students bring into their classrooms.

Exploration of gender influences on adolescents' literacy practices, has led Booth (2002) to note that boys' out-of-school literacy practices are often dismissed and/or unrecognized within the classroom. Booth offers concrete suggestions for tapping into students' everyday literacies, including their out-of-school literacies. He suggests computer programs, electronic games, multimedia, graphic novels, comics, magazines, card collections, hobbies and other print and non-print materials offer entry points into students' literacy-related experiences. Booth advocates capitalizing on the multimodality seen on the Web and in CD-ROMs. Usage of these tools, he argues, has potential to render literacy education more appealing, purposeful and inclusive.

### *Culturally Responsive Education*

The importance of advocating for inclusive definitions of literacy within institutions of learning is affirmed in studies such as a two-year case study of an experienced first-grade teacher in a working-class community in West Texas. Monkman, MacGillivray, and Leyva (2003) examined the role that students' own cultural and social practices play in contributing to mainstream literacy acquisition. Monkman et al. (2003) suggest that responsive literacy teaching involves bridging home, communities and school, connecting the cultural and social practices and beliefs children bring from home, and from other social interactions outside the classroom, to the mainstream sphere "in such a way that honours and uses the social and cultural resources they already have" (p. 249). Monkman et al. suggest that immigrant students entering schools, as well as students from outside the mainstream culture, can be disconnected from the ideas, assumptions and values of teachers and students in the school system. They argue that conscious incorporation of the cultural plane (Rogoff, 1995) into classrooms makes education relevant and meaningful for students of diverse backgrounds and prepares them to better read their world.

Marie Battiste (2005) documents challenges specifically associated with teaching Aboriginal students whose social and cultural practices differ from those introduced and fostered in Western models of education. In her report, *State of Aboriginal Education*, for the Canadian Council on Learning [CCL], Battiste explains:

First Nations youth have the highest school departures before graduation, the highest suicide rates, highest incarceration rates, and perform far below the achievement and employment rates of average Canadians. They continue to have the highest rates of infant mortality and family social problems. These facts are often repeated in Canada, but little is known about First Nations learning, development, knowledge and language for much of the research has focused on their 'incapacity' and little on their potential for influencing positive transformations in their own and in Canadian society in general. In fact, Canada and its provincial curricula has continued to

marginalize or be indifferent to First Nations peoples, since their political legacies has divided their interests and the created hegemonic power relations evident in colonization, racism and domination which continue to effect First Nations present and future. (p. 5)

Battiste (2005) suggests that provincial curricula, in Canada, continue to marginalize rather than empower First Nations peoples. She explains that colonization has seriously affected the lives of First Nations peoples.

Grant and Gillette (2006) provide a clear definition of ‘culturally responsive’ education:

When will we, as a society and as a profession, acknowledge and affirm that all students can learn and achieve and do away with the codes (e.g., at risk, single-parent home) that allow us to speak with a false tongue? To be “culturally responsive” means that effective teachers must not mouth the words; rather, they must

- Believe that all students can achieve and hold high expectations for all learners.
- Build a “community of learners” in the classroom and connect with students’ families.
- Be learners themselves and vary instruction to meet the needs of students.
- Know that students have a wealth of skills and knowledge and use these in teaching.
- Be willing to be introspective about themselves and their teaching, monitor their beliefs and actions for bias and prejudice, and be unafraid to teach about the “isms.” (p. 294)

They encourage teachers to view all students as capable learners and to adapt their teaching/learning practices to meet students’ needs, interests and cultural experiences.

According to Delpit (2006), helping hardworking teachers cope with some of the deficits they see in their students, involves reframing their perspectives. Delpit suggests that today’s middle class pupils acquire large amounts of knowledge at home. Delpit explains that the difficulties teachers face, particularly teachers whose experiences lie outside the cultural or class backgrounds of their pupils, may be tied to their inability to recognize their students’ strengths. She suggests that teachers who familiarize themselves with aspects of a child’s

culture are better able to assess that child's competence. Delpit maintains that the cultures of marginalized groups tend to be either "ignored, misrepresented, viewed from an outsider perspective, or denigrated" (p. 229). The researcher argues that skills considered to be 'basic' are generally skills that middle-class children bring to school (letter names and sounds, colour names, counting and recognition of numerals and familiarity with story books, for example). These skills may not be 'basic' to children with nonmainstream or non-middle-class backgrounds. Delpit suggests that children from poorer communities may lack basic skills, however, their critical thinking skills tend to be more pronounced as they are accustomed to being independent and to solving their own and others' problems. Delpit explains that teachers, too often, assess the knowledge that lower income children bring to school as being a deficit rather than an advantage. Delpit proposes that traditional school knowledge, including the 'basics' be taught within the context of critical thinking to students for whom basic skills are not so basic while middle class children be taught problem solving skills and independence. The researcher contends that children's self esteem and cultural pride are affected by the curriculum as well as by the attitudes their teachers express towards them: "one cannot 'honor and respect' the culture without honouring and respecting the children themselves" (p. 230).

An effective example of 'culturally responsive' education is illuminated by Bell, Anderson, Fortin, Ottmann, Rose, Simard et al. (2004) in their case study of 10 band-operated Aboriginal schools in Canada. The schools were deemed 'successful' by provincial Ministries of Education, school districts, and First Nations education departments and organizations, as well as by the researchers. 'Success' was defined as "demonstrating evidence of significant progress for Aboriginal students" (p. 22). Schools in the study were

located in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Yukon. The researchers brought a range of cultural and research experiences to the study. Four of the researchers identified as Aboriginal. All had conducted previous research into Aboriginal education. Aboriginal students comprised from 35% to 100% of the total school population. The researchers identified six areas as contributing to successful Aboriginal education: leadership, school climate, staff, funding and resources, community and programs.

Literacy emerged as a major program emphasis at each of the study sites. Some of the preferred methods of literacy instruction largely mirrored formulas for educating at-risk students in general: (a) ability groupings with levelled readers, (b) small group instruction, (c) school-wide/primary division blocking of time for literacy, and (d) commercial reading programmes such as Reading Recovery. Schools employed a wide range of commercial academic and support programs. At-risk students were identified early using intervention programs such as Headstart, preschool, all day kindergarten, or phonemic awareness instruction.

To situate literacy within students' and the community's own beliefs and practices, efforts were made to involve students' families in at-home literacy practice. As well, Aboriginal languages and culture were a constant focus at all schools in addition to English language learning. The shape this took varied across schools. In some schools, parents or elders served as cultural teachers. Each school reported serious challenges in finding certified Aboriginal teachers, especially those with expertise in early childhood development, special education, reading, and science and math electives for teaching in the secondary panel. Each school was governed by a blend of provincial/territorial and Aboriginal authorities.

*Use of Multicultural Literature for Promoting Culturally Responsive Education*

Angela Ward (2000) urges teachers to move away from deficit notions wherein multicultural literacy is conceptualized as a liability. Ward construes speaking and writing in one language as a limitation. She argues that a pluralist view “sees literacy as part of the broader issue of how power is distributed in society as a whole” (p. 2). Ward advocates using multicultural literature in the classroom in ways that “move beyond looking for brown faces in the text to finding books that deal with important human values and dilemmas” (p. 3). According to Ward, issue-centered literature offers potential for multicultural representations to move beyond cultural specifics to an exploration of human values.

Ward’s (2000) support for use of multicultural literature in the classroom shares similar belief structures to those iterated by Courtland and Gambell (2000). They suggest that literature offers tremendous potential for engaging students in opportunities for learning and for challenging their world views. In the opening chapter to their text, Courtland (2000) explains that literature has the power to evoke deeply intimate and unique responses in readers, “to stir within them ideas and emotions, and to stimulate them to make connections to their own lives” (pp. 17-18). Using reader response theory as a framework, the authors explain that readers’ engagement with and response to texts is influenced by their background knowledge, life experiences, interests, world views and previous readings and involvements with literary texts.

Courtland, Niemi, Paddington and Magnusson (2006) explored ways in which transmediation supports students’ comprehension of multicultural literary texts. In their study of 19 students in one Grade 8 classroom, students read and responded to Deborah Ellis’ (2000) multicultural novel, *The Breadwinner*. Students explored their understandings of the

text and multicultural issues therein (including issues related to women's rights and the role of the Taliban), through means of artistic representation, in the form of acrylic paintings. The two Grade 8 literacy and art teachers at the research site were involved in the research as well as the planning and implementation of art and literacy lessons. The research builds on Cervetti, Pardales and Damic's (2001) notion that reading is an act of coming to know the word and world and on Bustle's (2004) research into the arts as a scaffold through which students can make empathetic connections to their world and to social action. According to Courtland et al. (2006) the processes of reading, response, transmediation and reflection facilitated deeper understandings of the social justice issues addressed in Ellis' (2000) *The Breadwinner*.

Bradford (2007) explains that the field of postcolonial studies has largely ignored children's texts and the language of children's books. She suggests that children's books shape children's ways of being in their world. The author maintains that postcolonial works construct ideas and values about colonization, culture, and individual and national identities in ways that marginalize Indigenous peoples:

The fact that non-Indigenous people learn about Indigenous people largely through representations produced, in Langton's phrase, through "stories told by former colonists:" means that Indigenous cultures and people are generally the objects of discourse and not their subjects. In the field of children's literature, one of the most important consequences is that Indigenous children rarely encounter texts produced within their own cultures, so that representations of Indigeneity are filtered through the perspectives of white culture. (p. 10)

According to Bradford (2007), the relative neglect of children's literature in postcolonial research can be traced to two main reasons: (i) liberal humanist modes of thought that emphasize human connectedness across time and space with little room for more historicized or politicized critical readings; and, (ii) Jungian interpretations, tied to

transmission of traditional narratives, that identify common patterns of symbolism and meaning in stories from different cultures. Bradford suggests a need for more critical interrogations of postcolonial theory as these relate to children's literature. Citing higher rates of poverty, suicide, incarceration and infant mortality among Indigenous populations, she argues that the "trauma and disruption" (p. 9) of colonization continue to impact colonized peoples. The author advocates for careful selection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous texts that present alternative narratives of the past.

Harris and Willis (2003) note that the purposefulness of multicultural literature extends to all students, including Whites "who need to be decentered in the curriculum and to learn about others" (p. 829) and students of colour "who need to be added to the curriculum and have their culture affirmed" (p. 829). The researchers recommend that teacher education programs include multicultural literature in ways that promote self-identity, multicultural awareness and sensitivity to the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Further, the researchers articulate a need for student teachers to be exposed to multicultural works that "move individuals outside of their comfort zones, raise critical consciousness, and challenge the status quo" (p. 829).

Bainbridge and Oberg (2005) suggest that teachers need training and support if they are to select and use multicultural literature effectively. In a case study of one school district, the researchers examined elementary teachers' use of Canadian multicultural literature and the supports facilitating their usage. Data were collected through an on-line survey, observations in schools, and interviews with elementary teachers, teacher-librarians and school and district administrators. The case study was a follow-up to a series of three research projects aimed at exploring preservice and inservice teachers' understandings of

Canadian identity and their knowledge of Canadian books. According to the researchers, teachers are excited to use Canadian multicultural picture books and assume the books will be readily available within their school libraries. Interviews confirmed that novice and experienced teachers depend on teacher-librarians to keep them informed about books and to make book selections for them. The participants identified teacher-librarians as 'master' teachers, curriculum coordinators and instructional leaders within the school. Bainbridge and Oberg suggest that teachers lack general knowledge of Canadian multicultural books, particularly books that present non-mainstream or controversial points of view. They explain that teacher-librarians need to be well-versed in Canadian multicultural literature and willing to find ways to share their expertise with teachers to facilitate teachers' use and knowledge of multicultural literature.

Focusing on one specific genre of multicultural literature, Johnston and Mangat (2003) see potential for multicultural picture books to support teaching and understanding of cultural identity in new ways. The researchers articulate ways in which Canadian children's picture books present diasporic histories traditionally excluded in Eurocentric accounts of Canada's past:

Canada's newer literary voices, in re-imagining the nation's diverse cultures, languages, histories and traditions, challenge notions of a Canadian meta-narrative that supposedly speaks for all Canadians while, in reality, only addressing a select few. Their stories may help to raise new questions and tensions that have the potential to disrupt any homogeneous notion of Canadian identity. (p. 203)

Johnston and Mangat (2003) articulate a discord between Canada's official designation as a multicultural country and the way in which power balances continue to shift towards citizens of European descent. They argue that multicultural picture books, in

exploring dominant and minority narratives of identity and belonging provide multiple viewpoints for exploring cultural representation in the history of Canada and its peoples.

*Perceived Lack of Direction in Preservice Literacy Education*

A second factor impacting teacher preparation for teaching literacy is the ‘perceived’ lack of direction in literacy education (Beck et al., 2005; Kist, 2005). Embedded in a multitude of theoretical frameworks and practices, literacy education necessitates expert subject knowledge by teacher educators if student teachers are to be better prepared for the demanding role of literacy teacher (Beck et al., 2005; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Linnakyla & Valijarvi, 2005; Volante, 2006). According to Beck et al. (2005) and Grossman et al. (2000), the concepts introduced and the approaches implemented during preservice preparation for teaching literacy inform the curriculum design and implementation decisions teachers make on their teaching practicums and during inservice teaching.

Beck et al. (2005) suggest foundations for effective teaching of literacy necessitate thorough understanding of the complexities of literacy/multiliteracies, in addition to teaching/learning theory, and critical literacy and social justice theory. Kosnik and Beck (2009) explain that new teachers, “in a sense” (p. 1), actually receive tremendous direction on what and how to teach:

Their preservice instructors offer them a wide array of theories, principles, and strategies, and their practicum mentors give them plenty of practical advice. After graduation, they are handed detailed curriculum guidelines, prescribed or recommended teaching materials, and mandated assessment and reporting systems. Further guidance usually comes from their school principal, experienced colleagues, and school district and government induction programs. (p. 1)

The researchers maintain that this guidance system makes sense theoretically but breaks down in practice.

Beck et al. (2005) suggest that student teachers are often left to apply pedagogical theory themselves. They relate the perceived lack of direction in literacy education to the overwhelming abundance of theoretical frameworks and practical applications for supporting in-school literacy development, instructor unfamiliarity with research in teacher education and the relative brevity of in-course training devoted to literacy education in preservice programs. Beck et al. (2005) maintain that teaching and modeling a pluralistic view of literacy in preservice education is a demanding task. To help preservice instructors balance these demands, Beck et al. (2005, 2007) advise: (i) Prioritization of approaches, concepts and strategies related to literacy; and, (ii) Depth of coverage over breadth of coverage. The authors contend that providing a sense of where to begin, what to include and how to deliver that content demands expert subject knowledge from teacher educators responsible for instructing preservice language arts and literacy. They argue that detailed exposure to a limited range of excellent curricular materials, models, approaches, techniques and strategies, as well as awareness and understanding of metacognitive processes involved in teaching and learning, gives student teachers sufficient vision to sustain them in the early years of teaching and to serve as a basis for continued professional growth. Beck et al. (2005, 2007) explain the choices, conscious or otherwise that faculty educators make in designing and implementing curriculum for preservice literacy instruction impact the preparation of student teachers. Predictably, the sheer complexity of literacy compels instructors to make decisions about what to include in preservice education and what to omit. Emergence of new literacies in response to changing societal needs, interests and developments compounds these decisions as does the relatively short duration of preservice courses.

In a preliminary report of Year 1 findings from their site in our national, longitudinal study on preservice preparation of literacy teachers, Beck, Brown, Cockburn and McClure (2005) studied the ideas and practices of 16 elementary literacy instructors, both tenure-track and contract. Their goal was to determine the approaches undertaken by preservice instructors and changes in instructors' understanding of literacy. The researchers noted that the literacy instructors advocated a social constructivist approach to teaching/learning; however, the degree to which they practiced and /or modeled this approach, in-class, varied. Similar variations occurred in the extent to which instructors valued depth of course content over breadth. Instructors reported widespread emphasis on critical literacy; however, new and multiliteracies received minimal emphasis in-course. Beck et al. (2005) suggest that the complexities of literacy heighten the need for preservice literacy instruction to have a major theoretical component. New teachers, they argue, need to understand literacy more fully if they are to support literacy learning across diverse school contexts. According to Beck et al. (2005), opportunities, in their preservice literacy courses, to engage in literacy activities geared to developing their own strengths, models acceptance of alternate ways of knowing and may influence student and novice teachers' future strategy use. The researchers also maintain that heightening student teachers' awareness of the biases inherent in literacy education represents a step towards educating thoughtful, critically literate teachers who are better prepared to meet the needs of the diverse student populations in today's classrooms, and to help students develop critical and other literacy practices relevant to their own lives.

Beck, Kosnik and Rowsell (2007), in a preliminary report on their longitudinal study on teacher preparation, examined first and second year teachers' views. The authors provide a comprehensive analysis of the adequacies and inadequacies of preservice education. They

found that student teachers perceived having received substantial guidance in what and how to teach. Primarily, student teachers were exposed to a wide array of theories, principles and strategies. Secondly, detailed curriculum guidelines, prescribed or recommended teaching resources, and mandated assessment and reporting systems provided further guidance. In addition, school principals, colleagues, and formal induction and mentoring programs also offered guidance and support to novice teachers. Beck et al. (2007) contend that so much material is presented in preservice literacy courses that new teachers are unable to develop a focused, coherent pedagogy. They argue that the guidance system breaks down for the following reasons: curriculum overload (too much for a beginning teacher to filter through); inconsistent guidance in both preservice and inservice settings; insufficient preservice modeling of theories to facilitate practical application in the early years of teaching; inadequate preparation of student teachers to recognize and/or enact professional choices in planning for literacy; and, the busy reality of early years teaching.

Beck et al. (2007) advocate setting priorities in teacher preparation programs such that novice teachers might emerge from preservice with “a selective, integrated set of pedagogical intentions that, to the degree possible for a new teacher, they can name, understand, own, and implement” (p. 3). The researchers propose that a coherent, prioritized vision of teaching be developed in cooperation with student teachers, wherein student teachers’ voices dominate the dialogical culture in the preservice program. Beck et al. (2007) suggest the following priorities guide preservice literacy education: program planning; pupil assessment; classroom organization and community; inclusion and equity; vision for teaching; and, professional identity. These priorities are revisited, refined and described in

greater detail by Kosnik and Beck (2009) in *Priorities in Teacher Education: The 7 Key Elements of Preservice Preparation*.

Kennedy (2006) suggests that inservice teachers experience tremendous internal and external pressures due to the multi-faceted nature of teaching. She challenges the role of knowledge in teaching, explaining that teachers must simultaneously address a number of issues and concerns at any given time, including: (i) covering content; (ii) fostering student learning; (iii) increasing student participation; (iv) maintaining momentum; (v) creating a supportive classroom community, and; (vi) attending to their own cognitive and emotional needs. Kennedy argues that the frameworks and approaches introduced in preservice education (evidenced in such terms as *learning community*, *co-construction*, *inquiry* and *social justice* (p. 209)) fail to address more than one or two of the concerns that teachers experience on a daily basis. Further, she suggests that pressures arise from conflicting societal aims for education. For example, Kennedy cites tensions between societal goals for recognizing students' independent needs and interests while also ensuring that all students are treated equally. She also notes that accommodating students' needs and interests is not always possible given demanding curriculum expectations for content coverage.

According to Kennedy (2006), "the reason we continue to disagree about what constitutes 'best practice' is that we all envision different ways of solving these simultaneous classroom equations" (p. 206). She suggests that teachers constantly develop 'scripts' to represent their individual solutions to the array of concerns and ideals that confront them in real time teaching. She maintains that the 'vision' currently fostered in teacher education programs is static, incomplete, removed from curricular purposes and incongruent with the range of competing values and ideals held by the various communities in which novice

teachers are expected to teach. Kennedy suggests a need for teacher education programs to re-envision teacher preparation in ways that are more complete, dynamic and prepare teachers to face and solve the challenges they encounter in diverse classroom settings.

Kist (2005) notes a lack of consensus amongst researchers in terms of the actual form(s) pluralistic models of literacy teacher education might take. Suggestions range from an interdisciplinary curriculum (Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000) to more inquiry-based education (Eisner, 2002). Kist (2005) contends that the lack of direction in these deliberations is problematic and provides fodder for further research. He suggests that the possibilities for envisioning the fabric of a multiliterate classroom are infinite, but “in the end, what is the sixth-grade teacher who is interested in new literacies to do on a Monday morning? How is a teacher to do all this...?” (p. 11).

#### *Supporting Seamless Learning in Teacher Education Programs*

Seamless learning, characterized by tight coherence and integration among courses and between coursework and field work is essential to heightening the overall effectiveness of teacher education programs. Darling-Hammond (2006) maintains that program cohesiveness prevents the structural and conceptual fragmentation criticized in traditional teacher education programs. According to Darling-Hammond, highly successful programs reflect careful attention to all areas of preservice learning to bring together seemingly disparate program elements through an integration of roles:

... courses are designed to intersect with each other, are aggregated into a well-understood landscape of learning, and are tightly interwoven with the advisement process and students' work in schools. Subject matter learning is brought together with content pedagogy through courses that treat them together; program sequences also create cross-course links. Faculty plan together and syllabi are shared across university divisions as well as within departments. Virtually all of the closely interrelated courses involve application in classrooms where observations or student teaching occur. These classrooms, in turn, are selected because they model the kind of

practice that is discussed in courses and advisement. In some particularly powerful programs, faculty who teach courses also supervise and advise teacher candidates and sometimes even teach children and teachers in placement schools. . .

Darling-Hammond (2006) advocates for extended and well-supervised clinical experiences, thirty weeks minimum, in duration. She maintains that student teaching opportunities be selected carefully such that they closely support the ideas being presented simultaneously through closely interwoven coursework. This researcher also advocates for extensive use of case methods, teacher research, performance assessments, and portfolio evaluation during preservice to facilitate links between theory and practice into inservice teaching. She articulates that strong relationships, common knowledge and shared beliefs among school and university-based faculty foster seamless education of student teachers.

Researchers propose inclusion of a wide range of experiences, approaches, strategies and tools for supporting teacher preparation during in-course and practicum preservice experiences (Kosnik & Beck, 2000; Lukin, Bandalos, Eckhout, & Mickelson, 2004; Mallette, Kile, Smith, McKinney, & Readence, 2000). Central to this spectrum of experiences is an underlying social constructivist approach to teaching and learning (Beck et al., 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Noel, 2000; Volante, 2006). In addition, a number of proposals for supporting teacher development foster a lifelong learning approach and advocate establishing faculty/school partnerships to support novice teachers in their transition from preservice to inservice education. Included in this latter group are: action research (Kosnik & Beck, 2000; Leland, Harste, & Shockley, 2007; Mallette et al., 2000); Preservice Assessment Literacy Study Groups [PALS] and Inservice and Preservice Assessment Literacy Study Groups [IPALS] (Lukin, Bandalos, Eckhout, & Mickelson, 2004); and, the establishment of both formal and informal partnerships between Faculties of Education and District School Boards

and schools (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Duffield, 2005; Ridley, Hurwitz, Hackett, & Miller, 2005).

#### *Adoption of a Social Constructivist Course Framework*

Numerous researchers maintain that adoption of a social constructivist course framework fosters deeper understandings of literacy and effective teaching of literacy (Beck et al., 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Noel, 2000; Volante, 2006). Kosnik and Beck (2009) support a “showing and telling” (p. 10) approach to teaching/learning during preservice education to help student teachers adopt and effectively implement social constructivist approaches in their own classrooms. Instead of a ‘we cover, they select and apply’ model of teacher education, the researchers propose a ‘together we figure out’ model (p. 4).

In her study of four students enrolled in two consecutive social constructivist-based education courses, Noel (2000) describes ways in which social constructivist models help student teachers make sense of new information about teaching and learning. She argues that a social constructivist approach to building bridges between theory and practice actively engages student teachers in the modeling and use of approaches, strategies and tools characteristic of effective literacy teaching. Noel advocates preservice inclusion of opportunities for hands-on and minds-on experience through role play, practice of teaching strategies, and participation in learning activities. According to Noel such practices enable students to construct deeper understandings through lived experience in new and/or familiar pedagogical approaches. Noel contends that collaborative learning, modeled, supported and initiated responsibly in programming, supports teacher use of social constructivist principles during inservice teaching.

Beck et al. (2005) suggest that a social constructivist approach to the teaching and learning of literacy necessitates that teacher preparation programs value experiential learning over transmission models. According to Beck et al. (2005), in-course modelling of social constructivism dictates the presence of certain activities over others, activities that recognize and value the social nature of all learning. The researchers found wide variations in the extent to which preservice instructors modeled, in their course and program, the social constructivist principles they advocated. Similarly, whereas the value of community was highly emphasized by preservice literacy instructors, some were not able to achieve a sense of community in their own courses.

*Experiential learning processes: Means for facilitating learning.* A number of researchers stress the potential for facilitating student teachers' emerging understandings by tapping into their own learning processes (Borg, 2003; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Volante, 2006). Volante (2006) investigated Canadian student teachers' perspectives on their preservice program design and delivery. At the beginning of the second semester, study participants (47) were asked to join one of four focus groups to discuss their personal and professional growth in an intermediate/senior preservice program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto [OISE/UT]. In addition, 12 of the original participants participated in individual interviews at the end of the academic year. During the individual interviews, preservice graduands were asked to comment on the main strengths and weaknesses of the preservice program. The respondents reported the diverse range of peers' views and experiences as critical to their own professional development. Volante argues for rigorous selection procedures to ensure student teachers bring a diverse range of volunteer and teaching-related experiences to preservice education programs.

*In course examination of pre-existing belief systems.* Many researchers suggest that student teachers' pre-existing assumptions about teaching and learning continue to influence their cognitive development throughout preservice and inservice teaching (Borg, 2003; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Klein, 2005). According to Borg (2003), the experiences that teachers acquire as learners inform their cognitions about teaching and learning and continue to influence cognitive development for the duration of their teaching careers. In his document analysis of 25 years of mainstream research on teacher cognition, Borg suggests a need for preservice education programs to build in opportunities for critical self-evaluation of pre-existing belief systems if teachers are to grow pedagogically. Professional preservice preparation is more effective when student teachers are provided ample opportunities for examining changes in their belief systems.

Klein (2005) contends that teacher education programs have a responsibility to ensure the existence of discursive spaces where student teachers might recognize and analyze the educational, cultural and biographical discourses by which they have been shaped. He maintains that reflection on the discursive practices of home, community and classroom, and the ways in which these practices support and/or hinder student teachers' learning, personal identity and confidence will lead preservice educators towards new understandings of the ways in which discourses impact identity and knowledge. He urges literacy educators to support student teachers in recognizing that exclusion and alienation negatively impact literacy development.

In a report on teacher preparation from preservice through to early years inservice teaching, Feiman-Nemser (2001) describes the paradoxical role of the prior beliefs students bring to their preservice programs. These images and beliefs, she argues, serve as filters for

making sense of the knowledge and experiences encountered in preservice; however, they also function as barriers to change, limiting the ideas student teachers are willing to accept. Early experiences, she suggests, need to be supplemented and/or challenged by preservice education (during in-course and practicum experiences) and inservice classroom experiences. Feiman-Nemser warns that student teachers must engage in critical examination of their entering beliefs in light of the alternative beliefs introduced in the preservice year if they are to develop powerful images of good teaching. Otherwise, she argues, entering beliefs, however faulty, will continue to shape teachers' practices and ideas.

Brindley and Laframboise (2002) also emphasize the need for preservice preparation programs to challenge the pre-existing cultural beliefs student teachers bring to their programs. Brindley and Laframboise followed 115 students, enrolled in four sections of a children's literature course, at a large university, in the southwestern United States. Their three-year study describes in-role simulations used in their course-work to encourage student teachers to re-examine their cultural beliefs. The researchers suggest that preservice students, many of whom are white, enter into teacher preparation programs with culturally insular perspectives and do not experience the cognitive dissonance necessary for promoting change in these belief systems. Brindley and Laframboise urge examination of 'taboo topics,' including issues of diversity, racism, and equity within preservice classrooms, by using drama as a medium. Purposefully designed activities with outstanding cultural texts, they argue, have potential to stimulate cultural awareness and sensitivity in preservice students.

*Critical analysis of literacy tools and curricular materials.* Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin and Place (2000) maintain that reflection plays an active role in shaping student teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes toward teaching. Like Borg (2003) and

Volante (2006), they advocate capitalizing on the visionary nature of reflection by building continual opportunities for individual and collaborative reflection into preservice literacy education. Grossman et al. (2000) followed 10 beginning teachers from their last year of preservice education into their first two years of full-time teaching. Data sources included five yearly interviews and classroom observations of the beginning teachers as well as interviews and observations of associate teachers, mentors and supervisors. The researchers suggest that preservice modeling of theory through practical application is instrumental in helping teachers develop pedagogical tools in that teachers draw on pedagogical tools introduced in preservice to develop their classroom practices. In their findings, Grossman et al. describe teachers joking about becoming “giant reflectors” (p. 33) as a result of the constant emphasis on reflection built into their preservice programs.

Further, Grossman et al. (2000) found that teachers’ developing understandings and practices were also shaped by the settings in which they taught, their collegial relationships, and the availability of resources. According to Grossman et al., the emergence of pedagogical tools developed in preservice became most evident during teachers’ second year of teaching. They argue that “theory becomes real only through practice” (p. 29).

Grossman et al. (2000) suggest that the curricular materials to which beginning teachers are exposed dramatically influence their learning. They encourage teacher educators to build into their programs opportunities for student teachers to practice critical literacy skills by questioning pre-packaged literacy programs, curriculum, trade texts and classroom literacy practices. According to Grossman et al., first year teacher participants welcomed prescribed and/or pre-packaged resources during their hectic first year of inservice teaching, but lacked the time, support and confidence to critically assess the effectiveness of their

programs and resource materials. Despite difficulty attaining a clear vision of teaching in their first year, teacher respondents continued to use some of the pedagogical tools introduced in preservice to critique their practices and make sense of their experiences. The researchers contend that a reflective stance towards teaching re-emerged only in the second year of teaching.

Loughran, Brown and Doecke (2001), like Grossman et al. (2000), suggest that the impact of preservice experiences on cognitive development may not be realized until year two of inservice teaching. In a study of twenty two first-year teachers, all recent graduates of a one-year Bachelor of Education program, Loughran et al. (2001) examined the transitions from preservice education to inservice teaching. They found that the innovative, creative teaching practices developed in preservice education take second seat to classroom management issues and other site pressures during first year inservice teaching. According to study participants' reports, reflection serves as a vehicle for facilitating the re-emergence of these innovative, preservice practices during year two of inservice teaching. Loughran et al. suggest a need for teachers in schools and Faculties of Education to work together for ongoing learning and support of pedagogy.

Hibbert and Iannacci (2005) use the term 'good teacher consumerism' (p. 716) to describe skills they believe educators need to practice when reviewing, selecting and implementing prescriptive materials for supporting balanced literacy within the classroom. The researchers maintain that prescriptive programs are often mass purchased by boards of education in a top-down fashion, before being forced upon teachers, giving them little or no input. The researchers suggest that the term, 'balanced literacy,' is widely used and carries different meanings. They report availability of many commercial programs said to target

balanced literacy. They suggest that while these programs use some of the terminology of balanced literacy theory, they offer little in the way of substance. The researchers advocate for balanced literacy to be construed as more than marketing select equalized components of literacy instruction (i.e. reading and/or writing): “. . . it is far more comprehensive in its commitment to ensuring that all aspects of reading, writing, listening, viewing, and speaking receive appropriate rather than equal emphasis within a literacy program” (p. 719).

According to Hibbert and Iannacci (2005), a comprehensive view of balanced literacy requires that teachers play an active role in decision making, responding to student needs and larger issues encompassing theory-practice considerations. They suggest that prescriptive programs, such as the *Four Blocks* model, though pedagogically sound in terms of strategy usage, contain time structures that limit teachers' involvement in decision-making processes. They worry that novice teachers, in an effort to cover all components of prescriptive programs, will sacrifice carefully-planned, engaging teaching in favour of scripted teaching. Further, they note that some prescriptive program initiatives, for example, use of levelled readers, promote the idea of homogeneous ability groupings over more inclusive mixed-ability groupings. They caution that packaged curricula have potential to “deaden teachers' creativity and innovation” (p. 724). As a solution, Hibbert and Iannacci urge teachers to practice good teacher consumerism by becoming actively involved in selecting and modifying materials for their students and classrooms.

Vacca, Vacca, and Begoray (2005) also stress the importance of incorporating opportunities for developing and practicing a critical, reflective stance in preservice literacy education. In addition to providing opportunities to critically assess pre-packaged curriculum materials, they advise instructors to use a variety of print, oral, and multimedia texts from

other cultures to engage preservice student teachers. According to Vacca, Vacca, and Begoray, inclusion of multicultural videos, novels, magazines, websites, music, and guest presenters has potential to inform teachers' inservice decisions for making education more inclusive.

#### *Linking Theory and Practice in Meaningful Ways*

Beck et al. (2005) suggest that reflection during preservice literacy education offers a means for linking theory and practice in meaningful ways. Describing their respondents' perceptions, they outline student teachers' concerns that literacy courses were overtly theoretical and lacking in practical application. According to Beck et al., the instructors interviewed in their study realized the importance of linking theory to practice. Many drew heavily on students' practicum experiences to illustrate theoretical principles. The researchers advocate explicit modeling of strategies, in addition to discussion, to permit students to make first-hand connections between theory and practice and to facilitate appropriation of strategies.

Smagorinsky, Cook and Johnson (2003) reject the theory/practice binary and suggest that focusing on each entity separately, and the separation between the two, fails to recognize how individuals learn. They argue that the problem with teacher education is not that it is overtly theoretical but that it places too little emphasis on the development of concept. Smagorinsky, Cook and Johnson reviewed case study research they conducted in two programs (elementary and secondary) at one university, on the transitions teachers make from preservice to inservice teaching. They found that students emerged from teacher education programs with fragmented, sketchy understandings and beliefs about teaching, tended to adopt the instructional approaches to which they were exposed in school settings

and possessed few tools for critiquing or modifying “cookie-cutter” (p. 1428) curricula. They argue that teacher education programs operate within a variety of constraints, mandates, financial limitations, and conflicting perspectives that make it difficult to introduce teaching as a concept. They suggest that terminologies used by inservice teachers and administrators further erode the concept of teaching introduced in teacher education programs. They advocate replacing the theory/practice binary with the terminology of concept development:

If the word and world are indeed intertwined as argued by Freire (1972), then this change in discourse could be accompanied by change in practice. Rather than viewing theory as being under the authority of the university and practice as being the domain of the school, educators could treat the conceptual fields as mutually dependent and regard concepts as being in an ongoing state of reconsideration and redefining. (p. 1425)

They stress that teacher education programs, though only one arena of influence on teachers’ conceptual development, are of critical importance. The researchers suggest that Faculties of Education consider developing more cohesive curriculum to emphasize a more concise conception of teaching that is considered and extended over time and grounded in school-based experiences.

Mallette, Kile, Smith, McKinney and Readence (2000) argue that content knowledge, obtained in-course, must be combined with field experiences in order for students to develop sound pedagogy. Whereas each venue affords different, equally significant learning opportunities, disparities between the two hinder student teachers’ strategy use and cognitive development. In case studies of six elementary student teachers in the Southwestern United States, the researchers found that inquiry-oriented courses, with an in-field, experiential component, offered greater opportunities for students to explore emerging understandings of reading pedagogy, as compared to traditional courses offered within the Faculty of Education.

Grossman, Smagorinsky, and Valencia (1999) maintain that student teachers' frameworks for thinking are developed by the problem solving they conduct within in-course and in-field settings. The researchers followed 15 student teachers from preservice into Year One of inservice teaching. Ten of these participants remained in the study into Year Two of inservice teaching. The researchers explain that the different value systems and social practices that characterize the activity settings in which student teachers learn to teach can support or hinder their adoption of the conceptual and practical tools introduced in preservice education. Grossman et al. (1999) define conceptual tools as the principles, frameworks and general ideas about teaching/learning and English/language arts acquisition. Pedagogical tools are the classroom practices, strategies and resources used in teaching/learning language arts. Grossman et al. maintain that the more activity settings to which student and novice teachers are exposed, the greater the chance of incompatible goals and diminished understanding/adoption of the teaching/learning approaches, theories, strategies and tools advocated in preservice education.

*Action research.* Kosnik and Beck (2000) and Mallette et al. (2000) suggest that action research presents an attractive research paradigm for use in teacher preparation programs. According to the researchers, the reflexive nature of action research supports preservice students' connection-making processes as they attempt to link theory to practice. In a study investigating the Mid-Town elementary preservice cohort programme at OISE/UT, Kosnik and Beck describe the effects of the action research process on the understandings, skills and behaviour of sixty student teachers. Participants included student teachers enrolled in primary/junior education, with access to practicum classes one or two days per week, throughout the year. Drawing on their classroom experiences and interactions with

elementary students, student teachers selected an aspect of language arts as the focus of their action research. This integrated approach to preservice education supported acquisition of the knowledge and skills required for successful action research in both preservice and inservice settings. Individual work, as well as cooperative, was emphasized in the research process. Assessing the impact of teacher candidate participation in action research, Kosnik and Beck maintain that action research prepares student teachers for the complex demands of regular teaching assignments. The researchers suggest that action research provided academic grounding for student teachers' observations, therein facilitating connections between theory and practice.

Leland, Harste and Shockley (2007) contend that action research, in the form of reflexive inquiry, can be used to help preservice students take greater ownership of their cognitive development and develop deeper understandings of the concept of teaching. In their case study, the researchers studied the writing and reflections of one white, female preservice teacher as she moved through their program and into inservice teaching. During the program, the participant, Caroline, was encouraged, by the course instructors/researchers to examine her own early history of reading/writing. Caroline was unable to recall any specifics surrounding how she learned to read or write. The course instructors/researchers suggested that she engage in a form of reflective inquiry to ascertain more details about her emergent literacy.

In an interview with her mother, Caroline learned that she had been an enthusiastic reader/writer before starting school; however, her early experiences with schooled literacy had not been positive ones. Although Caroline was able to read and write before entering school, her teacher discouraged her from choosing her own reading materials or writing in

sentences in kindergarten. Writing in sentences was reserved for Grade One. As a result, Caroline 'turned off of' (p. 137) reading and writing at an early age. A component of Caroline's coursework involved selecting and reading a novel for young adolescents. Through the process of composing her journal reflections for the course, Caroline came to see ways in which the power of choice contributed to her enjoyment of reading. This awareness influenced the post-preservice decisions Caroline made in her own classroom.

Leland, Harste and Shockley (2007) suggest that reflexive inquiry needs to adopt a critical stance in order to maximize cognitive growth:

Although inquiry has been defined in various ways, it usually involves students in some type of research on a specific topic. Without a critical element or some attitude, however, this can become a process of simply repeating what others have said without ever asking questions or looking for other perspectives. (p. 137)

The researchers advocate a social justice approach to teaching; however, they maintain that commitment represents a beginning point and is not sufficient for achieving social change on its own. Leland, Harste and Shockley (2007) explain that teachers need to be trained in preservice to apply a critical lens to their practices if they are to develop the skills and attitudes characteristic of effective teachers: "Teachers who are always asking questions and are aware of the limits of their own knowing have a far better chance of making a difference than those who think they already know everything" (p. 142).

According to Leland, Harste and Shockley (2007), Caroline's use of reflexive inquiry facilitated her ability to generate multiple critical perspectives and to find new ways of positioning herself as a teacher. They suggest that the critical stance adopted by Caroline supported her development of new practices to replace the familiar, less effective ones to which she was exposed as a learner. They see a need for Faculties of Education to revisit the ways in which preservice experiences are structured. They contend that preservice exposure

to critical inquiry has potential to help preservice graduates embrace their own students' needs and interests in ways that encourage them to develop global and multicultural perspectives.

At least in part, Lukin et al. (2004) attribute an increase in the understanding of assessment literacy, that is, the ability to describe and implement a variety of assessment strategies within the classroom, to the pairing of learning teams with action research. They suggest that action research, by creating opportunities for student teachers to attend to their own inner voices, facilitates connection-making between theoretical knowledge and practical applications as well as preservice teacher practices and student achievement.

#### *Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice Research*

Numerous other researchers (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Finley, 2008; Grossman et al., 2000; Kincheloe, 2003; Kosnik & Beck, 2009) also maintain that preservice literacy education has potential to shape the values and approaches student teachers carry into inservice teaching. They argue that critical pedagogy and social justice research contribute to our understandings of the ways in which preservice literacy education influences cognitive development. Beyond improving student skill levels, literacy and teaching of literacy also offer means for examining social injustices. Finley (2008) suggests that researchers have a moral obligation to engage in inquiry that is activist, "engages in public criticism, and is resistant to neoconservative discourses that threaten social justice" (p. 681). She maintains that social change begins with artful ways of seeing and knowing ourselves and our world.

Robinson, McKenna, and Wedman (2004) stress that critical perspectives have potential to unveil a world of unequal power and resource distribution through which certain groups of people are privileged based on ethnicity, race, gender, and social class. They

maintain that critical literacy raises awareness that the language of texts and readers' responses is value laden and promotes equity and justice by offering a means for examining and enacting privilege.

### *Frameworks for Supporting Preservice Teachers*

Teacher preparation is influenced by the frameworks Faculties of Education implement to support student teachers' pedagogical understandings. Beck et al. (2005) and Feiman-Nemser (2001) suggest that the complexities of literacy education necessitate that an ongoing approach to learning be adopted to facilitate the teaching of theoretical and practical frameworks related to literacy. They advocate for sustained learning opportunities for teachers at every level of their careers. Feiman-Nemser suggests that preservice preparation be viewed as a time to begin formulating a basic repertoire of techniques, skills, strategies and approaches. Beck et al. also support this approach. They describe preservice literacy education as a time to help student teachers develop a "sense of where to begin" (p. 5). Without such opportunities, Feiman-Nemser argues, teachers are "unlikely to teach in ways that meet demanding new standards for student learning or to participate in the solution of educational problems" (p. 1014). Whereas researchers (Beck et al, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Grossman et al., 2000) recognize value in the idea of 'learning to teach over time,' they also problematize this solution, noting that beginning teachers are often thrown into situations for which they feel ill-prepared. Beck et al. (2005), along with Feiman-Nemser (2001) and Grossman et al. (2000) invite other researchers to join in further discussions and research on the notion of sustained learning for teachers.

### *Establishment of Partnerships*

Feiman-Nemser (2001) highlights a need for faculty personnel, responsible for field placements, to work closely with literacy educators, sharing expertise and setting a common agenda to prevent program fragmentation. Kosnik and Beck (2009) highlight a need for all faculty, administrative or otherwise, to play a larger role in contributing to the overall effectiveness of preservice preparation programs. Beck et al. (2005) suggest that the emphasis on teaching literacy across all content areas further emphasizes a need for sharing between all faculty and staff, therein fostering an integrated approach to preservice teacher education.

Beck and Kosnik (2000) suggest that partnerships between schools and Faculties of Education have potential to foster professional growth of student teachers through seamless learning. Beck and Kosnik stress the importance of working more closely with principals of partner schools to build stronger practicum settings: "They have a crucial role to play both in supporting the associate teachers and student teacher and in fostering the renewal of the practicum schools that is so essential to the teacher education enterprise" (p. 221). Beck and Kosnik suggest that broader development of liaisons between principals and faculty might further support appropriate placement of novice teachers in urban settings, where local boards are located in close proximity to Faculties of Education.

In the partnership model they propose, Beck and Kosnik (2000) also advocate for both formal and informal training of associate teachers through continual interaction between university faculty, school-based educators and student teachers. They suggest that associates, along with student teachers, be encouraged to assume active roles within a problem-oriented, inquiry-based model of teaching, learning and supervision. Ensuring that faculty advisors,

associate teachers and student teachers co-develop and hear the same messages at inservice meetings strengthens relationships between coursework and in-the-field training while empowering and protecting student teachers. The authors suggest that co-establishment of the desired approaches to teaching and learning may result in wider-spread modeling both on campus and in partner schools. Some of the ideas Beck and Kosnik recommend for developing closer ties between faculties and partner schools include: informal conversations, lunch-time inservices, modeling of mentorship, research conducted in partner schools, written communication with associates, and encouragement of associates to attend professional conferences and engage in graduate work. Additionally, Beck and Kosnik urge universities to prioritize the renewal of partner schools, revisiting faculty workloads and/or promotion issues, therein recognizing and rewarding faculty for actively promoting deeper relationships between schools and university.

*Learning teams.* Lukin et al. (2004) suggest that action-research be used as a paradigm for fostering partnerships between school boards and Faculties of Education. They maintain that learning teams (small groups of five to six preservice and experienced inservice teachers) offer multiple opportunities for further supporting preservice professional development through action research. The researchers studied the impact of Preservice Assessment Literacy Study [PALS] Groups and Inservice and Preservice Assessment Literacy study [IPALS] Groups in one school district.

The PALS and IPALS programs were developed in Nebraska, by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Faculty of Education and the Lincoln Public School Board. Developed to support student teachers in their literacy assessment practices, PALS involved the pairing of student teachers with practicing teachers in conjunction with classroom experience

(practicum). IPALS included practicing teachers as fellow learners, each teacher contributing to his/her peers' growth by sharing advice, information, resources and more, through a discussion of action research undertaken in the classroom. Teams met twice monthly to study, discuss, design and reflect on action research projects. Student teachers integrated study group learning into their teaching practices.

*Professional Development Schools.* Duffield (2005) also supports the establishment of partnerships between K-12 schools and Faculties of Education, and suggests that partnerships improve teaching and learning at both venues. In her longitudinal study, Duffield followed 17 student teachers accepted into the Professional Development School [PDS] model of teacher preparation at a Midwestern university. The participants enrolled in the PDS model were immersed in a local elementary school for a minimum of 90 hours of observation, 30 hours of various field experiences within the PDS site (including Individual Education Plan (IEP)/faculty meetings, parent teacher conferences, PE/music classes and lunch/recess supervision) and 16 weeks of student teaching. In many cases, participants doubled the expected number of hours for observation. Participants rotated through various classrooms at the PDS site. They were also expected to partake in such experiences as IEP meetings, faculty meetings, lunch/recess supervision, parent-teacher conferences and other similar activities. Duffield found that sustained involvement at the PDS site contributed to the development of positive relationships between student teachers, and the teachers and students at the PDS site. Increased opportunities for student teachers to establish strong, positive relationships with pedagogically-similar teachers cemented connections between theory and practice and contributed to preservice participants' development of professional skills and confidence.

Ridley, Hurwitz, Hackett and Miller (2005) argue that supported socialization of student teachers not only fosters self esteem but also contributes to increased willingness to experiment with strategies and approaches modeled and introduced during preservice preparation programs. In the first year of their two-year comparative study, Ridley et al. (2005) evaluated 10 PDS and 15 campus-based student teachers from the same university. Student teachers in the PDS program were enrolled in a one-year (3-semester) intensive apprenticeship-type program. Their program ran Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. Student teachers worked full days in the classroom with teachers on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Education courses were taught at the PDS site on Tuesdays and Thursdays. During semester two, student teachers team-taught in a seven-week half-day elementary summer school program, supervised by university faculty and master teachers. Subject-specific coursework designed to inform summer school teaching was provided in the afternoons. In the third semester, student teachers team-taught with their mentor teachers for six weeks, before assuming full teaching responsibilities for the duration of the semester (length not specified in the study). Student teachers in the campus-based program completed a two-year, four-semester program. They spent approximately 5 hours per week in elementary schools during semesters one through three, before teaching full-time in semester four. In the first year of the study, an examination (of professional teaching knowledge), a written lesson plan, a video recording of teaching performance, and a post lesson reflective evaluation were used to assess the effectiveness of the Year 1 participants.

Participants in Year 2 included 14 PDS (7 from Year 1) and 12 campus-based graduates in their first year of inservice teaching. In January of their first year inservice, participants were offered a stipend to participate in three assessments: lesson planning, video

recording of teaching performance and post-lesson reflective evaluation. Year 2 participants were not asked to take the professional knowledge examination. Six trained, experienced teacher evaluators scored the assessments using rubrics.

The researchers found that the PDS student teachers were assessed as being slightly more instructionally effective than their campus-based peers during Year 1 of the study and that this difference in abilities intensified in Year 2 of the study. Although this study had numerous limitations, including the lack of continuity between participants across both years, the findings nevertheless suggest that further research is warranted into the models adopted for effective teacher preparation, including PDS programs and more traditional campus-based ones.

Planning for effective preservice teacher preparation is a complex process compounded by a variety of factors. Student teachers need to understand the social, cultural, historical and political contexts of English literacy teaching/learning as well as traditional and situated literacies and new and emerging multiliteracies if they are to design and implement inclusive programs. A social constructivist course framework facilitates student teachers' learning by actively involving them in the learning processes. In course examination of pre-existing belief systems and literacy tools and curricular materials models critical literacy as a practice and informs student teacher's pedagogy. Seamless in course and practicum experiences supported and influenced by the frameworks and delivery models adopted within Faculties of Education further facilitate development of sound pedagogy.

### **Socialization of Early Year Inservice Teachers**

Inservice teachers face a number of challenges during their early years of teaching. Beginning teachers graduate from their preservice programs with limited knowledge and

skills. Socialization of novice teachers facilitates their successful transition from preservice to inservice teaching by fostering development of deeper understandings within a supportive, professional environment. Two examples of frameworks for supporting early year inservice teachers include assisted entry to inservice teaching and ongoing professional development.

“Exhilarated and exhausted, hopeful and cynical, fulfilled and dejected – these adjectives depict the emotional spectrum characterizing teachers’ first year experiences”

(Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006, p. 351)... So begins Liston, Whitcomb and Borko’s (2006) commentary on the pressures novice teachers face. The researchers suggest that first year inservice teachers face an almost insurmountable number of challenges:

They work to develop humane, yet efficient, routines to manage the daily business of classroom and school life. They struggle to design engaging curriculum and to build knowledge of rigorous and fair standards for student work. They try to fend off fatigue, seeking to balance career demands with activities and connections that rejuvenate. They grapple with the absurdities and paradoxes of school bureaucracies, choosing when to critique and resist ill-framed policies and practices. They stumble in some interactions with colleagues, administrators, and parents. They wonder why their trying work and hard-won accomplishments are viewed with such low regard by the general public. (p. 351)

The researchers also posit that graduates of effective teacher education programs seem to surmount the obstacles more readily than their less prepared counterparts. According to Liston et al. (2006), understanding how teacher education might better respond to the challenges of first year teaching involves understanding the sources of beginning teachers’ struggles.

According to Kosnik and Beck (2009), new teachers are neither consistently informed, nor adequately prepared to handle the vast freedoms they are given professionally. The researchers note that program planning is a complex process, entailing numerous decisions, including: (i) Topic selection and how much emphasis to place on each; (ii) Topic

implementation (materials, strategies, activities, approaches); (iii) Scheduling of topics during the year; (iv) Integration of topics across-the-curriculum; and, (v) Degree and means to which broader, deeper learning goals (research skills, collaborative learning, everyday literacy practices) should be pursued (p. 19). They characterize teacher autonomy in program planning as a desirable trait. According to the researchers, autonomy permits teachers to respond to the following three factors: (i) the unpredictable nature of teaching; (ii) the reality that some topics have greater relevance over others to diverse student bodies across diverse localities; and, (iii) variations across students in terms of what is considered 'engaging,' given that student engagement is essential to learning (p. 20).

Many researchers (Beck et al., 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Malette et al., 2000; Smagorinsky et al., 2003) suggest that learning to teach literacy can best be supported through sustained learning experiences that link precognitions about teaching and learning to preservice preparation, preservice preparation to induction, and induction to ongoing professional development. According to the literature multiple factors contribute to inservice teacher success, including: existence of induction programs (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001); job assignment and workplace conditions (Beck et al., 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001); and, the quality of professional development opportunities offered to inservice teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fang, Fu, & Lamme, 2004; Hughes, Cash, Klingner & Ahwee, 2001). Beck et al. (2005) contend that Faculties of Education can and should be instrumental in initiating programs to support the transitions from preservice to early year inservice teaching.

Borg (2003) examined the nature and development of teachers' cognitions in his review of a selection of research from the field of foreign and second language teaching.

According to Borg, the social, psychological and environmental realities of the school and classroom shape teachers' cognitions and practices. He contends that pressure and influence are exerted from many directions: principals' expectations and requirements, the physical school and classroom, parents, classroom management issues, society, curriculum mandates, school policies, colleagues, standardized testing, and availability of resources. Borg outlines the ways in which the realities of school and classroom encourage or discourage innovation, experimentation and the use of inquiry-based methods fostered during preservice training. He notes that difficult working conditions, such as heavy workloads or large class sizes, impact teachers' pedagogical choices. With less time for lesson preparation, teachers reported selecting and implementing certain activities even though they were aware that more effective activities existed. Borg suggests that although extensive research has been conducted on language teacher cognitions, more focussed research is needed to address the implications of all of this research for the professional preparation and continuing development of language teachers.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) maintains that early years' inservice teaching, as formative years in learning to teach, influences pedagogical beliefs as well as teachers' decisions to remain in teaching. She contends that, too often, the induction process is abrupt and lonely, leaving beginning teachers to sink or swim. She argues that even the best induction programs cannot compensate for irresponsible job assignment of beginning teachers. Such assignment, she notes, jeopardizes student learning and teacher development and devalues teacher expertise.

Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson and Fry (2004) suggest that the tensions teachers face can actually contribute to the development of an effective teaching pedagogy

and identity. In their case study, the researchers followed Sharon, a fifth year student majoring in elementary education, in the U.S. southwest, through her preservice year and first-year in inservice education. They explored how Sharon negotiated the different conceptions of education that framed her in-course, practicum and early inservice experiences. Smagorinsky et al. (2004) focused particularly on the ways in which Sharon's attempts to reconcile opposing belief systems influenced the development of her identity as a teacher. Sharon experienced substantial tension between the progressive social constructivist approaches advocated in preservice education and the more traditional, conservative values and practices supported by her associate teacher on practicum and by her (same-grade) teaching colleague during inservice teaching. Recognizing the situation, Sharon's principal assigned Sharon a mentor teacher from a different school in the district. This relationship turned out to be very beneficial. The researchers maintain that learning to teach involves constructing an identity in the midst of systems and relations that may or may not be in congruence. They suggest that the tensions Sharon experienced both before and during her first year of full-time teaching made her more determined to develop her own teaching identity. Smagorinsky et al. propose that the tensions involved in gaining a broader vision of teaching (in this case, one that gave consideration to progressive and more traditional approaches and tools), helped Sharon establish and personalize her goals and vision for teaching. The researchers are careful to note that Sharon's resolution to these tensions may have been very different if she had not been assigned a mentor teacher and left on her own to navigate her teaching identity within her new setting.

In their study of twenty-two first year teachers, all graduates of a one-year post-degree education program, at a Faculty of Education, Loughran, Brown and Doecke (2001)

found that the realities and pressures of full-time teaching posed difficulties for beginning teachers trying to balance their developing understandings and expectations of teaching and learning with their actual practices. The researchers found that issues related to classroom management consume novice teachers' thoughts. They suggest that teacher educators make more explicit links between learning about teaching in preservice to learning about teaching through experience as a beginning teacher.

Kosnik and Beck (2009) explain that beginning teachers depart preservice programs with limited levels of subject knowledge (both content and pedagogy). The researchers link constant growth in subject knowledge for teacher educators and inservice literacy teachers to improved student instruction. They advocate a lifelong approach to learning to teach:

Teachers need to be conscious of the limitations of their preservice preparation, no matter how well conducted, and view themselves as embarking on a career-long program of professional learning, one that will increase their effectiveness and deepen the satisfaction they gain from teaching. (p. 132)

Kosnik and Beck (2009) advise teacher educators to be forthright with student teachers: "Right from the beginning of the program, we should discuss with student teachers the importance of subject knowledge... and how they will not have enough of it by the end of the program" (p. 123). The researchers propose making student teachers more aware of ways in which they might increase their subject knowledge via reading, courses, travel, movies, workshops, dialoguing with pupils, and other avenues once they become inservice teachers.

There are additional ways in which beginning literacy teachers might be supported as they make the transition from preservice teacher to inservice classroom teacher (Beck et al., 2005; Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999). Two of these suggestions, described below, include: assisted entry into inservice teaching and ongoing professional development.

*Assisted Entry to Inservice Teaching*

Workplace conditions impact the success of teacher induction (Beck et al., 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Feiman-Nemser (2001) offers two suggestions for supporting novice teachers through assisted entry programs: (i) appropriate assignment of beginning teachers; and, (ii) reduced teaching loads. Fideler and Haselkorn (1999) contend that staffing needs and teacher contracts often interfere with responsible placement of beginning teachers. As a result, novice teachers find themselves balancing extra classes, coping with behaviour problems and large class sizes, and teaching outside their areas of expertise.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) proposes a curriculum framework based on teacher learning over time: “The first years of teaching are an intense and formative time in learning to teach, influencing not only whether people remain in teaching but what kind of teacher they become” (p. 1026). She believes that consideration of teaching load is directly linked to appropriate assignment of novice teachers. She suggests a ‘sink or swim’ approach to induction is irresponsible. Feiman-Nemser supports reduced teaching loads intended to facilitate effective mentorship during specific times of the school day.

The NCTAF (1996) recommends structuring the first two years of inservice teaching like a medical residency. Through this model, novice teachers receive ongoing advice and evaluation from experienced teachers.

Several researchers (Beck et al., 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Grossman et al., 2000) recommend that continued collaboration and negotiation between/among schools, Faculties of Education, government organizations and unions is needed to critically evaluate and/or support extensive format changes to teacher induction.

### *Professional Development*

Despite evidence that sustained, quality professional development impacts student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001), one-shot professional development continues to dominate teacher inservice (Hughes, Cash, Klingner, & Ahwee, 2001). Based on the findings of a four-year study of six rural schools in Northeast Florida, Fang, Fu and Lamme (2004) advocate formation of school/faculty partnerships for addressing ongoing professional development needs. In their study, informal monthly meetings provided opportunities for teachers and faculty educators to engage in action research, working cooperatively to formulate solutions and instructional plans. Fang, Fu and Lamme believe this model represents an empowering alternative to the prevalent paradigm of one-shot professional development.

Consensus among researchers supports the creative use of time and financial resources to enable teachers to receive sustained and substantive learning opportunities during the school day (Fang et al., 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Fishman, Marx, Best, & Tal, 2003). Approaches to professional development include a vast range of formats such as action research projects, teacher study groups, PDS, workshops, visitations, conferences, formal and informal discussions and summer institutes. Feiman-Nemser (2001) suggests that alternate models of professional development emphasize teacher discourse as a central vehicle for sharing and evaluating ideas and practices (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

What students learn is directly related to what and how teachers teach; and what and how teachers teach is influenced by the knowledge and skills faculty educators introduce, challenge and/or foster in teacher education programs. A critical link in preservice preparation for teaching literacy, faculty educators have a responsibility to ensure that

student teachers graduate from their programs equipped with the knowledge and confidence to teach literacy effectively as well as the awareness that preparation for teaching literacy is an ongoing process.

### Summary

There is no literacy vaccination, “only a consciously devised, continuous program that develops vocabulary in the context of real experiences, provides rigorous instruction, connects new information to the cultural frameworks that children bring to school, and assumes that children are brilliant and capable” (Delpit, 2003, p. 17). Supporting literacy within the classroom necessitates thorough understanding and appreciation of the complex sociocultural contexts of literacy, the significance of multiple forms of literacy, and the emergence of new literacies. Understanding the factors influencing literacy and literacy education affords opportunities for student teachers to actively engage in critical literacy, uncovering the biases through which students, communities and societies continue to be advantaged and/or disadvantaged by literacy education.

Prescriptive approaches to teaching literacy appeal to preservice and early year inservice teachers seeking guidance and reassurance in planning for literacy. Preservice exposure and participation in a variety of approaches and strategies, using a critical lens, helps inservice teachers personalize the design and implementation of effective literacy programming (Kosnik & Beck, 2009).

Substantive preparation for teaching literacy supports transitions from student learner to teacher candidate to early year inservice teacher to ongoing learner (Beck et al., 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Substantive preparation recognizes the influences elementary and secondary learning experiences exert on student teachers’ cognitions about teaching and

learning, and provides ample opportunities for reflection on theory, practice and praxis (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Grossman et al., 2000; Loughran et al., 2001). Guided by social constructivist principles (Beck et al., 2005; Noel, 2000; Volante, 2006), what to teach and how to teach is modeled and supported through cognitive coherence between/among coursework, fieldwork, and inservice experiences (Borg, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Klein, 2005), and is promoted through ongoing professional development (Beck et al., 2005; Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Formation of partnerships between Faculties of Education and schools, as well as ongoing collaborations between faculty, principals and teachers, contributes to development of shared visions, further supporting excellence in the teaching of literacy (Beck et al., 2005; Fang et al., 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

As demonstrated by this review of the literature there continues to be intense interest in improving student literacy rates. Where previous research has examined multiple aspects of literacy education: frameworks, strategies, sociocultural contexts, for example, there are a limited number of longitudinal studies which attempt to document teacher preparation from preservice through to inservice education. According to Grossman et al. (2000), most research on preparation for teaching literacy ends with completion of the preservice year. Feiman-Nemser's (2001) comment, "Now is the time for groups of school and university educators to turn the idea of a professional learning continuum into a reality" (p. 1050) suggests a need for further research into the actual form(s) sustained learning might take and the actual understandings student teachers need before entering into inservice education.

The literature strongly suggests that teachers are inadequately prepared for the demanding role of teaching literacy (Beck et al., 2005; Kennedy, 2006; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003). Longitudinal, multi-site examinations or case studies of the nature of

teacher preparation and the successes and challenges preservice and inservice teachers face have potential to provide a clearer sense of direction for reforming and supporting teacher education programs for heightened teacher preparation, more effective teaching of literacy and improved student literacy rates.

This chapter has provided a review of related literature on national government reform agendas for improving education, planning for effective student teacher preparation for teaching literacy, and socialization of early year inservice literacy teachers. Chapter Three discusses the research design and methodology, and the data analysis process.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This three-year longitudinal study examined factors that shaped, supported and hindered the preparation of a group of elementary teachers for the demanding role of teaching literacy and the successes and challenges they experienced in the first two years of teaching literacy. My study examined, in detail, literacy teachers' perceptions of their training, as they moved through three stages of their development: preservice literacy courses, and Year 1 and Year 2 inservice teaching in various locations. As noted in the overview, my study was part of a larger study on teacher preparation for literacy teaching.

This chapter provides details about the design, methodology, research process and ethical considerations of the study. It then provides a rationale for the organization of the data across chapters four and five.

#### Design

*For over more than three decades, a quiet methodological revolution has been taking place in the social sciences. A blurring of disciplinary boundaries has occurred. The social sciences and humanities have drawn closer together in a mutual focus on an interpretive, qualitative approach to research and theory. Although these trends are not new, the extent to which the 'qualitative revolution' has overtaken the social sciences and related professional fields has been nothing short of amazing. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. vii)*

It was not my intention to join a revolution, particularly not via the choices I made in selecting one research design over another; it just quietly happened. During my early coursework, many of the readings and much of the discussion centered on 'rigor' and whether or not qualitative research might be categorized as 'rigorous enough'.

I recall being initially overwhelmed. Promises of rich descriptions and deeper understandings (Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) drew me towards qualitative

research, yet my mentors reported that quantitative research, had, for many years, enjoyed supremacy. Already displaced from my family and home, and overwhelmed by the impressive workload of my summer courses, I had not anticipated (naiveté on my part) having to defend the basic design of my research.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003) the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches can be narrowed down to five main points: (i) uses of positivism and postpositivism; (ii) acceptance of postmodern sensibilities; (iii) capturing of the individual's point of view; (iv) means for examining the constraints of everyday life; and (v) securing of rich descriptions. In my coursework, comparison of qualitative and quantitative studies included discussion and analysis of their components, and the labeling and ordering of these components. This helped me to understand their points of difference and cemented my desire to further explore qualitative designs. The further I move, in time and space, from my coursework, the more my confidence, knowledge and skills prepare me to embrace variety in research design and to challenge myself to render my processes more transparent to others, therein satisfying the demands of and for research that is rigorous.

Qualitative inquiry, defined by Creswell (2005) as providing depth of understanding, extends the range of questions to be explored in my study. The national study, of which this research is a part, used mixed-method research, predominantly qualitative in nature.

Conception of the design of this study fits Bogdan's and Biklen's (2003) description of multi-case studies as the "study of two or more subjects, settings, or depositories of data" (p. 62). The design also has many characteristics associated with grounded theory (Creswell, 2005), in that my perspectives were modified and continued to change as a result of constant-comparison analysis of the data and literature as the study unfolded. Charmaz (2000) defines

grounded theory as theory developed inductively from data. According to Charmaz, research based in grounded theory examines a case to develop theory that fits one data set. Creswell (2005) describes this process as a “systematic, qualitative process used to generate theory that explains, at a broad conceptual level, a process, an action, or interaction about a substantive topic” (p. 439). In my development and reconsideration of existing theories related to literacy and teaching / learning, I adopted Goulding’s (1999) explanation of theorizing as the process of creating alternate explanations until a ‘best fit’ is developed.

Goulding (1999) suggests the first step to generating grounded theory entails discovering an unnoticed or superficially considered area of research. Further, Goulding contends that most researchers draw on their disciplinary backgrounds to provide a perspective from which to investigate the problem. In my rationale, I explained the strong ties between this study and my own past and present experiences teaching literacy and the language arts. Throughout my review of the literature, I have given consideration to multiple perspectives, theories, and frameworks that might inform my research and have noted a need for additional longitudinal studies that give consideration to the ongoing nature of teacher preparation for teaching literacy.

While my research contains elements of grounded theory, it should not be construed as an example of grounded theory. Characteristic of interpretive grounded theory, the interpretive aspects of my research focused on the creation of contextualized emergent understandings rather than the creation of testable theoretical structures. Use of constant-comparison methods further ties my research to grounded theory but this is where the similarities end. My use of constant-comparison was intended to generate deep meanings rather than develop new theory. O’Connor, Netting and Thomas (2008) contend that aspects

of grounded theory can be useful for developing generalizable theories, or they can facilitate deep understanding and meaning, but they cannot do both at the same time within the same research design.

Qualitative research is highly personal in nature (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest a need for researchers to be aware of how they shape what they hear, observe, read and reproduce. They advise researchers to give careful consideration to research paradigms before committing to one methodology over another. In their view, research paradigms are comprised of three elements: epistemology, ontology and methodology. Guba and Lincoln suggest that these three elements are inseparable; methodology is dependent upon ontology, which in turn, is dependent upon epistemology. The choices I have made reflect my current understandings and interests, as well as my previous experiences with literacy and the teaching and learning of literacy.

#### *Researcher Stance*

Denzin and Lincoln suggest that all research is interpretive in that it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. The authors refer to the 'net' (p. 33) housing the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises. They suggest this 'net' be viewed as the researcher's interpretive framework. The beliefs contained within it shape how the qualitative researcher views the world and acts within it. A number of theorists/researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) maintain that all researchers bring their own specific backgrounds to a study, including their training, knowledge of related topics, standpoints and theoretical approaches. Although the paradigms through which I approach my research may be obvious to the more experienced researcher, I felt a personal and

professional need to better understand the 'ologies' of my research scholarship. This I equated (and still equate) with knowledge, skill and expertise. The social constructivist paradigm I adopted in my research (and which incidentally is also reflected in my approach to teaching literacy) assumes a relativist ontology (pluralisms; there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (researcher and participant co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (based in the natural world) set of methodological procedures (as defined by Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Perhaps the difficulty I encountered in trying to pinpoint my own research paradigm is symptomatic of the interpretive, postmodern, criticalist practices and values of which it is a part. By this, I ask whether my open-mindedness to new ideas and approaches can be attributed to indecision and inexperience or to my research paradigm? Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest that nonpositivist orientations have created a context in which no study can go unchallenged by proponents of contending paradigms. They maintain that postmodern paradigms are at least equal in legitimacy to more conventional ones. Further, they argue that paradigms are becoming less easily segregated: "Indeed, the various paradigms are beginning to "interbreed" such that two theorists previously thought to be in irreconcilable conflict may appear, under a different theoretical rubric, to be informing one another's arguments," (p. 164). Guba and Lincoln contend that researchers make better use of their time when they consider where and how paradigms exhibit confluence rather than where and how they exhibit differences and contradictions.

In writing my dissertation, I sought to share the diverse perspectives of the participants; that is, the preservice instructors and teachers (from preservice through their first two years of literacy teaching), and let their voices articulate multiple stories about

teacher preparation for teaching literacy to create a more complete picture than any one story could tell. Awareness that all communications and analyses were filtered through my worldview, values and perceptions, reminded me of the need to be cognizant of my own biases. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) maintain that the methods qualitative researchers use can help them transcend their own biases: "The data that are collected provide a much more detailed rendering of the events than even the most creatively prejudiced mind might have imagined prior to the study" (p. 33). In contrast with these views, Denzin and Lincoln suggest the researcher is *always* "biographically situated" (p. 30) and that "the myth that research is objective in some way can no longer be taken seriously" (2005, p. 385). Thus, objective observations are non-existent in that the politics and ethics of research permeate *every* phase of the research process. To limit personal bias I maintained a critical, reflexive stance throughout all stages of the research. I also included the voices of student and novice teacher and teacher educator participants. Their voices describe teacher preparation from various viewpoints, corroborating details and creating a more rich description.

Critical theory emphasizes the need for exposing assumptions and influential practices and modes of thought and offers a framework for understanding my own and other researchers' biases and the extent to which these constraints become limitations. Peters, Olssen and Lankshear (2003) suggest contemporary consciousness, developed and evidenced in and through our discursive practices, imposes limitations of which we are unaware. Our thoughts and practices fill such an intimate part of our daily experiences we no longer recognize them as limitations. According to the authors, we quickly come to embrace these constraints as characteristic of normal and natural human behavior. Peters, Olssen and Lankshear (2003) point out that earlier critical theorists, including Foucault, Kant, Nietzsche

and Heidegger, adopted an attitude of ‘permanent criticism’ (p. 73) as a self-reflexive and therein, more effective approach to understanding and enacting social theory. Informing my own stance, is Foucault’s (1997) view of critique as the art of “voluntary insubordination, of thoughtful disobedience” (p. 41), a virtue, capable of fuelling political activism for promoting positive change.

### *Reflection/A/r/tography*

The term *a/r/tography* is an acronym for artists/researchers/teachers who conduct research through each of these roles. According to Irwin and de Cosson (2004), *a/r/tography* is based on the practice of *metissage* or the blurring of boundaries and crossing of borders. Irwin and de Cosson describe *metissage* as interdisciplinary: “It hyphenates, bridges, slashes, and creates other forms of thirdness that provide the space for exploration, translation, and understanding in deeper and more enhanced ways of meaning-making” (p. 30). According to Irwin (2004), the practice of *metissage* is a form of creative meaning-making through which theory and practice become inextricably linked:

Theory as a/r/t is at once textual and visual, and a/r/tography as *metissage* is at once visual and interlingual. Different texts, images and languages merge, pull apart and merge and merge again. Theory is not limited to but includes textual discussion and analysis set within and/or alongside visual imagery of educational phenomena and/or performance. (p. 32)

According to Irwin and de Cosson (2004) the inclusion of reflective poetry/prose in dissertation writing can be classified as a form of *a/r/tography*. As a lens, *a/r/tography* permitted me to examine teacher preparation for teaching literacy alongside my own identity as a writer/researcher/ teacher. As a methodology, *a/r/tography* enabled me to present multiple perspectives and sources of data in an engaging, creative format therein mirroring

the complexities of literacy education. I have used both personal narrative poetry and excerpts from the poetry/prose of others as vehicles for *autoethnography*.

Prendergast (2006) suggests that 'research' poetry offers an alternative context for understanding and representing key theories and texts in inquiry. In response to my third research question, which looked at how I was constructing my identity as a literacy instructor, I developed narrative poetry describing my own experiences and/or reflections on various stages related to preservice and inservice education. My own experiences as elementary classroom teacher (Grades 2 to 10), teacher-librarian (Kindergarten to Grade 8), special education teacher (Kindergarten to Grade 8), graduate student/researcher/ graduate assistant, and preservice contract lecturer continue to shape my identity. Individually and cumulatively, these experiences afford vantage points for informed reflection on the successes and frustrations new and experienced teachers share in learning to teach literacy and language arts. Narrative poetry describing my experiences (in memory) is woven into my dissertation, at interludes within and between chapters.

This process is in keeping with Ellis and Bochner's (2003) approach which stresses the importance of understanding the researcher's personal experiences and connections to the culture under study. They suggest that the combination of inward and outward foci enrich the study, rather than biasing the findings. Ellis and Bochner describe criticisms of personal narrative writing as generally falling into two categories: (i) the trustworthiness of personal accounts; and, (ii) the romantic construction of the self. They argue that there is a need for academics to adopt a broader definition of social inquiry and to stop "trashing" (p. 21) what is personal:

A text that functions as an agent of self-discovery or self-creation, for the author as well as for those who read and engage the text, is only threatening under a narrow

definition of social inquiry, one that eschews a social science with a moral center and a heart. . . . We need to question our assumptions, the meta-rules that govern the institutional workings of social science – arguments over feelings, theories over stories, abstractions over concrete events, sophisticated jargon over accessible prose. (p. 221)

*A/r/tography*, like effective literacy instruction, fosters pluralisms, particularly in the interpretation/meaning-making and response processes. According to Finley (2008), arts-based inquiry, through its use of “everyday, localized, and personal language, and in its reliance on texts that are ambiguous and open to interpretation . . . draws people into dialogue and opens the possibility for critical critique of social structures” (p. 687). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) contend that the interpretive practice of making sense of one’s research is both artistic and political. *A/r/tography*, artistic and political, in itself, supports the existence of multiple interpretive communities over one interpretive truth (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Thus, *a/r/tography*, as a form of arts-based inquiry, has potential to broaden and deepen ongoing conversations about teacher preparation for teaching literacy.

### *Sample*

In Year 1 of this study, three preservice literacy instructors teaching P/J language arts and ten student teachers (7 females, 3 males) participated. The three instructors (all female) were, at the time, the only ones on site charged with preparing preservice candidates to teach elementary language arts and literacy at the primary/junior level. The student teacher sample was accessed through EDUC4470: Classroom Management. A letter of informed consent (see Appendix I) invited the student teachers to indicate their willingness to participate in a survey, follow-up interviews and years 2 and 3 of the study. Student teachers who indicated interest and willingness to continue with the study were interviewed in Year 1.

Participants in Years 2 and 3 were five novice teachers (4 females, 1 male), then in their first and second years of inservice teaching. Two of the five teachers were participants from the original group of student teachers interviewed in Year 1. One of the three teacher educators was re-interviewed in Year 3 to provide insights into the nature of ongoing learning.

#### *Research Site(s)*

The Faculty of Education, Lakehead University was established in 1965, and is situated amongst the forests and streams of Northwestern Ontario. The Faculty of Education is housed within the Bora Laskin building, aptly named after the Right Honourable Chief Justice Bora Laskin (1912-1984). Bora Laskin was widely recognized as one of Canada's leading legal scholars and most controversial justices. Born in Fort William (now Thunder Bay), Bora Laskin instructed law at the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall (York University). He was appointed Chief Justice in 1973.

The Faculty of Education offers consecutive Bachelor of Education programs and concurrent programs. The Faculty includes a Department of Aboriginal Education to foster Native Language instruction and prepare Aboriginal teachers to meet the needs of Aboriginal students and communities (<http://education.lakeheadu.ca/>).

The Faculty of Education offers two models of program delivery to students interested in obtaining a Bachelor of Education degree: (i) a concurrent program; and, (ii) a consecutive one-year program. Students may enter one of three divisions: Primary/Junior [P/J], Junior/Intermediate [J/I], or Intermediate/Senior [I/S]. Students interested in teaching at the P/J level also have the option of registering in the Revised Integrated Teacher Education [RITE] program, a one year alternative scheduling of the Professional Year

Bachelor of Education program. This study focused on P/J instructors and students who were in the final year of the concurrent program or the one year consecutive program.

Primary/Junior students enrolled in preservice education at the university have two options from which to choose the format of their preservice education. Students may take all courses on campus or register for the Professional Program Onsite Delivery [PPOD]. The PPOD model affords opportunities for students to pursue literacy instruction within elementary schools.

All P/J students enrol in a mandatory 54-hour literacy course which runs through Fall and Winter semesters. PPOD students take their 54-hour literacy course, along with an 18-hour literacy-focused planning and evaluation course, from the same literacy instructor. Thus, PPOD students receive one full course equivalent [FCE] designated for literacy teaching and learning. Students in the PPOD program work in classrooms as volunteer literacy coaches one quarter day per week. Students registered in the on-campus courses generally have different instructors for their 54-hour literacy course and 18-hour planning and evaluation course so the planning and evaluation course is not necessarily literacy-based. On-campus students are not expected to volunteer as literacy coaches, although some students serve as volunteer coaches in an after-school reading program co-ordinated between the Faculty of Education at the university and a local school board.

In addition to an 18-hour Early Reading Institute course, all students registered in the P/J program may also take an 18-hour elective course such as drama or communications. In the professional year, all student teachers participate in two five-week field placements, one in the Fall and the second following completion of the Winter session. The majority of

students in attendance at the Lakehead Faculty of Education come from various urban and rural settings across Ontario.

### Methodology

*Wynken, Blynken, and Nod: A Dutch Lullaby*

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night  
Sailed off in a wooden shoe---  
Sailed on a river of crystal light,  
Into a sea of dew.  
"Where are you going, and what do you wish?"  
The old moon asked the three.  
"We have come to fish for the herring fish  
That live in this beautiful sea;  
Nets of silver and gold have we!"  
Said Wynken, Blynken and Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,  
As they rocked in the wooden shoe,  
And the wind that sped them all night long  
Ruffled the waves of dew.  
The little stars were the herring fish  
That lived in that beautiful sea  
"Now cast your nets wherever you wish  
Never afeard are we";  
So cried the stars to the fishermen three:  
Wynken, Blynken and Nod.

All night long their nets they threw  
To the stars in the twinkling foam  
Then down from the skies came the wooden shoe,  
Bringing the fishermen home;  
'Twas all so pretty a sail it seemed  
As if it could not be,  
And some folks thought 'twas a dream they 'd dreamed  
Of sailing that beautiful sea---  
But I shall name you the fishermen three:  
Wynken, Blynken and Nod.

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,  
And Nod is a little head,  
And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies  
Is a wee one's trundle-bed.  
So shut your eyes while mother sings  
Of wonderful sights that be,  
And you shall see the beautiful things  
As you rock in the misty sea,  
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three:  
Wynken,  
Blynken,  
And Nod.

*Written by Eugene Field, 1900*

Would that my own journey into this study had been as serene as the voyage shared by Wynken, Blynken, and Nod in Eugene Field's (1900) Dutch lullaby! Clive Beck, at OISE/UT, and Joyce Bainbridge, at University of Alberta, had been collecting data for this national literacy study a full year before Lakehead University began to participate. My own involvement in the study, at the Lakehead University site, began in Year 3 of the national study, Year 2 for the Lakehead site. I had substantial paddling to do in order to catch up. When I entered the study as local co-researcher with Dr. Mary Clare Courtland I felt as though I, too, had set sail in a wooden shoe, albeit a leaky, unstable one. Data collected in Year 1 had to be analyzed and preliminary findings forwarded to the researchers involved in the national literacy study and Mary Clare and I anticipated sharing our preliminary findings at upcoming conferences. Our student teacher participants had graduated and were heading into various inservice and other career positions within a variety of settings. Shortly, their contact with Lakehead University would become more sporadic and/or non-existent.

Reflection is a sobering experience. Three years have passed since I nervously climbed into my wooden shoe. Whether I facilitated the keeping afloat of the study, or whether it sustained me, I have emerged more confident as a researcher, determined to learn from my mistakes and the limitations of the study, yet thankful for having been invited into the wooden shoe in the first place.

Qualitative research methods used within the study included: semi-structured, in-depth interviews of preservice instructors and preservice and inservice participants, and the analysis of documents. A research log, in which I recorded and reflected upon my thoughts, feelings and insights, also served to inform analysis of the data in an ongoing manner (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). As discussed earlier (see *Researcher Stance*), *autoethnography*, in the

form of original as well as purposefully selected narrative poetry and prose, permitted me to examine teacher preparation for teaching literacy alongside my own identity as a writer/researcher/ teacher.

### *Semi-structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were employed to facilitate gathering of comparable data across subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Interviews took place in the Spring of Years 1, 2 and 3 of the study. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed (Creswell, 2005).

In Year 1, three preservice instructors and ten student teachers were interviewed on site. In Year 2, five first year inservice teachers were interviewed. The same five teachers, then in their second year of inservice teaching, were also interviewed in Year 3. Four of the teacher participants were interviewed face-to-face, on campus, at Lakehead University. One participant, living overseas, was interviewed by telephone. Interviews ranged from 1 to 2 hours in length. One of the preservice instructors was interviewed for a second time in August of Year 3. Year 1 data was gathered before I joined the study.

Through these interviews, Mary Clare gathered data regarding preservice instructors' literacy course design and implementation and student teachers' perceptions of their literacy courses. She and I collected the data in the second and third years - Year 1 and 2 inservice teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for teaching literacy, and factors contributing to inservice teachers' successes and frustrations in planning for literacy. The questions posed in the Year 1, 2 and 3 interviews related directly to the study objectives outlined in the *Overview of the Study*, in Chapter One of this dissertation. Although the same questions were asked in all of the interviews, probe questions varied and additional comments were encouraged. Ongoing data analysis informed the generation of new questions.

Year 1 interview question guides for language instructors and student teachers, and Year 2 and 3 interview question guides for first and second year inservice teachers (see Appendix III) were developed prior to the onset of the study. These question guides were modified during year three of the study to permit more detailed follow-up of new lines of inquiry generated by information gathered via the email correspondences between the participants, Mary Clare and me. Revised Year 3 interview questions for inservice teachers are contained in Appendix III. Interview questions addressed such areas as the following:

- background experience of instructors and student teachers;
- instructor goals for the literacy course;
- course assignments and readings;
- links to other campus courses;
- links between campus courses and the practicum;
- the emerging views and practices of student teachers and early years inservice teachers in the area of literacy;
- student teachers' and inservice teachers' attention to diversity and equity issues;
- Year 1 and 2 inservice teachers' programming / timetabling for literacy;
- teaching and assessment strategies employed by teachers in years 1 and 2 of inservice teaching;
- novice teachers' views on preservice preparation; and,
- the transitions, supports and challenges experienced by teachers in years 1 and 2 of inservice teaching.

Initially, in accordance with the plans outlined in the national literacy study, we had intended to visit, observe and interview Year 2 and 3 participants in their own school

settings. This plan collapsed because our situation was different from the other research sites involved in the larger, national study. Preservice participants involved in the national study attended universities in large urban centers and obtained employment within a radius easily traversed by car. The Lakehead participants were unable to secure local, urban teaching placements. As a result, they accepted positions in remote rural communities and overseas. I contacted the overseas participants (two in Year 2, one in Year 3) to make arrangements for interviews by telephone. The remaining participants, one situated within a fly-in community, the other two within driving distance of Thunder Bay. Although I offered to meet them at their home schools, they always found a reason why we should meet in Thunder Bay. Though the participants did not explicitly address the fact, I suspect they felt unnerved by the prospect of an observer viewing them in action within their own classroom setting. I was unable to collect extensive first-hand notes about each participant's setting. I had to rely on the details supplied by the participants.

Interviews took place at the Faculty. They were recorded and transcribed.

#### *Document Collection*

Documents collected during the study included: preservice instructors' course outlines, regular and ongoing email correspondence with inservice participants (every two months throughout each school year), and inservice participants' long range plans, language arts timetables, professional growth plans, sample lesson plans, resource lists, materials on professional development/induction/mentoring, and written reflections. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) categorize such documents among 'material culture' (p. 172) and suggest their meaning is often highly chunked and contextualized. The researchers stress the importance of dialoguing with participants to bring deeper meaning to material culture: "The material

culture may not be able directly to ‘speak back,’ but if appropriate procedures are followed, there is room for the data and for different levels of theory to confront interpretations” (p. 172). The gathering of email correspondence, in addition to semi-structured interviews, provided a forum for exploring the context of the participants’ documents in detail, therein facilitating interpretation of the documents.

The course outlines submitted by the instructors in Year 1 of the study informed me about the instructors’ pedagogical practices, resource selection, the content of their preservice language arts programs, the nature of the assignments they planned for their preservice students, and the types of assessments valued in evaluating preservice students.

In Years 2 and 3, questions forwarded via email addressed various issues related to the teaching of literacy, including: teacher scheduling and programming for literacy and language arts; implementation of approaches modeled and/or advocated in preservice; factors supporting/hindering continuation of these approaches and/or leading to adoption of new ones; induction and mentoring; and, perceptions of the adequacy of the preservice program. The decision to correspond via email was based on respondents’ various teaching appointments across the region, Canada and overseas. Sample questions forwarded to participants via email are contained in Appendix III.

Documents submitted by the participants yielded further insights into their timetabling for language arts, knowledge and use of teaching/learning theory, pedagogical beliefs and values, reaction to professional inservices and/or lack of inservice sessions, and the celebrations/ frustrations they encountered in their first two years of inservice teaching.

## *Research Log*

Throughout the study, I made detailed notes on all aspects of the study. These ranged from notes concerning the participants (their backgrounds, school settings, experiences, body language during interviews), their email correspondences, interviews and the documents they submitted, to notes outlining my own planning processes, the questions I needed to explore further, my hunches and my emerging interpretations of the data and how these related to the literature I had read.

As often as possible, I recorded point form notes during the interviews about the content of the interview, the participants' appearance and demeanor, and my overall impressions of the participants' strengths, frustrations and approachability. When Mary Clare and I were both able to attend an interview, I asked most of the questions while Mary Clare kept detailed notes. Always, these interviews were followed by discussions between us on their content and emerging themes.

Often, I reread my notes, adding reflective comments about ties to the literature or reminding myself to ask specific questions during subsequent email correspondence and /or interviews. At times, the comments I added were reminders to revisit question sets with specific participants who had been too busy to respond to the initial email.

Each time I corresponded with a participant via email or met for an interview, I made notes about the nature of the correspondence, and any points needing additional clarification or follow-up. As well, I set timelines for re-initiating contact with participants to encourage regular and ongoing dialogue.

## Research Process

The following sections describe the research process in which I engaged. I begin by discussing my access, then move to a discussion of the data collection and analysis.

### *Gaining Access*

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) write, “As you can see, negotiating permission is tricky” (p. 80). They give three ‘bits’ of advice: be persistent; be flexible; and be creative (p. 80). These ‘bits’ of advice would, I soon discovered, prove indispensable.

When I commenced my roles as co-researcher and research officer in the study of teacher preparation for teaching literacy, at the Lakehead site, the national literacy study was already in Year 3, the Lakehead study in Year 2. Initially, this happenstance facilitated my ease of access. As co-researcher in the national literacy study, Dr. Mary Clare Courtland had already received on-site permission to proceed with the study and to allow me, her graduate student, to use the data set for my doctoral research. The Year 1 survey had been conducted with approximately 100 P/J student teachers enrolled in the professional year of the Bachelor of Education program. The three literacy instructors teaching P/J Language Arts Methods and 10 student teachers had already taken part in semi-structured, audiotaped interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Although the initial process of gaining access caused very little personal anxiety, my entrance into the study was not without its trials. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) write: “Though we have been talking about gaining access as if it was something that only occurred at the beginning of your study, throughout many studies permission will have to be sought and cooperation gained as you move out into new territories and meet new people” (p. 78). The intended design of the study anticipated continuing involvement of the original participants

(the 10 student teachers interviewed in Year 1) but this was not to be the case. Renegotiating access with the student teacher participants as they passed into their first year proved not to be possible.

Criteria for continued participation in Years 2 and 3 included: (i) teaching within grades kindergarten to six; and, (ii) teaching language arts in some capacity (classroom, special education). Two of the initial student teacher respondents who had been interviewed in Year 1 and were willing to remain in the study became part of this opportunistic sample. The remainder of the original student teacher sample were unable to participate primarily for three main reasons: (i) they had not yet secured teaching positions; (ii) their inservice teaching assignments did not meet the language arts criteria of the study; or, (iii) they elected not to participate given the overly busy schedules of their newly acquired teaching assignments. These realities, while not ideal in any sense, necessitated finding and inviting new participants to join the study. Initially, I attempted to make contact, for a second time, with each of the individuals who had provided contact information on the initial Year 1 survey. Ultimately, new participants came from three avenues: (i) ongoing participants were invited to provide information on any peers from the site who might be interested in joining our study; (ii) the three preservice instructors were surveyed for further student contacts; and, (iii) Dr. Courtland and I invited previous students (with whom we had maintained contact) from our own language arts and literacy courses to join the study. In the end, three new participants, two of whom had participated in the survey, then in Year 1 of inservice teaching, eagerly joined the study. Four of the five participants remained in the study until its conclusion. One of the participants did not actively participate in the study during Year 3 and was therefore deemed to have informally withdrawn.

As well, in Year 3, Mary Clare and I chose to reinterview one of the three preservice literacy instructors teaching P/J language arts. In her email correspondence and final interview for Year 3 of the study, one of the original student teachers (then in her second year of inservice teaching) commented on the role of AQ courses in shaping her emerging teaching philosophies. This participant had recently acquired a specialist in reading, having completed three on-line AQ reading courses in total. The course instructor was one of the three literacy instructors interviewed during Year 1 of the Lakehead study. Mary Clare and I, along with the inservice teacher participant, foresaw several benefits to discussing the content and delivery of the AQ reading courses with both the inservice teacher participant and the preservice instructor participant (separately). Re-negotiation of access proved far simpler since ties had already been established with both participants.

The nature and focus of the study (student teachers' experiences during their professional year and into years 1 and 2 of inservice teaching) meant permission to do the study did not need to be secured through the various school boards in which the participants taught during Years 2 and 3 of the study.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

A constant-comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) was used to collect and analyze data. In keeping with an inductive approach to qualitative research, the theoretical orientations brought into the study (critical, reflective, social constructivist) provided the initial framework for inquiry. Categories were developed by comparing data sets to each other, to existing theory, to the literature and to emerging theories.

Much of the qualitative data collected from interview transcripts and correspondence with the participants might best be categorized as free-flowing text (Denzin & Lincoln,

2003). In each instance, the passages were interrelated and acquired deeper meaning through context. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest that coding is the “heart and soul of *whole-text analysis*” (p. 274) in that it forces the researcher to make judgments about the meanings of related blocks of text. In my experience, this could not have been more truthful. I devoted hours and hours to coding the data. The data became my puzzle, the relationships within, my challenge to unfold. Data analysis was actually a pleasurable process, one in which time sped past unnoticed until the kids arrived home from school and my two lives collided.

Due to the length of the study (3 years) and amount of data collected, data were analyzed in an ongoing manner. Various analytic memos, housed within the notebook where I kept my fieldnotes, highlighted potential themes and questions for follow up in the email correspondence and interviews with participants, summarized tasks needing to be completed within a monthly timeframe, and listed various studies / researchers I might explore in relation to commencing my literature review.

In preparation for my debut as a research presenter at the Language and Literacy Researchers of Canada [LLRC] and Canadian Society for the Study of Education [CSSE] conferences, I began reading, rereading, chunking and coding the data gathered so far. Mary Clare and I worked separately, meeting regularly to discuss our emerging themes and intuitions. Initially, I made triplicates of all of the transcripts. I then read all of the transcripts, from beginning to end, giving informal consideration to emerging themes. On my second reading, I recorded comments in the margins of one set of transcripts, noting emerging themes and possible categories and codes. At the same time, I began reading preliminary reports completed by other researchers in the national literacy study. These informed my coding of the data, cementing certain themes and codes in my mind and suggesting others to

explore further. Once relationships and patterns became more apparent, I colour-coded passages in the transcripts, by theme, identifying the speaker and page reference to facilitate easier analysis of the data. At this point, I cut the data into colour-coded strips, read and reread the strips for similarities and differences, and manipulated the strips into groupings of related codes. I then labeled and glued these groupings of same-coloured strips to legal-sized (8.5" x 14") paper sheets. This created a visual representation of the coded data. The pages could easily be spread out across the floor or housed one on top of the other, according to my needs. Once the visual representation was completed, I recorded my themes in a word document on my computer. Themes emerging from the preservice/in-service teacher data in Years 1, 2 and 3 are included in Table 1.

Table 1

*Themes Emerging from Preservice/In-service Teacher and Teacher Educator Data*

---

Year 1

- programming for literacy
  - field experiences embedded in preservice year
  - preparedness for teaching literacy
  - student teacher recommendations for improving the teacher education program
- 

Year 2

- reconceptions of the adequacy of the preservice program in preparing teachers to instruct literacy and language arts
  - language arts programs
  - induction and mentoring
  - successes and challenges
- 

Year 3

- reconceptions of the adequacy of the preservice program in preparing teachers to instruct literacy and language arts
  - language arts programs
  - induction and support
  - successes and challenges
-

In subsequent years (Years 2 and 3), I changed my methods slightly. The Year 1 transcripts had been given to me as paper copies. I did not have access to the tapes housing the original interviews. In Years 2 and 3, we used a digital tape recorder and I was able to upload interview transcripts, as audio files, from the digital recorder to my computer. Transcribed files were saved as word documents. Used to editing and revising word documents on the computer screen, I now completed my coding on the computer.

My intention had been to make use of ATLAS/ti software. Assurances this software would facilitate cross-tabulation of data and inform the determination of appropriate category groupings rendered it very appealing. The software had several limitations. Primarily, it was difficult to use. Secondly, certain operations contained small glitches not yet ironed out by the designer. Although I wanted to become more proficient in the use of ATLAS/ti, time constraints facilitated my decision to analyze the data by hand for this study.

Once I had read and reread the transcripts and printed off copies, I began chunking the data, on the computer, into themed-groupings. These groupings were further labeled and broken down according to commonalities and differences. A benefit to coding the data in this manner was that I could insert labels and comments directly onto the screen, adding extra spaces where needed. New themes could easily be moved to a new blank page. Groupings of passages could be paginated according to theme and printed off for ease of use.

Yearly, ongoing analysis of the data facilitated the development of various themes, categories and codes. Sharing of these themes, categories and codes among researchers, through year-end reports, supported informed analysis of existing themes, categories and codes, as well as development of new ones.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest researcher responsibility necessitates that social researchers engage in a constant process of reassessing and reimagining as they move through the stages of social analysis. Mary Clare and I met regularly (generally once per month) to discuss our notes, to revisit emerging themes and to plan our next steps in the research process. These discussions facilitated the forward motion of the study and served as a cross check of the ongoing data collection and analysis.

To facilitate this process, Denzin and Lincoln propose a list of questions researchers should ask themselves during analysis. Among these questions the following are included :

- *Have I connected the 'voices' and 'stories' of individuals back to the set of historic, structural, and economic relations in which they are situated?*
- *Have I employed multiple methods so that very different kinds of analyses can be constructed?*
- *Have some informants / constituencies / participants reviewed the material with me and interpreted, dissented, challenged my interpretations? (pp. 199-201)*

Working alongside other researchers, Mary Clare, in particular, meant I had ongoing opportunities to engage in reflective processes and to assess and expand my work responsibly.

Triangulation of data sources (Creswell, 2005) was significant to the methodology used in this study. Analysis of a variety of data sources supported cross-checking of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The interviews, for example, complemented the email correspondences forwarded by participants during years 2 and 3 in that they provided more detailed descriptions of specific opinions, practices, approaches and strategy usage touched upon in the emails and outlined in lesson plans and long range plans. Similarly, the course syllabi were compared to participants' comments regarding content covered and emphasized

in-course. My interpretation of the documents was based on the simultaneous evaluation of similarities and differences, as well as contexts and theories contained within and among the documents themselves. Embedded within and reflective of the participants' experiences, their documents provided additional means for examining and cross-checking the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Dr. Clive Beck at OISE/UT received initial approval for the national literacy study on August 13, 2003, from the Office of Research Services at the University of Toronto. A copy of this approval is contained in Appendix II. Dr. Mary Clare Courtland was invited to join the study in 2004 and received ethical approval from The Research Ethics Board at Lakehead University on February 17, 2005. A copy of this approval is contained in Appendix II.

Care and attention were given to the rights of study participants. Explanation of the ethical considerations is presented below. These included informed consent, right to withdraw, assurance of anonymity and confidentiality, potential risks to participants, deception and benefits to subjects and /or society, storage of data, and dissemination of research findings.

#### *Informed Consent*

Each group of respondents (student teachers, literacy instructors, inservice teachers) gave written consent in every year of the study. The study was explained, discussed and reviewed yearly.

In Year 1 of the study, student and preservice teacher participants were given separate Explanatory Letters and Consent Form packages. The Student Explanatory Letter/Consent Form package is contained in Appendix I. The Preservice Teacher Explanatory

Letter/Consent Form is also contained in Appendix I. Each package detailed the purpose, background and goals of the project, commitments for involvement in the study, and the ethical considerations articulated by the Research Ethics Board at Lakehead University.

The ethical considerations articulated in the Student and Preservice Educator Consent Forms included:

- The right to withdraw at any time;
- Assurance that the study posed no risks to the participants;
- Anonymity and confidentiality;
- Secure storage of data for 7 years; and
- An explanation of the dissemination of the research study, including the writing of reports, scholarly papers, journal articles and presentations at academic conferences.

The Student Explanatory Letter also contained information about the survey and interview processes in which students were being invited to participate as well as a schedule of events. Students were advised of two options for their involvement: (i) complete the survey; or, (ii) complete the survey and be interviewed by a member of the research team. The purposes of the survey and interview were also explained in the Student Information Sheet. Students who agree to complete the survey and be interviewed signed an additional Consent Form prior to participating in the first interview.

In Years 2 and 3 of the study, an Explanatory Letter and Consent Form package (see Appendix D) reminded teacher participants (then in first and second year of inservice teaching) of the general goals and ethical considerations of the study.

The preservice teacher educator who agreed to be re-interviewed in Year 3 was given the same Preservice Teacher Information Sheet/Consent Form package used in Year 1 to inform preservice teacher educators about the goals and ethical considerations of the study (see Appendix I).

Anonymity of respondents was assured through the use of pseudonyms during dissemination of the research. As per the Lakehead University policy, data will be stored securely for seven years. The original data set will be secured by the principal investigator, Clive Beck, at OISE/UT. Copies of the data collected at Lakehead University will be stored securely by Mary Clare Courtland and me.

#### *Requests to REB for Proposed Changes to the Study*

Among the changes Mary Clare and I requested of the REB at Lakehead University were: (a) time extension; and (b) permission to re-interview one of the teacher educators. In March of 2007, Mary Clare and I sought permission, from the REB to extend the period for gathering data from May of 2007 to the end of June 2007. The teacher participants, then in their second year of inservice teaching, required additional time to respond to our e-mail queries. As well, one of the overseas participants encountered difficulties forwarding her signed consent form. The initial consent form disappeared in the mail. A second form could not be submitted by fax. Eventually, this participant decided to forward written consent via e-mail. Extending the time period for data collection also permitted Mary Clare and me to re-interview one of the preservice literacy educators to gain insights into the nature of AQ courses in literacy (specifically, a three-part reading specialist offered online through Lakehead University). These steps were necessary to ensure that all of the email responses submitted by the participants, along with the instructor interview, could be used in the study.

Permission to extend the study time period was granted by the REB on April 23, 2007.

Copies of the request and permission letters are included in Appendix II.

Mary Clare and I submitted annual reports to the principal researcher along with a statement of progress to the REB at Lakehead University to ensure application of the highest ethical and scientific standards.

### *Is Compliance Enough?*

Tilley and Gormley (2007) encourage researchers to strive for reciprocity in their research practices. Looking at her own research within a women's correctional institute, Tilley questions the adequacy of her efforts at reciprocity. Surely the female prisoners were able to receive medical attention more promptly as a result of being in the study; however, Tilley questions whether or not the participants got as much out of the study as they gave to the study. Throughout the duration of my study on teacher preparation for teaching literacy, I was keenly aware that the teacher participants were time-strapped and felt a duty to respond to my e-mails. I altered and/or dropped questions from my e-mail queries, changing my expectations to suit the participants' busy schedules as needed. Often, the participants expressed feelings of being overwhelmed. In some instances, participants shared news of tragic events within their school communities. In response, I validated the participants' feelings. At times, I wrote more often to check on the participants' well being. Our regular and ongoing e-mails contributed to a sense of community, that somehow, we were united in helping children learn. For two full years, we exchanged stories and enjoyed each others' presence at the face-to-face interviews and then the study ended. Although I thanked each of the participants and offered to keep the lines of communication open, we have slipped into

the business / busyness of our daily lives. Contact has dissipated. In the end, I, too, wonder whether there was enough reciprocity?

### **Rationale for Organization of Data**

Teacher preparation for effective instruction of elementary literacy and language arts is a lengthy and complex process (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fisher, 2004; Kosnik & Beck, 2007). The preparation begins long before students are accepted into preservice education programs and continues long after they depart (Borg, 2003; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Kosnik & Beck, 2009). Immersion in the arena of teacher preparation for teaching literacy necessitated that I listen carefully to many voices so as to emerge with new and deeper understandings. Different perspectives, including teacher educator, preservice student teacher, preservice graduate, and inservice teacher, all offered potential for new insights into understanding teacher preparation for teaching literacy. There is dispute among researchers on the degree to which student teachers are influenced by preservice education (Borg, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Fisher, 2004; Jarolimek, Foster & Kellough, 2005) and the best means for maximizing this influence (Delpit, 2003; Kist, 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2007; Street, 2001). Consensus among researchers, however, suggests that preservice experiences have potential to influence, positively and/or negatively, the cognitions, approaches, strategies and tools adopted by students in and beyond preservice education programs (Beck et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Eisner, 2002; Kincheloe, 2003; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Grossman et al., 2000). In this manner, preservice experiences influence teacher preparedness for teaching literacy (Beck et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Grossman et al., 2000).

Throughout my study, multiple inter-woven stories emerged, each one informed my understandings of teacher preparation for teaching literacy, each one connected and added depth to the others. In examining teacher educators' beliefs about preservice education and their students' preparedness for teaching literacy, alongside the developing cognitions of early years teachers, my study provided a longitudinal picture of the influences of preservice education at one Faculty of Education. Each of the participants described his/her experiences, therein sharing his/her own perspectives on teacher preparation for teaching literacy. Cumulatively, these perspectives provided me with deeper understandings of the nature of teacher preparation for teaching literacy.

I struggled with the ordering of these perspectives. Initially, I felt the 'telling' should begin with the teacher educators. Isn't that how this story began - hearing the instructors' philosophies, approaches and value systems, the means through which these were communicated to the student teachers and their influences on the student teachers' understandings about teaching/learning literacy? Then again, given the timing of my entrance into the national literacy study (then in its second year), I was not a part of that beginning. Where the story actually 'began' is a construct I created in my own mind.

I started writing Chapter Four entirely convinced that the story should commence with the most recent past. I wanted the first voice to be the voice of experience where the teacher participants looked back from year two of inservice teaching. Researchers suggest that preparation for teaching literacy begins long before student teachers enter into preservice programs (Borg, 2003; Beck et al., 2005; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Feiman-Nemser, 2001), so it made sense that the story should begin with the year two inservice teachers

reflecting on their learning and experiences. And so, I commenced the arduous task of setting up Chapter Four to reflect my decision.

I am a fan of movies that commence in the present, move to the past, continue in the present, and then move to the future. I was surprised to find that such creative liberties of expression did not, in this instance, do justice to my research. My pursuit of less traditional research forms and my desire to “get out of the representational straight jacket that social scientists have been in for most of this century” (Tierney, 1999, p. 309) were misguided. I came very close to compromising the content of my research for the sake of its form.

Re-reading Finley’s (2008) chapter on Arts-Based Inquiry, I came to see the oversights inherent in my reasoning. According to Finley, non-traditional methods and revised standards for evaluating research developed in the early 1990s, in part, as a result of an emerging ethics of care between researchers and participants. Questions surrounding the dissemination of research to expanding audiences, including local communities and other participants, prompted researchers to re-examine acceptable forms of research.

Representational forms proposed included art, music, dance, photography, prose and poetry. One of Eisner’s (2002) most important contributions to arts-based inquiry was his insistence that we use many different art forms to know the world and that these same forms might also be used to inform the social sciences. Richardson (2001) also maintains that the use of other disciplines - art, sociology, history, dance, and drama among them - have potential to inform our research processes and deepen our understandings through crystallization.

Creative sequencing of my data might have further defined my research as non-traditional but my motives were certainly not embedded in an ethics of care. Ultimately, I wanted the sequencing of voices to enhance the readers’ overall understandings of teacher

preparation for teaching literacy. My attempts at creative sequencing seemed only to wrap-up the participant voices more quickly, neither a desirable nor responsible trait in a longitudinal study.

Who are the participants? What can we learn from their comments and experiences? I have organized my discussion of the data into two chapters: preservice preparation for teaching literacy; and, inservice literacy teaching. Preservice preparation for teaching literacy is discussed in Chapter Four. Inservice support for teaching literacy is discussed in Chapter Five. In Chapter Four, we hear the voices of the preservice educators as well as those of the student teachers involved in the study. Chapter Five attends to the voices of the student teacher graduates, then in years one and two of inservice teaching. Data obtained from an AQ reading instructor and the nature of her Reading Specialist AQ courses are also discussed in Chapter Five. Sharing the discourses separately allowed me to create a space for considering commonalities and differences across the various settings, participants and places in time before joining the voices together in Chapter Six. My own voice and how I am constructing my identity as a literacy instructor/teacher educator at a Faculty of Education, is woven into the poetry and discussions within Chapters Four through Six.

This chapter has provided a detailed explanation of the design, methodology, research process and ethical considerations undertaken in this study. It also provided a rationale for organization of the data across two subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESERVICE PREPARATION FOR LITERACY TEACHING

#### Hush... Listen (Part 1)

Ah, beloved Friday seminars  
Scaffolds of knowledge  
Intended to link in-course and practicum understandings

“Is it a recipe you seek, then?”  
“Gather round, draw closer, sport your best listening hat.”  
And waving his own feathered cap,  
The magician smiled, winked, and flirted with the audience  
A grandiose bow sealing the venture  
And the student teachers sat mesmerized

The recipe...  
Elixir of effective literacy teaching  
Oh sweetest, most golden liquid

Latecomers bolted inside,  
Embarrassed, afraid lest they be deemed unworthy  
“Future keepers of the literacy secret,” he bellowed  
“I welcome you.”  
And they, enraptured, rose to their feet  
Zombies chanting, “Literacy, literacy, literacy”

A flourish of his cape  
Silence  
Oh savoury conjecture  
What might the Great One say?  
In the face of complexity...  
What might the Great One say?

Various gowned figures appeared:  
Socio Constructivist, on the right  
Multi Literacies, on the left  
Social Justice trailing slightly behind  
Critical Literacy clipped at their heels  
And on and on trailed the line  
A sea of faces  
Known to varying degrees by faculty, sessionals  
And to a much lesser extent, bewildered students

Positioning themselves beside the Great One  
The audience shuffled, more mesmerized than before...

L.E. Leslie

This chapter describes the findings and interpretation for year one of the study. It has been divided into three sections. In the first section, I describe the profiles of participants

in Year One. The second section describes the findings. It begins with an overview of the teacher education program for preservice students enrolled in the primary/junior division at one Faculty of Education. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the data:

(i) programming for literacy; (ii) field experiences embedded in the preservice year; (iii) student teacher preparedness for teaching literacy; and, (iv) student teacher recommendations for improving the teacher education program. The final section discusses the interpretation of the findings.

### **Profiles of Participants: Year One**

#### *Student Teacher Participants*

The ten student teachers interviewed were registered in the P/J education program at Lakehead University. Seven respondents were enrolled in the Professional Program Onsite Delivery [PPOD] component, the other three, in the on-campus program. The majority of student teachers (8) were completing the one-year consecutive Bachelor of Education degree; two student teachers were in year four of their concurrent program. Student teachers varied in terms of their previous educational, volunteer and literacy-related experiences. Educational backgrounds included English, arts, women's studies, history, administration/human resources, economics, outdoor recreation and psychology. Volunteer and literacy-related experiences ranged from minimal to fairly extensive. For example, one respondent had volunteered in a kindergarten class for four years prior to admission into the preservice program, while another had taught English as a second language in China for one year. Similarly, student teachers varied in their perceptions of self as reader/writer. Respondents with extensive English and literacy educational experiences tended to describe themselves as avid, capable readers and writers, reading for pleasure as well as professional interest, and

journaling and writing extensively. Most respondents identified themselves as either capable readers/writers too busy to currently enjoy reading and writing or as average readers/writers, “somewhere in the middle.” One respondent described himself as having grown up a reluctant, below average reader/writer. Respondents varied in age.

### *The Three Literacy Teacher Educators*

The three instructors interviewed taught all sections of the P/J literacy courses at the university, in both the PPOD and on-campus preservice education models. The instructors were contract faculty; each held a Master of Education degree and had extensive professional experience in literacy. All were retired educators with teaching, principal and consultant experiences at the school district level. Fiona had also acquired experience as a regional consultant and had worked for the Ontario Ministry of Education with a mandate to promote early literacy across the region. She had gained extensive experience working with school boards in remote communities in northern Canada. No tenured faculty member instructed P/J language arts at the time of this study. Please find a summary of the teacher educator profiles in Appendix IV.

### **Findings: Year One**

The findings are organized under the following themes:

- Programming for literacy
- Field experiences embedded in the preservice year
- Student teacher preparedness for teaching literacy
- Student teacher recommendations for improving the teacher education program

### *Programming for Literacy*

Programming for literacy was influenced by a number of factors. These included factors directly related to the teacher educators' values and beliefs about teacher preparation for teaching literacy, as well as factors more specifically tied to administrative decisions implemented in the Faculty of Education to support effective teacher preparation. In some cases, as with the PPOD approach, the teacher educators had been instrumental in influencing administrative decisions surrounding programming for literacy. I discuss programming for literacy in three areas: teacher educators' training and preparedness for literacy teaching, content and influences emphasized in literacy courses and practice teaching experiences embedded in the preservice year.

#### *Teacher Educators' Training and Preparedness for Literacy Teaching*

*Learning and leadership.* All three teacher educators were strongly committed to literacy education and had acquired significant related experiences before joining the Faculty of Education. Each had worked with school board staff to promote increased levels of student literacy through heightened teacher awareness of literacy and literacy strategies and practices. Josie held various positions within her school board, including classroom teacher, resource teacher, consultant, vice principal and principal before accepting her position with Lakehead University:

*I was a classroom teacher probably for 10 years and I worked as a classroom teacher for about five years and then I did special education where I was the resource person in a school. I did that for about three years and then I worked as a consultant for four years or thereabouts where I was doing programming and assisting teachers in class and then that's when I went and did my Masters in Clinical Psychology.*

*I came back and I worked as a psychometrist with the [name] Board for four years. After that I worked as a coordinator for the [name] Board and I did communications which was English at the secondary level, language at the elementary level, assessment for the whole board and guidance for the secondary level.*

*And then after that I decided all these words of wisdom that were coming out of my mouth, I wanted to know if they were do-able at the school level. That's when I decided I'd go and see what being a principal is like. So then I was a Vice-Principal for one year and then I was Principal for 10 or 12 years.*

In addition to serving as a teacher, vice principal and principal, Pamela gained experience as assistant to the superintendant of curricula for a northern board of education:

*I also was an assistant to the superintendent of curricula and responsible for some program studies and took part in some major board committees that gave me lots of background. For two years I worked with [name] on looking at effective schools and effective instruction and had all sorts of opportunities for professional development in reading and visiting sites around the country.*

Fiona, having accumulated similar teaching and leadership experiences to her colleagues, gained additional experiences as an early literacy curriculum developer within a Ministry of Education:

*I was then hired to go to the Ministry of Education to work on a set of portfolios to do with early literacy and even down to implementing child care in schools. One of the major things that I did with the Ministry was work on the writing of the curriculum document, the common curriculum, which gave birth to the new Ontario curriculum. I was there for four years. . .*

Fiona took a consultant position with a northern organization before moving into a position at the Faculty of Education:

*. . . from there I went to an organization . . . that worked with small northern school boards providing some consulting services . . . it was a group that worked collaboratively with a bunch of small school boards, to try and, and save money on different aspects of running a school board. I worked with them and that's when I started working at the Faculty so I was doing consulting for half the week and working at the Faculty for half a week.*

*I had wonderful opportunities for in-service so I was able to participate in all the Ministry inservices regarding the curriculum changes, the new report cards, the provincial tests, and I, I felt that was really valuable in-service for me. I had another, a renewal really, in my professional life. That job involved a lot of travelling to small northern reserves. I had to get on small airplanes. I stayed with that organization for about four years. . .*

Pamela believed the practical experiences she acquired as a classroom teacher and principal contributed to her knowledge of novice teachers' strengths, weaknesses and needs and to her overall expertise as an instructor within the Faculty of Education:

*My role as principal was as a curriculum leader. I never did staff meetings that didn't have a curriculum, except for the first one of the year . . . mostly administrative kinds of exercises with the staff. But my priority was constantly professional development and I did an awesome job of that. I, I had awesome staff in the schools that I went to. If you didn't keep developing as a professional, you were asked to leave my school.*

Describing the nature of the links between expertise as a teacher educator and her experiences as a principal, Pamela explained:

*I can give practical examples too of what you need to do and, and put a lot of sense of responsibility on these students so that they know how important their role is going in. And, and we work through a lot of those kinds of scenarios with students so that they know why you do long range planning and why we work as colleagues so that we're, you know, reflecting on our practise and constantly improving.*

*So I think as well as the training as a teacher, the training and experiences, as a principal, I can give a perspective to staff too and, and let them know that they don't have to stay isolated in the middle of a room, that they problem solve issues that children are having in their learning, and all the, you know, the people out there that can help them.*

Retired from positions held within their boards of education, the three literacy educators were content to instruct on a part-time basis at the Faculty of Education. Fiona explained: *"I didn't want to do three sections this year because this is supposed to be fun. Three sections just puts me over the edge and it becomes full time employment."*

Fiona had instructed literacy and curriculum planning and evaluation courses at the university for ten years; Josie and Pamela had instructed courses for five years.

*Leadership in program development.* Early into their appointments at Lakehead's Faculty of Education, the three teacher educators initiated changes to the Faculty's approach to teaching literacy. The shape and design of these changes were influenced, at least in part,

by the collegial relationships the teacher educators had established with teachers in the field prior to joining Lakehead University. Pamela helped organize the PPOD mode of program delivery. The idea for the PPOD arrangement generated from a need that Pamela observed in the local school community:

*So the PPOD arrangement is, [name] was the Vice Principal when I was at [school] and thinking of applying to the Faculty and I was thinking that one of the things that would be wonderful because I knew he was going to [school], a high-needs school, would be if we could explore having our students give some more help to high-needs children out there. It would be great for the students here and I mean it's win-win and for the children. Anyhow, after I got the position and met with [name of Faculty administrator] about it she said yes 'you could make that part of your program.' I mean, I just about fell off my chair because I didn't know what the rules were about how things get organized at the University. We talked about it and made that part of the program.*

Pamela also made arrangements with the designated literacy teachers at local elementary schools to allow her PPOD students to attend the workshops they offered to classroom teachers.

Fiona's feedback into the programming at the Faculty of Education resulted in an administrative decision to provide a subject context for the teaching of curriculum planning and evaluation:

*As I started doing the assessment and evaluation it was a very strange course to teach because it was not in the context and I went to [name] and asked if I could teach the curriculum planning and evaluation to the students that I taught language arts to because I saw that those two courses went really well together. It seemed to me to be a way for language arts to be the context for a lot of what we were learning in curriculum planning and evaluation. And it was decided that we'd give it a try and I think now that structure is pretty much standard I think for the most part. Curriculum planning and evaluation is attached to another subject.*

As well, Fiona worked closely with an outstanding Grade 1 teacher who demonstrated practices such as guided reading and running records for student teachers. She also invited the school principal to teach a variety of mini lessons to PPOD students.

Josie invited colleagues to be guest speakers. She also collaborated with a Grade 5 teacher on an “e-pal” project to encourage writing between the elementary students and the teacher candidates. Additionally, the instructors were able to borrow authentic teaching tools from their colleagues in the field, including: report cards, student writing samples, long term plans, literature-based units and a host of curriculum materials.

*Passion for teaching literacy.* The three teacher educators were deeply committed to their positions as literacy educators at the Faculty of Education. Each expressed enthusiasm for her subject area. For example, Fiona commented, “*Language arts was my first love.*” Pamela exclaimed, “*I have a HUGE interest in language arts.*” In addition to feeling enthusiastic about their roles as literacy educators, the instructors also felt competent in their subject area knowledge. Asked, “*Do you feel confident as a language arts instructor?*” Josie exclaimed, “*Yeah, I do, very much so.*”

Fiona responded,

*Yes. I do. I, I don't know how I'm supposed to answer that. I have a passion for literacy education and one of the things that my students often comment on is that that passion is communicated to them. They understand the value because I believe that success in school and life is directly related to your success with literacy, with reading and writing.*

Josie described feeling anxious at the beginning of her career as a literacy teacher educator, hoping she would be ‘good enough’:

*Initially when I first came I thought, I had a real concern whether I was going to know enough to be really helpful to the teachers, and within the first I guess two or three classes I realized I really did have a strong background in the area of language so it wasn't as much of a concern. I was concerned about whether I would be I guess the word is "good enough" for the students because I think it's pretty critical that you've got somebody who's knowledgeable and is able to support these students.*

These feelings were further compounded, for Josie, by a sense of responsibility to produce effective language arts teachers: “*if we don't have people who know how to teach*

*language in the area of reading and the area of writing, we're letting down . . . many, many classrooms of children."*

Although the three literacy educators instructed a variety of courses at the Faculty of Education, language arts and literacy courses figured prominently in their teaching:

- *Oh OK I've done language arts, I've done early literacy which was removed from language arts, so language, which makes no sense at all. And I've done curriculum planning and evaluation and then I've done a program that is called PPOD. . . I do the teaching of the curriculum planning, the early literacy and the language and it's pretty much integrated that part of the day. All those subject areas are really together so the planning and evaluation is based on doing it with language and early literacy. (Josie)*
- *Alright. I've been teaching language arts, P/J for the five years. I've also, for four years, been teaching curriculum planning and evaluation and for three years I've done both of those things as well as be their faculty advisor. For four years I've had my students working in the field as part of my program. (Pamela)*
- *Yeah I, I teach mainly language arts for the primary junior division. I have taught curriculum planning and evaluation. I've taught Ontario Ed. I was thinking of my work with Lifelong Learning but that's another department . . . I also do the placement supervision work for two of the three sections that I've worked with this year. . . I have two PPODS and one non-PPOD. (Fiona)*

#### *Content and Influences Emphasized in Literacy Courses*

*Breadth and depth of topics and content.* The teacher educators employed a range of social constructivist teaching/learning processes in programming for literacy within their literacy courses. Their course syllabi, as well as their own and their student teachers' descriptions of in-class activities, provided further insights into the depth and breadth of topics and the approaches, frameworks and strategies introduced by the teacher educators in programming for literacy.

As a result of team planning, all three literacy educators included similar content in their courses. Together, they deliberated over curriculum decisions, including the breadth and

depth of teaching /learning theory and the types of approaches to which they felt their students needed to be exposed during literacy classes. Fiona served as a mentor to her colleagues during that time.

A major difference among the instructors was their approach to teaching the Language Arts Methods courses. Fiona instructed her P/J Language Arts and Literacy courses as one course. Pamela and Josie co-developed separate course syllabi for P/J Language Arts and for P/J Literacy. Topics included in the literacy courses, as evidenced in the course syllabi for Primary/Junior Language Arts are shown in Figure 1. Topics across Pamela's and Josie's J/I Language Arts and Literacy courses overlapped. These commonalities, itemized in bold print within Figure 1, included:

- Principles of becoming an effective teacher of language arts
- Balanced language arts program / balanced literacy
- Oral language / effective listeners
- Effective instruction: teaching for strategies
- Reading comprehension
- The process of writing
- Children's literature and the structure of text
- Assessing literacy development
- Planning and organizing the language arts program

Additional course components are highlighted in Figure 1, below the emboldened print. An overview of the course syllabi illustrates a number of components associated with a balanced approach to literacy (i.e. scaffolded reading levels from read-alouds to shared, guided and independent reading). Reading, writing and oral language skills were particularly

highly emphasized in the syllabi developed by Pamela and Josie. Fiona's syllabus appeared to be more general in terms of the specific skills/knowledges to be explored in the course (i.e. 'theoretical foundations for language arts' may relate to a broad range of theoretical frameworks).

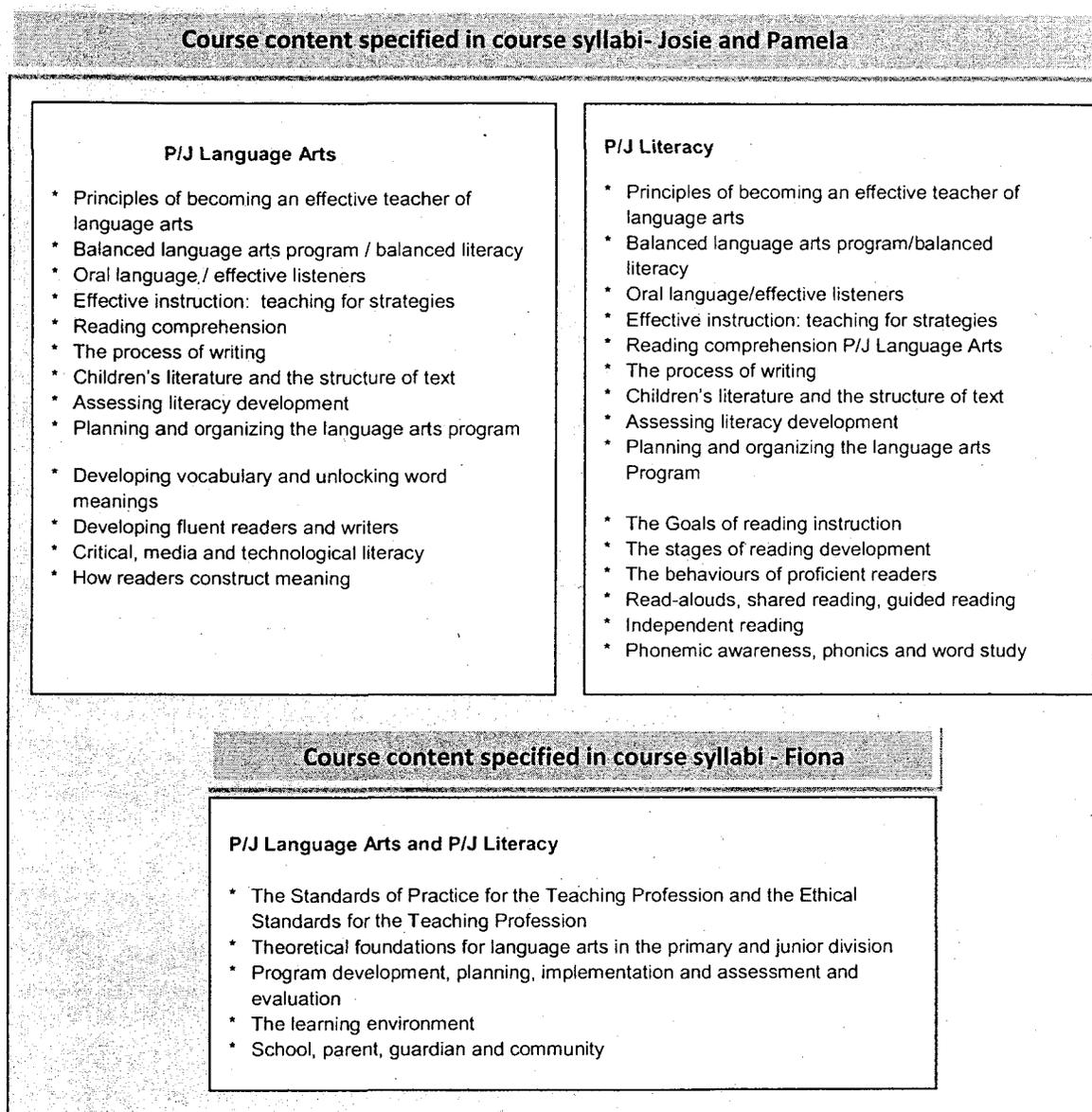


Figure 1. Course Content Specified in Syllabi for Josie, Pamela and Fiona

Course syllabi tend to reflect the 'intended' curriculum rather than the 'actual' curriculum, so data obtained in the teacher educator and student teacher interviews were helpful in further determining the subject and pedagogical knowledge introduced in class.

*Resources.* The three teacher educators used a wide variety of resources. They assigned readings from a popular Canadian language arts methods text as well as current Ministry of Education documents and special reports on literacy. Josie also used documents produced by a local school board, as well as authentic samples of children's writing within her literacy course. Pamela shared examples of units and report cards prepared by a colleague with her students. Two instructors commented specifically on how the PPOD classrooms they were assigned in the elementary schools enabled them to house their teaching materials and trade books.

*Time constraints.* Charged with the responsibility of preparing student teachers to effectively design and implement elementary literacy programs, the instructors reported feeling pressured by the 18-week in-course timeframe for literacy instruction. Pamela explained,

*Right from the beginning I tell them we are just going to scratch the surface, I don't have time to go long and deep with you on some things. They hear my frustration throughout the whole year (laughter) of not being able to go long and deep.*

*Areas of focus.* Two instructors noted changes in their approaches to topic coverage. They found themselves valuing depth over breadth in certain areas. For Josie, reading and writing became areas of focus:

*Even though the time is so short . . . the one thing that has changed for me is spending more in-depth time on what I call more global things such as the area of reading, the area of process writing, the area of non-informational text, the area of comprehension strategies. I talk to them [I tell them that the] early 1990s was when comprehension really started. People used to think you got it by osmosis.*

Josie explained that focussing on specific areas of the language arts meant others received little or no attention:

*... there are some things that I never get to. I do spelling and I do grammar and those things but I don't do them to the depth that I do understanding material that's been read or the writing process or you know those things. I think those are absolutely critical to success.*

Over time, Fiona adopted a new approach to literacy education. Whereas she had initially tried to introduce her preservice student teachers to as much relevant information as possible, she had come to see the importance of ensuring that student teachers departed her course with clear understanding of the larger concepts related to literacy education:

*I went from wanting to give my students everything that I possibly could to understanding that what I could give them was limited and I better make every minute count. I've gone from wanting to provide a huge bank of information to distilling it down to wanting to make sure that they walk away with those few major concepts or beliefs about language learning.*

Differences in the value systems the instructors held regarding the breadth and depth of topics and coverage were reiterated in comments shared by the student teacher participants. Asked to conjecture what goals their literacy instructors held for them, the students gave a variety of answers. Sandra felt that her instructor, Fiona, tried to communicate a love of literacy: *"I think that she wanted to spread her knowledge and her love for literacy to us and to give us the tools that we would need in the classroom to provide a rich literacy environment for our kids."* Jane was also instructed by Fiona. She perceived willingness to try new strategies and knowledge / application of balanced literacy as goals her instructor wanted students to carry from the course:

*I think that she wanted us to try a lot of stuff and to sell on balanced literacy. . . . When we came out of it, whatever we did, we tried to be creative with it in the end and . . . to try as much as you could when you left and that you know how much you had done there as a place to jump off from.*

Craig believed his instructor, Pamela, attempted to introduce students to as many aspects of language arts as possible:

*The main goal was to cover all of the aspects of language arts instruction. Secondary to that, show us the places where all the resources were available so you know reading, writing, and teaching techniques as well as oral and visual communications-getting across how to get, how to teach them and then providing practical examples.*

While the theoretical frameworks of instructors varied, the topics addressed and the strategies demonstrated were similar across all courses. This is not surprising given that the instructors had collaborated for a number of years on planning their courses. Pamela mentioned balanced literacy as her framework. She cited several authors, including Tompkins, Cunningham, and Hewett as having influenced her teaching. Though Josie referred to theorists such as Vygotsky and Cambourne, she did not explicitly identify using a social constructivist approach in class. By contrast, Fiona clearly used social constructivist terminology to explain the overall framework of her preservice literacy program:

*I believe it (literacy) happens in a social context. I believe that literacy is about constructing meaning, creating meaning whether it's reading a text or listening to a story being read or whatever. It's, I guess, a constructivist view of literacy.*

Whether implicit or explicit, elements of social constructivism could be found within each instructor's approach to teaching literacy.

*Use/modelling of teaching/learning approaches, theories and strategies.* All three instructors described the importance of modelling the approaches, strategies and tools to which preservice students were exposed in-class and/or in their readings. Fiona modeled a 'read aloud' on a weekly basis, in an effort to influence student teachers' inservice decisions regarding curriculum implementation and resource selection. She also emphasized the potential for using picture books/artwork to highlight visual literacy as a form of communication:

*I did a read aloud every single week for my preservice students, to try and expose my students to good literacy, to do some modelling of what you can do with the literature. . . I always selected books that had interesting artwork. I have a fine arts major in my Bachelor of Arts and I just think it's a wonderful way to start connecting so we can see that the artwork is just another way of communicating.*

Josie described the ways in which modeling was embedded into the philosophy she introduced in her literacy classes:

*We talk about reading skills not being up to par. I really believe - teach anybody, children, anybody and they'll learn. If you expose them to what the material is and teach them, and I'm not talking drill and kill . . . actually modelling what it is that you expect and showing them what it looks like it's going to be good for anybody's learning. . . I use that philosophy in my classes.*

Pamela described ways in which she used modelling, as an authentic formative tool for assessment, to inform students' development of a literature unit:

*I had two guys in my Monday class. I gave them their lit. unit back three times and I sat with them twice and went through it again. I modeled how to do it. I brought in the mitten and the puppets and all the resources that we use and using the guideline . . . demonstrated how to put it together and the kind of thinking you have to do and the considerations of using the guideline and integrating other subject areas. . . It's what you do with children. It's "this isn't good enough," it's barely a level three, do this and this and you've got two weeks to get it back into me."*

In other examples of authentic modelling, Josie employed modeling to scaffold student learning. In the first example, Josie showed her students how to plan a lesson, before providing opportunities for them to co-develop a plan, and finally, to design one on their own:

*I think it's really important to actually have students do things. . . I'll use the example of a lesson plan. I model it. I show them how to do it. I have them do their first one in a group and they do it in the classroom and then they try one on their own. Then after that, I actually have them do one that's an assignment that's marked.*

In a second example, students worked in small groups to co-plan a 90-minute literacy block. Groups presented to one another, therein modeling a variety of means for using balanced literacy in the classroom:

*An example would be we do a literacy block. We give them materials. They work in groups of three or four and they have to take that material and then show, demonstrate, how they would do balanced literacy in a two or two and a half hour block of time. They do that in class. I give them sort of anywhere from an hour to 90 minutes to plan it.*

Early in her course, Pamela modeled a goal setting exercise and provided opportunities for her students to become actively involved in their own learning processes. Pamela suggested that repetition supports student understanding and informs their curriculum delivery and implementation:

*I actually have them do some goal setting at the beginning. They do a personal exercise for me called a Me Bag where they get me some background so I know a little bit about their personal lives. I find out about their training and they're to put in goals for the year for me and, and we have fun with it. We give them a lunch bag. I model almost everything that I try to have them understand . . . they let me know if they need more in something and we keep going back to it. If I see that their first lessons, they weren't getting the gist of how to properly do guided reading, then they do another one.*

The initial goal setting activity was followed-up regularly through informal class discussions in which Pamela invited students to critique course content and offer suggestions for future learning and/or teaching within the course.

Fiona placed emphasis on the role of oral language as a foundation for literacy learning: *"I believe that oral language is the foundation of all other literacy learning."* She valued explicit instruction as an effective model for informing preservice students' understandings about teaching/learning: *"I believe that literacy skills develop through explicit instruction, through lots of opportunity, authentic or meaningful opportunity for practice."*

Josie was less specific about the teaching/learning theories she personally adopted and/or communicated within her literacy courses. She felt preservice students needed a basic understanding of how children learn: *"I think it's important that they have some idea how*

*children learn. If you don't know how children learn, I don't know how you can be effective in the classroom.”*

Josie and Fiona believed that preservice students needed to understand that language learning is processual in nature. This was evident in comments such as “*You need to know that there is a developmental process in language, in writing, in reading, all of that*” and “*I believe that language acquisition starts probably before a child is born so I believe that language learning or literacy is developmental in nature.*”

The three literacy instructors used a variety of means to engage preservice students in their own learning. Fiona introduced and began establishing a learning community during the first week of literacy classes. Fiona hoped the emphasis on respect and cooperation would filter into the preservice students’ own classrooms following graduation from the Faculty of Education:

*My teaching is based on respect, on recognition of what each individual has to offer to the group. My first lecture is on building a learning community and I outline my expectations of them in terms of being part of a learning community . . . I know university is a competitive-based approach to learning; I want as much as possible to have a cooperative approach.*

*So I tell my students we're all as good as the weakest person in this room. If there's somebody who doesn't get it, none of us have done our job. I'm trying to encourage them to be learning partners and to support each other. . . I've had classes where ridicule and sarcasm are the flavour of the day and I won't put up with it.*

She was not deterred by student criticism: “*I've had classes who think I'm an old fuddy duddy but I just don't want anybody taking that mentality into a classroom with kids where [they] manage by ridicule and sarcasm. That's not acceptable.*”

For Fiona, a community circle provided opportunities for students to revisit, reflect upon and discuss their needs, feelings and personal and professional growth: “*We begin the*

*course and we end the course with a community circle and we have a community circle some place in the middle when I get the sense that people need to talk.”*

Josie credited the relaxed atmosphere within her literacy classroom with contributing to what she termed a ‘learning milieu,’ an environment in which she and her students influenced each others’ learning:

*Some of the students are absolutely fabulous so I probably learn as much from the. I really feel that I don't have to be in control of the class because it's what I call a learning milieu. We're all learning and I find that because I don't have to have this control that it works fairly well. It's a pretty relaxed environment.*

Josie invited and encouraged learning in her literacy classroom through the use of humour. She stressed the importance of making learning ‘fun’ for both the teacher and his/her students. This is illustrated by comments such as, “*Apparently I have a sense of humour in the classroom, so I guess that would be my teaching style*” and “*We're there to have some fun as well as learn and I think fun is part of learning.*”

*Ministry influence.* In addition to valuing a number of theoretical frameworks, the instructors perceived their roles as preparing students to teach in the Province of Ontario. There was significant emphasis on ministry documents and initiatives (as noted earlier with respect to course syllabi). Pamela stated explicitly that she believed that faculty should have little choice in the skills they teach: “*I don't believe in this academic freedom stuff when it comes to the professional year. I mean you need to go out and deliver the Ministry of Education documents, guidelines, expectations. You don't have freedom.*”

*Linking theory to practice.* The teacher educators also tried to explicitly address and model links between theory and practice. Pamela claimed to integrate both. She commented that the teacher candidates “*need to know that it's not just the nitty gritty, practical strategies*

*that they're looking for. They need to know why some of those strategies work, and when to apply them. It's kind of a combination of the two."*

Josie felt that she focussed more on the practical. She explained her stance:

*[I] probably err on the side of being a bit practical. They certainly get. . . some of the theory but I also know that they need to be able to survive in their first year of teaching. I'm going to make sure they know how to teach something or that they have a starting place to teach.*

According to Josie, students needed to apply their learning before they could fully understand the content and nature of that learning. As well, authentic application provided opportunities for the instructor to assess student learning and target areas of further need:

*You can talk about it, you can lecture it, you can have them talk about it, but unless they apply it they really don't always have a full understanding. Through sharing you can actually see where the weaknesses are and then you can sort of re-teach or get another activity.*

*Student teacher acknowledgement / valuing of teacher educator expertise.* The student teacher participants valued their teacher educators' subject area knowledge, competences and experiences. They attributed high levels of instructor expertise to their overall enjoyment of the program. Colin commented:

*I've enjoyed mostly the professors' knowledge. I'm in awe of their experience and their knowledge and it just demonstrates to me how much I have to learn. It makes me want to reach that level one day. We have a great Faculty here.*

Craig iterated similar sentiments: *"I found the instruction here to be very practical and the professors to be very interested and motivated."*

Jane also explained:

*I feel that most of the instructors are well versed in their subjects. They know what they're talking about here - particularly with our language course. Everything we are doing is pretty authentic. There's nothing there that we scratched our head and said, "Why are we doing this?"*

Rose, too, linked instructor competence to course meaningfulness and applicability:

*I think that some of my professors were very well educated and very focused on exactly what needed to be taught and how it could help you implement it in the classroom and then others were, kind of. . . I was wondering why I was learning it.*

One student described compassion as a characteristic she valued in her instructor.

Janet appreciated her instructor's efforts to instill confidence in the students during a difficult period:

*I think that our instructor really tried to keep us confident because I think she could tell that when we were tired and we were starting to get a little down. She was pretty good at saying, "You're almost done." She always told us we were teachers already. She was pretty good at keeping us confident which I think is important.*

The positive influence of the teacher educators' purposeful design and modeling of teaching/learning approaches, theories and strategies within their language arts courses was reported by the student teacher participants. Their comments shared further insights into the nature of the teacher educators' programming for literacy. The student teacher participants preferred teacher educators who adopted social constructivist approaches to teaching and learning. Student teachers credited participation in learning experiences, along with peer collaboration, with enhanced enjoyment and increased retention of ideas. Sandra valued being involved in the planning process: *"We felt more connected to our learning in that class because we were actually putting ourselves into it as well. We were more involved in the planning process which was nice."*

According to Colin, the most memorable part of his language course involved hands-on learning: *"We, for an entire eight months, worked in a classroom that was applying the balanced literacy principles. So I got to see it, hands-on. That was my most memorable part of my course."* Candice stressed the importance of modeling and participating in hands-on learning strategies while engaged in authentic learning tasks:

*The teacher was really good about hands-on activities. She wouldn't explain how you would do a running record. She would show us and let us do it . . . more than once because I don't think you do learn the once. If we were talking about exemplars or needing to see samples of children's writing or so on she had them. She'd say we were looking at real samples.*

Explaining the value of social constructivist approaches to teaching over lecture / transmission modes, Jane advised that instructors:

*Keep down the lecture and [include] more of the activities because that was really good. The ones that I remember were the days that we were very active. I won't remember a lecture two years from now but I'll remember that day we did poetry. I remember doing that because we were very active - participatory.*

In-class activities students most often remembered and described in detail were, in fact, participatory in nature. Further, modeling and active participation generated student enthusiasm for using these same strategies in-the-field. Colin explained:

*She had us complete activities as though we were students so we would put together sentence strips as though we were in grade three and we'd have to explain to the class what we did. We did a lot of cooperative learning and she taught us a lot of different cooperative learning strategies that I'll be able to apply in my class.*

Janet enjoyed participating in readers'/writers' workshop activities. She recalled responding to stories read by her instructor using various symbol systems: *"She even read to us and we discussed different kinds of books. We did some different activities that you can do with books, like interviewing or acting out and word games."* Jane recalled a *"wonderful class"* spent developing drama centres: *"I don't think I've laughed so hard in my life. It was a wonderful class and it just reminded me how much fun it is for kids to do - just having games and fun activities."*

Monica appreciated creating resources for eventual use in her own classroom. She praised the instructor's resourcefulness and empathy:

*I thought it was really well done. It's one of the better sections, actually taught you how to teach the course and little things that you can make on your own with little*

*cards that you can make to help the students learn and things that you don't have to actually go out and purchase. For a starting teacher, I mean you have no money to begin with so it was nice that they gave us little hints on homemade items.*

Colin enjoyed participating in a wide variety of meaningful activities. The perceived connectedness of these activities contributed to his overall feelings of preparedness for teaching literacy:

*She modeled us every day how an effective language arts program should be set up. She taught us as though we were primary and junior students with morning messages every time we'd come into class, with all the resources that she'd bring in to show what resources we could use as teachers. She taught us about balanced literacy and how to set up a, a balanced reading and writing program. She got us in touch with our creative side by having us write our own children's stories. She demonstrated literature circles and author circles, where we would sit together as a class and read our stories to one another. She taught us how to set up literature units. So I feel coming out of Lakehead, coming out of my language arts classes prepared to teach language arts to primary junior students.*

Generally, students were very pleased with the practical, meaningful nature of in-class assignments and appreciated opportunities to work co-constructively. Candice mentioned her preference for assignments which offered students choice: *“There was choice in our presentations. We could pick whatever areas - if we were interested in vocabulary building or children's writing or - the fact that there was choice.”* An opportunity to co-develop a language arts unit for later use was described by more than one student as *“immensely helpful.”* According to Jane, the unit planning assignment was *“probably the best assignment”*: *“We created a literature unit and that was immensely helpful. We, we did it in a group . . . We looked at the format and how to set it up and in the end we had a bound product. Three weeks of lessons right there for you.”*

Monica, too, appreciated participating in unit planning. She perceived the task as authentic – useful in her chosen profession:

*When we did the learning or the unit that was really helpful because we're going to have to plan units in the real world, and to plan a whole unit and try to balance everything in it and try to get balanced literacy in it and try to make it fun and interesting for the kids and when we talked about it, which we got to see the other groups did it and it gave you more ideas about what you can do with your own classroom.*

Sandra suggested, "It would have been really nice to have everybody get together and share their units and maybe make a big package so we can all take that away."

The student teacher participants offered insights into the usefulness of many other course assignments as well. For example, story writing reportedly gave student teachers an opportunity to examine teaching/learning from new and different perspectives. Janet reflected on the value of teachers understanding and experiencing first-hand the pressures students feel when asked to write a story:

*I honestly thought that it was a little bit easier for authors to write stories but to come to it from a position of the author and what students . . . are expected to write stories too and I haven't have been in that position to write a story for a long time so that was good.*

Student teachers tended to value assignments of a reflective nature. Sandra appreciated a lesson planning assignment in which students were asked to evaluate two of their own lessons, one excellent, the other less successful:

*That was really good because you got to reflect on what you've been doing and how you kind of evolve as a teacher and why the lesson didn't go the way that you hoped it would have gone and what you could do as a person to change it for next time.*

Craig expressed similar thoughts about a journal writing assignment. He claimed to have benefited greatly from journaling about his PPOD experiences. According to Craig, evaluating his development as a teacher by creating "next steps" solidified connections between theory and practice introduced during the PPOD experience.

### *Practice Teaching Experiences Embedded in the Preservice Year*

The student teacher participants had the opportunity to take their preservice courses on campus or to pursue literacy instruction within elementary schools in the PPOD model. The two models of integration adopted at the study site varied in terms of student teachers' simultaneous exposure to theoretically-based and experience-based knowledge. All student teachers participated in two five-week field placements, one in the Fall and the second following completion of the Winter session during their professional year. Coursework resumed after completion of the first practicum. This created a supportive environment where teacher educators could facilitate student teachers' reflection and formation of links between theoretical and experience-based knowledge acquired in-course and in-field. The second practicum, occurring at the end of the one year program was not followed-up by in-course learning. As a result, student teachers were left on their own to deconstruct their final practicum experience.

Student teachers credited similar in-class and in-field experiences with enabling them to learn and practice the approaches, strategies and techniques associated with effective teaching for literacy. Conversely, they described a number of inefficiencies in the preservice program and stresses in their practical teaching placements as inhibiting learning and contributing to frustration. I will discuss first the PPOD pre-practicum experience and then the practice teaching experiences in general.

#### *The PPOD Pre-practicum Experience*

In the PPOD model, students acquired both theoretical and practical knowledge through coursework before participating in their first practicum experience. On a theoretical level, the PPOD opportunity was designed to provide a contextualized setting for

promoting connections between concepts taught in the course and the field experience. The teacher educators valued the PPOD as an authentic classroom setting. Fiona explained how the PPOD contributed to students' understandings of a rich literacy environment:

*The bulletin boards had things on them. I had appropriate instructional materials around the classroom. When students did some assignments they went up on the bulletin boards. It was like an ordinary classroom and it was another wonderful way to model. . . We had a morning message every week. I was just able to model a whole lot of strategies because I had the classroom to do them in.*

She contrasted this setting to the bland classrooms at the university where she was unable to expose students to the wealth of resources available to the PPOD students.

The PPOD experience was designed to maximize ongoing opportunities for student teachers to make connections between theoretical and practical knowledge. The level of effectiveness of the PPOD in fostering these links varied across courses/schools. During the first year of the study, there had been problems with the implementation of the PPOD strategy. Fiona explained that *"This year what happened was that principals and teachers saw my students as another pair of arms and legs and ears and eyes and my students were used mostly as reading buddies."* A lack of communication between partners, concerning the goals of the PPOD and responsibilities of the faculty and school personnel involved, negatively influenced the effectiveness of the PPOD.

Participants of the PPOD program affectionately referred to the PPOD as a community of learners. Craig encouraged future students interested in developing friendships at the Faculty to enroll in the PPOD option:

*If you have the opportunity, get into a PPOD. What happens is that you end up in the same classes with about 35/40 other students so you really become kind of a community of learners . . . friends and acquaintances rather than a big class where you don't know who the people are that are in it. It's great. Relationships are formed in that, it's another one of the springboards for learning.*

Sandra enjoyed the 'close-knit community of learners' as well as the familiarity offered by the PPOD experience:

*You knew that you were going to your PPOD and all the same people would be there. I think being used to, in my outdoor recreation degree, having a close-knit community of learners all together in classes. PPOD was more like that than any other class.*

Although students registered in the PPOD program reported having benefited from the sense of community generated within their PPODs, reactions concerning the overall effectiveness of the PPOD were mixed. Sandra recalled an instance in which in-class learning experiences in her PPOD were illustrated through parallel classroom experiences within an elementary classroom at her PPOD school. These links reinforced the relevance as well as the process for using the introduced skill:

*We actually had a teacher who was across the hall and she brought in some students and did running records with them and then would, like show us while they were doing the running records. We were also doing them and then we would compare with the teacher and she taught us about how she used them in the classroom. . . That wasn't the only time we talked about them. We talked about them all the time. . .*

According to Candice, the PPOD provided opportunities for consolidating ideas related to teaching and learning within a professional peer group, under the guidance of a skilled instructor:

*We all thought that we got an awful lot out of that [PPOD] There was consistency. There was consolidation when we would come from our schools and immediately right away could get into the topic that we were supposed to be focusing on. . . the proximity, the idea that the time to reflect was right away afterwards. It's exactly the same group and same people exactly in the same school that they did their PPOD, just came upstairs kind of thing. You're all in the same boat, you're speaking the same language, the ideas are fresh and you just kind of pinged off of each other and then guiding the whole thing was the teacher who was very knowledgeable and could pull out even more.*

Marisa described the PPOD as “*an excellent sort of feature to have. . . you could definitely sort of take what you learned and then apply it to the students that you're working with.*”

The volunteer component of the PPOD, through which students spent one quarter day per week in an elementary classroom, was also viewed as an advantageous teaching experience. Craig referred to the PPOD as providing “*a great foundation for what to expect in the schools.*” The literacy coaching experience served as a transition between in-class and field experiences.

Other students expressed concern about the inconsistencies across PPOD experiences in general. Janet expressed dissatisfaction with her own limited PPOD experiences:

*It would have been better if we had more time with the students. Our PPOD didn't get to go into a class regularly. I think some others did. We didn't really do that. We observed a classroom at the school we were at once and we read with them once but that's it.*

Addressing the inequities across PPODs, Candice stated:

*Some of them [classmates] had some trouble in their PPODs where their teachers weren't utilizing them properly or enough they thought. Maybe they were marking, maybe they were doing photocopying. They weren't really hands-on literacy...*

As mentioned earlier, Fiona directly attributed this breakdown of the PPOD experience to a lack of communication between the Faculty of Education and its partner schools.

### *The Practice Teaching Experiences*

Practicum placements were highly valued by each of the student teacher participants in the study. As Candice explained, “*It [the practicum] put everything into context.*”

According to the student teachers, practice teaching informed their cognitions about teaching and learning by adding a practical component to the more theoretical in-course offerings.

Several student teachers noted consistencies between in-course content and practices they observed in their field placements. Monica, however, found little consistency between her coursework and her associate's practices. Her associate followed a scripted series and Monica felt pressure to follow the instructions laid out in the teacher's guide. This was not what she had learned in language arts class.

The teacher educators tried to facilitate connection-making between in-course and in-field learning by assigning tasks to be completed in the field and scheduling class time for discussion after the first five-week practicum. Marisa explained how the practicum enabled her to apply and better understand the theory she learned in-class:

*What I found most beneficial were the placements . . . Until November I wasn't really in the classroom. I volunteered before but I wasn't really in the classroom every day seeing the kids so it was all theory and then in November actually getting into the classroom [I was] seeing what I took from the courses that were offered and how they applied in the classroom and just seeing what worked and what didn't work.*

Marisa felt that connections between course and field work complimented each other to provide a more meaningful experience overall:

*The school has done a great job of letting us know what the provincial standards are, what the curriculum expects of us, and then also allowing us opportunities to go into a classroom and work with teachers and get their feedback as well so it's not all theory. You get a practical sort of outlook from people who are already in the field.*

Gerry valued the confidence instilled as a result of his practicum experience:

*I guess my main influence as far as confidence and stuff goes in the classroom was probably from my first placement . . . you have the support of the associates there to help you out so you're not alone in the classroom. You're able to get a good sense for kind of seeing how they work it, seeing how things turn out when you do it.*

Rose, too, believed the field experience to be an excellent teacher. She explained:

*I think you learn from experience. It gave me some backing how children respond to certain activities better than others, different approaches better than others, how they feel more eager to participate when you introduce the activities in different ways.*

While Janet also recognized the value of experience afforded by her practicum experience, she felt the value was enhanced by returning to the Faculty of Education to share practicum stories and learn from others' experiences:

*I think placements and actually going out and doing it was the most helpful. And then coming back and not only discussing it with the teachers and discussing what you could have done and whatever... You're not going to get all the experiences in one placement so to hear other people helps you prepare for things that could happen.*

Student teachers interviewed in the study were thankful for having experienced positive relationships with their associate teachers. Though two described scenarios in which they were expected to follow the associate's literacy program and/or routines, most felt free to experiment with strategy use, approaches and teaching styles. Janet was impressed by the number of resources shared by her associate: "*She gave me a lot of ideas and I used some of them and then I had some of my own ideas.*" Colin regarded his associate as more than a mentor, noting,

*She's my mentor, she's my I'd like to say friend. I pretty much could have done anything I wanted because she thinks that's how people learn. I can't just copy somebody because I may not understand why that's happening.*

Though pleased with his own placement, Craig described having heard stories of difficult associates:

*I think the whole teacher mentoring system and all the associate teacher system is invaluable and I consider myself one of the lucky ones because I did hear some horror stories so, if there's anything that you said for the selection of associate teachers, I think it's very important and maybe some people just aren't cut out to be associate teachers.*

Marisa appreciated being permitted to experiment with strategy use while also receiving direct guidance from her associate:

*We talked about the lessons before they went through and then she would sort of guide me to do certain things . . . I think one class there was an activity and a bit of a discussion for a centre. I wanted to do the activity first and she's like, "No, do the*

*discussion first." She goes, "They'll be too excited for the discussion." In that way that was great but she really sort of gave me free reign and said, "You know be as creative as you want."*

Candice described her associate as "a wonderful lady" who permitted her student teachers to learn by their mistakes.

Gerry expressed pride in the confidence his associate placed in his teaching abilities:

*She felt that I was pretty good in the guided reading side of things. As far as keeping the kids engaged and having interesting activities to go along with what they were reading and so I thought it was probably the biggest success.*

Craig, inspired by his associate's programming for literacy, stated:

*I had a really good associate teacher who really strongly valued language arts. We would spend the entire morning on language arts. She might integrate some other subjects into it but it was primarily a language arts instruction. A lot of her philosophy I'm going to pick up on and use.*

Janet and Monica were the only student teacher participants to report having encountered any difficulties with their associates. Janet felt pressured by her associate to adopt a teaching style more similar to the associate's style. A self-described "quiet" person with a "loud" associate, Janet was instructed to "Be louder. You need to yell." For Janet, a "pivotal" point in the practicum came when her seasoned associate acknowledged, "That works for you. That you're quieter." Monica reported experiencing little freedom to test new strategies and approaches: "She (the associate) already had something going with the kids and you were just expected to continue with what she was doing so we did."

During their practicum placements, most students were exposed to balanced literacy models. A few students described using scripted literacy programs, including *Jolly Phonics* and *Four Blocks*. Monica appreciated links between her in-course and in-field experiences with balanced literacy: "It was nice to see that what we were learning was actually being practiced in the school and they were actually really focusing on the balanced literacy and

*the reading and the writing.*” Introduced to the *Four Blocks* program during his practicum,

Craig stated:

*I didn't feel pressured. I felt sold. I could see the benefits of it and I saw it as practical. During the first placement the more practical and then some of the theories that you write in the book. I didn't feel challenged to change it in any way, shape, or form. I was a believer.*

Monica, by contrast, felt pressured to conform to the program being used by her associate. She commented:

*I didn't use a lot of what I learned in class in there. I could have followed what the associate teacher was already doing so I just did that and followed the book because in the levelled readers that we had, it had a teacher's book and it told you kind of what to do step by step and we just followed that. That's what she wanted.*

Most student teacher participants were enthusiastic about the consistencies between their course work and their practicum experiences. Gerry credited the consistencies with deeper understanding of ideas and strategies discussed in the literacy courses and connections to the field. He explained:

*Yeah there was consistency there like as far as what they were saying - language arts class what you should be seeing in the classroom. There was consistency there like at least I got to see it was better. It was easier for me to understand it when I saw it in the classroom.*

Marisa attributed her previous in-course exposure to running records to her success using them on her practicum: “*When I was in placement I got to do three running records. Had I not been exposed to that I don't think I would have caught on. I think I would have been more nervous going in. I thought that was interesting.*”

Colin's in-course and in-field experiences were so similar, he confessed,

*I think I used a lot of what Professor Pamela talked about, what we had learned in our class but also I used a lot of what my associate was teaching and because they were so much the same I don't know if I could say it came from one or the other.*

Sandra found it “*was easy to use what I’d learned in my language arts class when she (the associate) was already doing so much of it in her classroom.*” Candice used the practicum as an opportunity to practice balanced literacy theory learned in-course. The completeness of her experience heightened her enjoyment:

*We would do exactly what I had been taught in the class where we’d have the guided readings going on and the shared readings just the way I expected to see it. It was also the writing. I understood that some of my classmates, the other schools that they were at would do the reading part and the speaking part and the analysis but they weren’t doing any writing. We were doing writing and journals as well. I was getting to see it all. I got the chance to do each component.*

In addition to benefitting from in-course and in-field consistencies, student teachers also reported being particularly encouraged by the positive interactions they shared with elementary pupils during their practicum placements. Describing pivotal experiences during the preservice year, Jane discussed her impact on two children with special needs. She described a young boy who “*couldn’t print to save his life.*” Jane worked one-on-one with this child. She felt complimented by his desire to print especially with her. The other child had “*very poor oral skills, very poor motor skills.*” According to Jane, “*The first time he called me by name it was just so special because he doesn’t talk to students.*” Monica was awed by the progress children made during her practicum: “*Kids who I never thought would read and they just were able to... and the one girl who could write two sentences, by the time I left was writing two pages of work and she was so proud of herself. It was awesome to see that.*”

Reflecting on the level of congruence between what student teachers were learning in their literacy courses and what they were observing/practicing during their practicums, the teacher educators also noted a number of significant similarities and differences. Josie indicated that the field is “fairly compatible” with the goals of the literacy course. However,

she expressed concern that literacy practices in some associate teachers' classrooms were not consistent with the intent of the approaches. For example, guided reading was being implemented more as round robin reading than strategy instruction. Fiona noted that her students saw a lot of traditional teaching:

*A lot of the strategies that I use in my classroom they're not going to see on placement. What my students see on placement is pretty traditional teaching. It's what they grew up with. I use a lot of cooperative learning strategies... This is a really common bit of feedback I get. They go into their placement. They want to try a cooperative learning strategy or let's say they want to try a literature circle, that's a pretty basic one. . . but the teacher, the associate teacher will say, "Well, my kids aren't ready for that" or "This is a low group of kids and they can't really handle literature circles." And that just makes me crazy.*

According to Fiona, an emphasis on traditional teaching styles during practicum teaching inhibited student teachers' experimentation with the cooperative teaching/learning strategies advocated at the Faculty of Education.

#### *Student Teacher Preparedness for Teaching Literacy*

All three instructors were confident that the student teachers had acquired the necessary foundations for teaching literacy effectively. Fiona's detailed description of the student teachers' preparedness and the characteristics she attributed to preparedness were particularly insightful:

*The feedback I get from associates is that my students are well-prepared. Because balanced literacy is the way we're going in this province, I give my students a good founding, a good basis in balanced literacy. We look at the strategies, the read alouds, the shared, guided and independent reading and writing strategies. . . Also literature circles or comprehension activities, responding to literature and inward study [reflection]. They know what that is. They know what running records are. They know what levelled books are. They have the vocabulary to go into the field and hold their own in a conversation. My students had a lot of training that many classroom teachers right now haven't had in terms of balanced literacy. They've got a good foundation in understanding what's happening in the province and in understanding what that looks like. . .*

In part, Fiona associated preparedness for teaching with knowledge of balanced literacy and scaffolded reading and writing, and with acquisition of a professional vocabulary. She also believed that her student teachers were well versed in the provincial teaching guidelines for teaching literacy within Ontario.

The student teachers expressed feelings of preparedness in different areas. A few assessed themselves as being ready to develop and implement effective language arts programs and were eager to share their emerging philosophies about teaching for literacy. The student teachers reported acquiring and mastering new skills, knowledge and confidence through their in-course and in-field teaching/learning experiences.

At the completion of her preservice year, Marisa was eager to begin teaching full-time. The preservice year had affirmed her desire to teach. Marisa explained, "*I definitely feel more confident and I just really want to get in the classroom and start teaching.*" Rose referred to the repertoire of strategies, tools, and approaches she had learned through the preservice program. She, too, felt better prepared to be in the classroom:

*I'm much more focused in the different subject matter . . . the different subjects of math and language arts and everything. There's more of a focus on what I want to get accomplished and the objectives that I want the students to get out of teaching the lessons. I've learned a lot of different strategies and assessment tools... really different approaches that would work and how to get some of the resources. I feel much more prepared to be in the classroom, to be able to focus the students on learning.*

Colin believed the program to be well rounded. He described the preservice year as a chance to "*seek out people in their field, experts in their field and ask questions and do a little bit of research and just build an understanding of what a good teacher is or ought to be.*"

Several student teachers were nervous about the transition from preservice to in-service teaching. Despite identifying herself as well informed, Monica also acknowledged being “*scared*” to enter into in-service teaching. She described her tenacity as a natural part of learning:

*That is something I'm scared about. I don't feel like I'm ready, but just personally because I know I've been taught everything. It's just actually putting what I've learned into practice. Everything looks so great when you're doing it in class, and you're like, "Oh yeah, this is how it's going to go," and it never quite goes like you planned and it's going to be scary, challenging, but you know, part of learning.*

Colin expressed trepidation about his first day in the classroom. He believed himself capable of taking steps to alleviate the stress to some degree and expected experience would eventually take care of the rest:

*I don't know how I want to set it up from day one in September of next year when I go into my classroom. I will wonder to myself how I will start, I'm going to have to talk to colleagues and say on day one what do I do for language arts? I'm going to have to spend the summer researching, setting up my program. I want to know just the little things that experience brings with it - the knowledge of the classroom set up. The foundation is there but I don't have the experience as of yet.*

Sandra stressed the importance of on-going learning for continued teacher education beyond the preservice year:

*I think that you can't ever know everything so it's just to keep learning about it and keep reading with the times and knowing what's new and what's working and just constantly re-evaluating what you're doing and how you can change it for the students to make it better.*

That student teachers were beginning to identify themselves as capable members of the teaching profession was evident in the emerging philosophies they shared about literacy and the teaching of literacy. All student teachers highlighted the importance of literacy as a foundation for learning. Craig characterized language arts as a crucial course for supporting the development of literacy in elementary pupils:

*. . . Probably the most important subject that we have to learn how to teach as teachers. The professor certainly didn't mince any words about that and it is something that I probably agree with. There are ways that you can integrate other things into your language arts instruction but at the end of the day really literacy is what we're after.*

Colin described literacy as the foundation of pupils' early learning experiences: "I think literacy is the foundation. I think that's the foundation of the primary especially classes."

Many student teachers outlined their intentions to take a "balanced" approach to literacy instruction in their future classrooms. "Balanced literacy" appeared to have slightly different connotations for different students, though all stressed the significance of reading and writing as components of balanced literacy. Colin described balanced literacy as seeing, hearing and practicing reading and writing daily:

*They need to see and hear and practice their reading and writing skills daily and that really in itself is a balanced literacy approach. I am a proponent of balanced literacy and believe that as a teacher I need to show my students how wonderful books can be, how much information is out there and show them that to love reading is great because it's the foundation . . . If you're a strong reader, you'll be strong in any subject in high school, in university.*

Gerry also stressed the importance of having students "actively" read and write every day:

*My philosophy is if you want all your students to read better, the main way to do that is to let them read, to have them actively reading every day. Same goes for writing. If you actually get them to do the writing every day, with your guidance of course because you can't let them get frustrated. . . You've got to teach them what you want them to do but then you have to give them time to actually do it.*

Janet, possibly confusing terminology, referred to "balanced reading": "I don't really have an approach to literacy yet. I've learned about balanced reading and I think that I'd probably stick to that . . . with guided and read alouds . . . I'd be sure to include literacy every day."

In defining literacy as “*communication*,” Candice presented a broader definition of literacy than other student teachers in the study:

*It's (literacy) the cornerstone to everything. If you can't assimilate communication, if you have some kind of I want to say the word 'handicap' but that's not what I mean. If you're not given everything that you need to be able to take in the information in all the forms, then nothing else is going to matter in any of the other disciplines or any of the sciences and the maths or anything, because you've got a problem right up front.*

No other student teachers made explicit reference, in their philosophy statements on literacy, to oral language development as a significant component of literacy. Some stressed the importance of playing with literacy as a means of encouraging a love for literacy at an early age. Sandra described a “*literacy rich classroom with words everywhere and with some different word games and word walls*,” therein implying the importance of an oral component. Reading emerged as the primary goal for language arts instruction, with writing being a close second.

Many student teachers felt excited and ready to begin inservice teaching. They believed that their language arts courses had contributed to their professional knowledge, taking them from an undeveloped point in their understanding about the teaching of literacy to a more developed, refined place. Colin was excited by the relevancy and usefulness of his in-class learning:

*Everything I learned in language arts I was able to apply in my first placement and I think I'll be able to apply in my second placement and as a teacher next year. Little things that even weren't related to language arts, her classroom management style, I was able to utilize. Her modeling of every aspect of a strong language arts program is, I've incorporated that into my teaching beliefs and my teaching style.*

Colin credited his language arts instructor with preparing him to be an effective language arts teacher: “*The course was fun; the course was interesting; the professor was*

someone who cared and was a strong role model.” Gerry expressed feeling better prepared to meet student needs in a variety of ways as a result of her in-class experiences:

*Before I started I wasn't aware of all the different aspects of language arts. Like outside of you know language arts as reading, language arts as writing, there's more to it than just kids have to read and write so show them how to do it. I see that there's more ways. I see the ways I guess of how to help them out.*

Monica, influenced by the emphasis on balanced literacy in her language arts class, promised,

*I'm definitely going to do balanced literacy and make it as fun as I can. Reading for a lot of kids is really difficult and I want to kind of make them feel comfortable with it, and make it so it's not threatening.*

Janet stressed the importance placed on language arts in today's classrooms and the “high expectations to sort of become an expert in the total of four months.” Despite these pressures, she emerged from her courses feeling, “I learned a lot in language arts.”

#### *Student Teacher Recommendations for Improving the Teacher Education Program*

Student teachers felt generally prepared to teach literacy but they expressed concerns about perceived gaps in their knowledge base. The student teacher participants provided many and varied suggestions for improving the overall quality and delivery of the preservice program. These suggestions addressed the length and duration of the preservice program, as well as course scheduling and workloads, variety of courses offered and the nature of the teaching/learning experiences to which the student teachers were exposed in preservice.

#### *Length and Duration of the Preservice Program*

Several students commented on the whirlwind nature of their preservice training.

Candice was amazed how quickly the year passed:

*I don't suppose that I imagined before I came that there would only be nine weeks of instruction, then a placement, then nine more weeks of instruction. Even though I knew there was only one year I didn't believe it would go this quickly.*

Colin worried that a less organized instructor might inhibit student learning in a condensed one-year program. He questioned, "*I don't know if we had another professor who was perhaps not as organized and not as thorough would the time have been as productive? Perhaps more instruction would have been needed?*" Marisa, too, iterated concerns about the one-year delivery model, suggesting that two years might better prepare preservice students to teach literacy effectively:

*Other provinces have two years for their education program and coming into it I thought, "Oh two years, my goodness that seems so long." I'm glad Ontario only has the one year. But actually having gone through this year there was a part of me that feels that we could have benefited from an extra year. We're only given broad highlights. To really get into specifics in each of the courses it would have been nice to have more time and I think it could have been fulfilled with an extra year.*

Monica, struck by the significance of literacy and its relationship to other subject areas, suggested that more time be allotted to literacy instruction during preservice education:

*Could be more time focused on it because literacy is such a huge component of everything. You have to read. I think there should be more concentration on teaching kids how to read and how to write because that's the basis of every other class pretty well.*

Jane iterated similar feelings:

*Literacy is going to be the drive in so many schools. It should be reflected in the time we take and twice a week gives you a little bit more contact with each other. You think about it more because you know a lot of us leave a class and say, well there's nothing due before next week so you don't think about it until you walk back the next week.*

Janet suggested that better pacing of practicum experiences throughout the professional year might permit more opportunities for connecting in-class and in-field learning and applications before the close of the year:

*It could be spread out more. We could learn and then do a bit of teaching and apply what we've learned and then learn some more and try to improve instead of just doing one big lump. Especially at the end, there's no wrap up. You don't really*

*discuss what you did. I've learned a lot in my first placement and then coming back, I learned things that I could have done better. I'm sure there's still things that I could learn and if there was something at the end to wrap it up then I'm sure that would be more useful.*

### *Course Scheduling and Workloads*

Students hoped to emerge from the preservice program having received the best possible teacher education. They anticipated operational similarities between the Faculty of Education and an efficient business. Suggestions for improving the program format addressed issues related to consistency (across courses and learning experiences) and were geared towards ensuring smooth operation of the overall program, including in-class and in-field experiences.

Marisa commented on her 9:30 daily start time: *"I also thought it was interesting that we start at 9:30 as opposed to 8:30 or 8:00 because once we start working, we'll start our day at 8:30 as opposed to 9:30 so I don't know if they could play with times a little bit better."*

Several students found the number of quarter courses and the inherent workload to be daunting. Sandra expressed concern that full and quarter courses bore similar workloads: *"I think it's hard because they're cramming so much into such a short time and all these courses are being treated as like full courses and we're taking ten of them . . ."*

Janet spoke of the steady volume of work and the necessity of being extremely organized,

*We have a lot of classes so it's hard to keep track of what's due when and you have some group work so you need to meet with them. There's a lot of classes and you have to keep organizers, always something that needs to be done in one of your classes.*

She pinpointed overlap in certain courses as a reason for professors to meet to discuss course content “*to see where they were overlapping and if there was something that could be changed in that aspect.*” Further, Janet suggested that some courses “*be compacted into less courses but still the material would be covered.*”

Marisa articulated that Faculty might build in breaks between classes, citing her own exhausting eight-hour stretch of classes to illustrate the point:

*I had four classes on Thursdays so that's eight hours with really no break in between so by the end of the day sitting in different classes for eight hours sort of a little taxing and there had been some points where I thought, "I'm really, I'm just writing the notes because I'm not absorbing anything."*

According to Marisa, “*...even in the workforce you'd be given a break.*”<sup>1</sup>

#### *Variety of Courses Offered in Preservice Education*

Colin emphasized the variety in course offerings as a significant component of the preservice program:

*The programs are, from what I've seen at other Faculties of Education a lot more diverse. We have courses in classroom management, we have classes in language arts and we were given a foundation and everything that a teacher needs.*

Some students felt that adding new courses and / or expanding existing ones might enhance the program. Gerry suggested that faculty consider offering additional outdoor-focused electives: “*I'm not sure if it would be possible to have any more electives like if you were hoping to do more outdoorsy things in the classroom maybe outdoors type courses.*”

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<sup>1</sup> The discord between quarter, half and full course assignment loads has been noted by Lakehead University. Preliminary discussions regarding a more standardized approach (across the Faculty of Education), in which the number of expected assignments might be set according to weight of the course, were held in April of 2009. Academic freedom means implementation is left to the discretion of course instructors.

Marisa believed that the preservice program might better prepare student teachers to meet the needs of today's multicultural classrooms by including emphasis on a wider variety of cultures:

*There was one course, multiculturalism, that I thought was excellent except that there wasn't really quite a diverse representation of cultures. I thought that maybe that could be one area that could be addressed. It was broken up into four parts. Three parts dealt with Aboriginal culture and then the fourth was sort of African-American culture. If you're teaching in areas like Southern Ontario there is a lot more cultures than those two that were represented.<sup>2</sup>*

#### *Nature of Teaching/Learning Experiences*

Most student teachers appreciated opportunities to engage in peer teaching and to work collaboratively; however, some felt an abundance of group work created special challenges. Rose enjoyed learning from her peers: *"That's what gave us an opportunity to practice teaching... as well as learning from the material that they gave to us as opposed to being teacher directed."* She referred specifically to materials generated through peer teaching as *"an extra resource that you can go back to."* Janet described an assignment in which students taught each other about assessment techniques: *"We did presentations on some kinds of assessments. . . so we all learned about those types of assessments from our peers and that was pretty helpful."* Commenting on the challenges inherent in group work, Marisa noted:

*I think one of the challenges of the program is the amount of group work that we do have. When you gather together to do an assignment with four or five people sometimes six, trying to balance everyone's schedule and meet - that has been at times very tricky but in the end you get the assignment done and you find time.*

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<sup>2</sup> Since data collection for the study took place, the multiculturalism courses offered at Lakehead University have been changed. Aboriginal Education is compulsory; multicultural education is an elective.

Colin suggested a need for “*some assignments [to] be non-cooperative, just have some assignments where you handed them in yourself and you're evaluated on your own work so not so much group work.*”

Tests appeared to be the least favoured form of student assessment. Janet noted a dichotomy between instruction on the importance of using varied assessment methods and widespread use of written tests at the Faculty:

*I don't like the tests in pretty much all the courses. It doesn't reinforce what we learned, that testing isn't always the best way. There's so many other ways of assessment that were taught. It'd be really nice to experience them as well as see it modeled. We've always been tested and we're used to that. Now we're learning that that's not the best way to assess all the time. It would have been nice to be assessed in other ways.*

Most students also noticed the lack of emphasis on digital literacies and highlighted a need for modeling of technological literacies beyond the use of e-mails and word processing. According to Marissa, “*there needs to be a stronger element of technology in the classroom.*” Janet recalled visiting the library with her language class to “*play*” on the computers during a peer presentation on assessment and being encouraged by the instructor to visit on-line e-books: “*The computer reads it (the book) to the student.*” Sandra remembered reading and discussing a chapter on technology in the language arts classroom and being expected to have technology links in lesson plans. Colin suggested limited exposure to technology in his language arts class might be attributed to the professor’s lack of knowledge and ability in the realm of technology: “*We really didn't focus heavily on technology. I think our professor was somebody who taught in the years where perhaps technology wasn't in the classroom as much.*” Rose felt a need to become more comfortable on her own with using technology: “*If I took the time or had the time to learn a little bit about it more myself then I could implement it and then be able to have the students have access to more as well... it's more a point of*

*myself being more comfortable.” Gerry confessed to feeling “not very comfortable.” He stated, “Outside of showing kids how you can do research on the internet, I’m not sure where else to use it.”*

Despite a lack of modeling, some student teachers felt comfortable implementing technology use within their own classrooms. Candice explained, *“Having children of my own, I know there’s some very good programs so I’m a pro. I’ve seen it work with my own kids.”*

### **Interpretation**

The study took place over a three-year time period. Year one participants were ten student teachers enrolled in a preservice education program at Lakehead University and their three literacy teacher educators. Generally, student teachers were pleased with the primary/junior component of the concurrent or consecutive Bachelor of Education programs offered by the Faculty of Education. They credited a number of factors with providing a solid foundation for teaching literacy; however, the program was described as intense, rushed and sometimes overwhelming.

The discussion is organized around the following topics: literacy teacher educator expertise and coursework; format and delivery of the preservice program; and, seamless learning. This section culminates in a graphic organizer (Figure 2) that summarizes the factors influencing student teachers’ development of professional skills, knowledges and confidence.

#### *Literacy Teacher Educator Expertise and Literacy Coursework*

The teacher educators designed and implemented literacy courses at the Faculty of Education. Their expertise emerged as a key factor in determining the level of satisfaction

student teachers experienced during their coursework at the Faculty. Each of the teacher educators travelled a unique and extensive professional pathway before assuming her role as literacy teacher educator in the program. The three teacher educators demonstrated leadership in the areas of programming and curriculum implementation. Each teacher educator proclaimed a passion for teaching literacy. The student teacher participants identified their instructors' passion for teaching literacy, their compassionate personalities, and their subject area knowledge as major strengths in the preservice program.

Fiona, a seasoned teacher educator, served as a mentor to her two colleagues. The three teacher educators often planned together, though differences were apparent in Fiona's course syllabus in relation to Josie's and Pamela's syllabi. The literacy teacher educators had different goals for their courses. While all instructors held a constructivist view of learning, Fiona attempted to make the theoretical underpinnings explicit. Pamela and Josie aimed to prepare their students for the initial years of literacy teaching by exposing them to a range of social constructivist teaching/learning strategies and tools. All three had fairly similar course content and used social constructivist strategies such as modeling, demonstration of cooperative learning and experiential "hands-on" learning. The process of sharing supported the teacher educators' professional development. The manner in which the teacher educators co-planned with one another supports Kosnik's and Beck's (2007, 2009) assertions regarding the importance of collaboration between teacher educators to develop cohesive programs. Since student teachers graduate from teacher education programs with markedly different skill and knowledge bases, Kosnik and Beck (2007) advocate for teams of teacher educators to discuss, prioritize and select topics for inclusion in literacy courses. Contract faculty bring tremendous practical experience to their teaching positions within Faculties of Education but

Zeichner (2003) suggests that their knowledge and experience with current theory in the field of literacy education may be more limited. He urges faculty members to assume a more active role in supporting collaborations amongst teacher educators.

Each of the three literacy teacher educators valued and modelled constructivist learning/teaching processes. For example, Fiona modelled a weekly read aloud, emphasizing connections between print and illustrations. Pamela used a unit assignment as a means for modelling formative feedback and assessment. Josie used modelling as a scaffold for facilitating student teacher lesson planning. The importance of adopting and modelling social constructivist teaching/learning processes is emphasized in the literature. Noel (2000), Kosnik and Beck (2007, 2009) and Volante (2006) categorize social constructivism as a useful framework for supporting teaching and learning. Volante (2006) suggests that teacher educators need to work towards replacing the “transmission orientation of university classrooms” (p. 184) to facilitate student teachers’ adoption of social constructivist learning principles in-the-field. According to their own and the student teachers’ reports, Fiona, Josie and Pamela actively engaged the student teachers in their learning/teaching processes, seldom using transmission as a mode of teaching/learning. Additionally, the teacher educators appeared to use the “together we figure out” (p. 15) model advocated by Kosnik and Beck (2009), in place of a “We cover, they select, integrate and apply” (p. 15) model. The student teachers credited their active involvement in the teaching/learning processes with contributing to their overall feelings of preparedness for teaching literacy.

The teacher educators explained the value of creating and modeling a community of learners. Fiona employed a community circle to help student teachers revisit and reflect upon their needs, interests and emerging pedagogies. Josie described a ‘learning milieu,’

characterized by a relaxed atmosphere, as contributing to students' feelings of engagement and acceptance. The teacher educators' philosophies echo Kosnik's and Beck's (2009) insistence that 'genuine' community is the 'single' most important factor in successful teaching (p. 78). Kosnik and Beck (2009) suggest there is room for Faculties of Education to model a stronger sense of community within the preservice education program by organizing social gatherings for student teachers and promoting the participation of faculty members in these events. Kosnik and Beck (2009) advocate for establishment of 'genuine' communities within Faculties of Education through retreats, discussions, group work, group assignments, getting-to-know-you activities, social gatherings, internet exchanges, and clustering of students during their practicums. At the study site, the sense of community established by the teacher educators' use of social constructivist teaching principles (discussions, group work, group assignments) was further supported by program initiatives, such as student teacher involvement in PPODs, grouping of students into cohorts that moved from one class to the next, and placement of two/three student teachers within the same classroom during practicum teaching.

The teacher educators were strongly influenced by the Ontario Ministry of Education policies and guidelines. Ministry influences were evident in the teacher educators' resource selection (i.e. Ministry documents, special reports and curriculum guidelines) and content choices (i.e. balanced literacy). Each of the teacher educators varied in terms of the coverage she modeled and advocated of Ministry materials and initiatives. Pamela's comment, "*I don't believe in this academic freedom stuff,*" identifies the potential for divisive thinking within university Faculties of Education. It underscores concerns addressed by Darling-Hammond (2006) about fostering cohesiveness across university and practicum settings. Pamela's

comment punctuates the need for strong relationships between schools and Faculties of Education to support shared adoption of knowledge, values and beliefs, thereby positively influencing teacher preparation.

The teacher educators advocated a balanced approach to literacy in which reading and writing, as priorities, are developed through a scaffolded system. Included in this balanced approach to literacy were read alouds, guided, shared and independent reading, as well as interactive, shared, guided and independent writing. Student teachers described balanced literacy in a variety of ways, indicating varying levels of comprehension regarding the components and purpose of the approach. This relates to Kosnik and Beck (2008) findings that ‘what’ educators teach is not always ‘what’ is learned (p. 124). In some cases, ‘what’ the student teachers actually learned amounted to little more than what Kosnik and Beck (2008) describe as “disconnected bits of information” (p. 124) about balanced literacy. Kosnik and Beck (2009) explain that student teachers often lack clarity in understanding the theoretical and practical implications for using balanced literacy and its components, including literature circles and guided reading. They suggest that student and novice teachers, along with their more experienced peers, are often unable to implement the small group learning associated with guided reading and literature circles within their classrooms. In light of Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) findings, Fiona’s use of experienced educators (classroom teachers and principals) to model guided reading and running records, might be further explored as a model for supporting stronger student teacher understandings.

The depth and breadth of topic and content coverage appeared to vary across literacy courses. Where Pamela complained about ‘scratching the surface’ in many areas, Fiona and Josie tended to focus on depth of coverage. Their conscious decisions to emphasize a limited

number of concepts in class are consistent with Kosnik and Beck (2009) and Beck et al.'s (2007) research into topic coverage and their subsequent assertions that "breadth of coverage makes depth of understanding difficult" (p. 3).

Each of the teacher educators valued experiential learning and collaborative learning in her classes. However, only one attempted to make theory explicit to her students. Beck et al. (2005) and Delpit (2003) articulate that a sound theoretical framework needs to be embedded in literacy courses and that theory needs to be made explicit and connected to experiential learning. Further, the researchers articulate that student teachers need to understand the rationale for practices such as modeling, demonstrations, reading aloud, and hands-on activities. As well, the researchers suggest a need for student teachers to critically examine some of the scripted programs they may see in the field (Kosnik & Beck, 2009). This critical analysis of literacy resources was not explicitly addressed in the courses.

Grossman et al.'s (2000) constructs of conceptual and practical tools provide a lens through which to deconstruct the relations between theory and practice in the courses. All three instructors focused on preparing students for literacy teaching by introducing them to a range of practical tools. Grossman et al.'s work on *appropriation* (consistency of strategy usage across preservice/field settings affects novice teachers' appropriation of pedagogical tools), may be instrumental in explaining how/why the student teachers graduated from the same preservice program with varying levels of understanding, with relation to balanced literacy, for example.

The effectiveness of the instructors' use of assignments to tie conceptual and practical tools together (i.e. writing process folders, literature-based units) is consistent with Thompson's (2006) and Kosnik and Beck's (2009) findings in this area. Thompson

articulates that student teachers need time to digest and analyze theoretical and practical knowledge obtained in class. She suggests that assignments be used as tools for creating connections between theory and practice. Kosnik and Beck stress that there are limits to what preservice teachers can learn about planning. They suggest that further theoretical preparation and linking of theory to practice in preservice literacy courses will better prepare student teachers to implement the plans they develop.

The findings of this study echo a general consensus among researchers that instructor expertise is a significant contributor to overall teacher preparedness (Beck et al., 2005; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Linnakyla & Valijarvi, 2005; Volante, 2006). According to Klecka et al. (2008), defining criteria to identify effective literacy teacher educators shapes the discourse of teacher education and has potential to provide a basis from which to move the profession forward.

#### *Format and Delivery of the Preservice Program*

The design and implementation of the preservice program contributed to student teachers' preparedness for teaching. In developing the PPOD and regular on-campus modes of program delivery, thought was given to how best to generate a sense of community. Student teachers commented on the purposeful grouping of students and the ways in which 'moving together' fostered a sense of community. Support for program variety, such as the regular on-campus and PPOD models of preservice delivery at Lakehead, can be found in the literature. Borko, Liston and Whitcomb (2006) suggest that variety in the formats undertaken for teacher education programs be construed as a positive. The researchers argue that a singular approach to teacher education may not be desirable. Borko et al. (2006), along with Darling-Hammond (2006) and Kosnik and Beck (2009) are among a growing number of

researchers who advocate for heightened discussion of alternative views, visions and enactments of teacher education. Researchers are able to identify traits associated with effective teacher education programs (Albers & Harste, 2007; Bainbridge & Oberg, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2006; Kosnik & Beck, 2009) but no one program seems to be upheld as the 'ideal'.

The PPOD model of program delivery offered at Lakehead University was designed to provide a contextualized setting for literacy teaching. According to the teacher educators and student teachers, the effectiveness of the PPOD, at the time of this study, varied across groupings. When run as originally intended, the PPOD was highly effective in solidifying links between theory and practice (as in Sandra's recount of learning about running records in her course, then seeing them in action within an elementary classroom immediately following the lesson). PPOD student teachers, for whom the literacy coaching component was implemented as intended, noted that it served as a foundation for their field placements by providing transition between in class content and the field experience. The student teachers moved back and forth between coaching to the literacy class and found they were able to make connections between these experiences and course content. Unfortunately, a lack of communication between partners meant that some student teachers did not enter classrooms with any regularity and/or were used predominantly as reading buddies. These inefficiencies in the program punctuate Darling-Hammond's (2006) research into the ways in which Faculties of Education fall short in preparing teachers. Darling-Hammond contends that changing what teacher educators teach and/or their use of strategies for connecting theory and practice will be ineffectual without major modifications to the relationships between Faculties of Education and schools:

It is impossible to teach people how to teach powerfully by asking them to imagine what they have never seen or to suggest they “do the opposite” of what they have observed in the classroom. No amount of coursework can, by itself, counteract the powerful experiential lessons that shape what teachers actually do. (p. 308)

Stronger relationships between Faculty and school partners may have prevented the miscommunications that interfered with student teachers’ cognitive and pedagogical development during PPOD/related volunteer time (one quarter day per week) within elementary classrooms.

The student teachers commented on what they perceived to be a number of systemic and operational deficiencies in the Bachelor of Education program. They questioned the relative brevity of the teacher education program, deliberating on whether or not one year offered a sufficient timeframe for mastering the complexities associated with teaching and learning. They discussed the hectic scheduling of courses and their demanding workloads. Student teachers saw a need for faculty to revisit assignments collaboratively in order to reduce repetition and redundancy across courses. Student teachers also offered suggestions for expanding the variety and content of courses to target the more diverse student populations in today’s classrooms. Lastly, student teachers noted a discord between the types of teaching/learning experiences promoted in their courses and readings and the types of experiences practiced by instructors in their program. For example, student teachers cited an overemphasis on collaborative versus independent assignments. The valuing of variety in assessment, stressed in their readings and course teachings, was not modelled in courses. Instead, tests emerged as a favoured form of assessment. Student teachers also noted a lack of emphasis on technological literacies, beyond use of the computer as a word processor. Analysis of the data also revealed gaps in student teachers’ understandings about critical literacy, multiliteracies and multicultural literature. Gaps in the literacy courses, relative to

oral language, transmediation and representation across multiple sign systems, were also noted.

The findings of this study are consistent with other researchers' criticisms of preservice preparation for teaching literacy and the fragmented understandings with which preservice students emerge from their preservice training (Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003). This emergence has led researchers to dispute the length and duration of preservice programs as well as the time allotted for literacy teaching/learning (Ballou & Podgursky, 2000; Bruinsma, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2006; Kosnik & Beck, 2007). Beck et al. (2005) maintain that one year preservice programs tax instructor expertise. Darling-Hammond (2006) suggests that student teachers' ability to grow 'roots' in their practice is hampered in one year preservice programs. She explains that some of the more 'powerful' apprenticeship models require a minimum of one full academic year of student teaching beyond in course learning. In contrast, Ballou and Podgursky (2000) argue against extending teacher education programs beyond one year. They explain that the extra time and financial resources demanded by longer programs have potential to deter excellent candidates from entering the field altogether.

Turning more specifically to literacy education, the student teachers in this study valued literacy and language arts as foundations for teaching and learning. They questioned the limited amount of time specifically allocated to literacy at the Faculty of Education. Kosnik and Beck (2007) contend that a one course literacy requirement (36 hours) in preservice is insufficient for adequately preparing student teachers to effectively teach literacy. Kosnik and Beck question why teacher education programs are developed with insufficient time being allotted to literacy instruction despite an abundance of research

supporting the need for modifications to this allotment of time. They also question why Faculties of Education seldom engage in either self-study or follow-up research to determine the preparedness of their graduates to teach literacy. Student teacher participants at the Lakehead University site actually received 54 hours of literacy instruction, 72 hours in the PPOD model where curriculum planning and evaluation were integrated with the literacy course. As well, students registering in drama, early literacy and/or other literacy-based electives received additional focus on literacy during their preservice year.

Student teachers reported being overwhelmed by the volume of courses and the workload within each course. These findings suggest a need for teacher educators to further collaborate regarding the amount and nature of in course assignments. Beck et al. (2007) and Kosnik and Beck (2009) affirm that the abundance of lectures, seminars, assignments and practicum requirements in preservice often interfere with student teachers' abilities to form cohesive pedagogy. They maintain that student teachers lack the time to critique, connect and apply the ideas and approaches presented in preservice to their own understandings and developing pedagogical awarenesses. Kosnik and Beck explain that recent graduates "grappling with the challenges of beginning teaching are not in a good position to figure out the implications of theory, especially if they barely understood it in the first place" (p. 10).

Marisa's comments regarding the limited cultural representations to which she was exposed during her preservice multicultural course resonate with findings from research on traditional literacy. Dlamini (1998) specifically addresses the need for teacher preparation programs to promote sensitivity to cultural diversity. Marisa thoroughly enjoyed her multicultural course. She reported having learned relevant details about instructing students

from Aboriginal and African American cultural groups. She noted, however, that various other cultural representations were absent from the multicultural course she completed.

An emphasis on social justice issues was not apparent in the student teachers' or teacher educators' comments regarding the development and implementation of literacy experiences and in their selection of literacy resources. The student teachers did not appear to have experienced opportunities to examine their beliefs and biases on entry into the program (Zeichner, 2003) nor to explore the potential of critical literacy and multicultural literature in enabling their future students to consider power relations, equity and social justice.

Practicum placements were highly valued by the student teachers. Student teachers commented on the manner in which practicum placements added a practical component to the more theoretical underpinnings of their coursework. They credited similar experiences (valuing of frameworks, strategies and tools) across in-course and practicum settings with enabling them to develop a stronger, clearer sense of effective teaching / learning pedagogy. Most student teachers felt free to experiment with their use of approaches, strategies and tools during practicum placements and benefitted from exposure to a wide range of resources. Three student teachers reported being exposed to scripted literacy programs (i.e. *Jolly Phonics*, *Four Blocks*) during their practicum placements. Two student teachers felt pressured to adopt their associate's style of teaching and use of scripted programming for literacy. The student teachers stressed the importance of being assigned a 'really good associate' and noted that some teachers 'aren't cut out' to be associates. Follow-up discussions at the Faculty of Education, after completion of the first practicum, were valued by the student teachers. The student teachers credited these discussions with providing a

vision of what they did well in their practicum teaching experiences and what they might have done differently.

The teacher educators expressed some concerns regarding the practices to which student teachers were exposed during practicum placements. They noted an emphasis on traditional teaching methods in the field and explained that some practices were not properly modelled. For example, guided reading was used as a round robin reading exercise by some associates. The preservice year ended immediately following the second practicum. As such, student teachers did not have an opportunity to deconstruct the experiences of their second placement.

Beck and Kosnik (2000), Feiman-Nemser (2001) and Duffield (2005) advocate for building close relationships between Faculties and partner schools to ensure valuing of similar concepts and tools across venues and to prevent program fragmentation. Beck and Kosnik suggest a need for universities to recognize and reward faculty members' development and promotion of partnerships in the same manner that publication is rewarded. A number of researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003) articulate a need for Faculties of Education to revisit the ways in which teacher education programs and experiences are structured. Darling-Hammond (2006) suggests that Faculties of Education revisit their programs to ensure coherence and integration among courses and between in course and in field learning experiences. She articulates the idea that a number of factors, including departmental divides, individualistic norms, and hiring of part-time adjunct instructors (even ones as qualified as the teacher educators at this study site), contribute to the difficulties of creating coherence in teacher education.

*Seamless Learning*

A number of researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kosnik and Beck, 2008; Ketter & Stoffel, 2008) discuss the ways in which seamless learning, characterized by in course and in field cohesiveness, supports the effective preparation of teachers. The majority of student teacher participants in my study did not report incongruence between the approaches, strategies and tools advocated in the course and in the field. It is possible that the level of understanding student teachers developed within the course was insufficient to promote critical reflection and contributed to their willingness to adopt prescriptive materials in the field. It is also possible that the teacher educators, former elementary school teachers/principals/ministry consultants, themselves, instructed a curriculum largely in-line with the Ontario Curriculum for teaching language arts being implemented within the Ontario school system in which most of the student teacher participants were teaching. Although the teacher educators' literacy course syllabi, their topics and resources, in particular, and their descriptions of their programming and implementation for literacy teaching tend to support the second possibility, this remains conjecture.

Two camps exist concerning the degree to which Faculties of Education should promote provincial curriculum guidelines. The first assumes that the Ontario curriculum for language arts provides optimal teaching/learning opportunities for elementary school-aged pupils regardless of their venue. Proponents of this viewpoint suggest discord between the theories introduced by 'ivory tower' professors at Faculties of Education and the practices used by K-12 teachers working 'in the trenches' (Ketter & Stoffel, 2008, p. 129). The second viewpoint suggests that Ministry of Education guidelines advantage white middle class learners while disadvantaging students from outside the mainstream population whose

preferred learning styles lie outside English reading and writing and oral language (Delpit, 2003; Guerra, 2004; Monkman et al., 2003; Schwarzer, Haywood, & Lorenzen, 2003).

At the end of their preservice year, the student teacher participants felt generally prepared to meet the challenges of inservice teaching. These findings reflect the findings of Mallette et al. (2000) and Beck and Kosnik (2000). According to these researchers, student teachers are better able to develop sound pedagogy when in-course and practicum experiences complement each other. Beck and Kosnik (2000), Lukin et al. (2004) and Duffield (2005) are among researchers who advocate closer partnerships between Faculties of Education and K-12 schools in order to support seamless learning for student teachers and to improve teaching and learning in both venues.

Figure 2 was developed as a summary of the findings. It provides an overview of the specific factors reported by the student teachers and their teacher educators as having influenced the student teachers' development of professional skills, knowledges and confidence. These factors have been grouped under seven headings: literacy teacher educators' expertise; coursework; preservice program delivery; practicum experiences; beliefs and values; past volunteer/employment experiences; and, experiences as a learner. The circular design of Figure 2 is intended to show the interactive nature of these factors. Many of the factors highlighted in Figure 2 are documented in the literature as supporting/hindering student teachers' development of professional skills, knowledges and confidence. Together, these factors influenced the degree of 'seamlessness' characteristic of teacher preparation for teaching literacy in year one of inservice teaching for the study participants. Figure 2 presents a comprehensive, tangible framework of the factors that promote and/or

hinder seamless learning. As such, Figure 2 has potential to guide and inform further studies into these factors.

## Student Teachers' Development of Professional Skills, Knowledges and Confidence

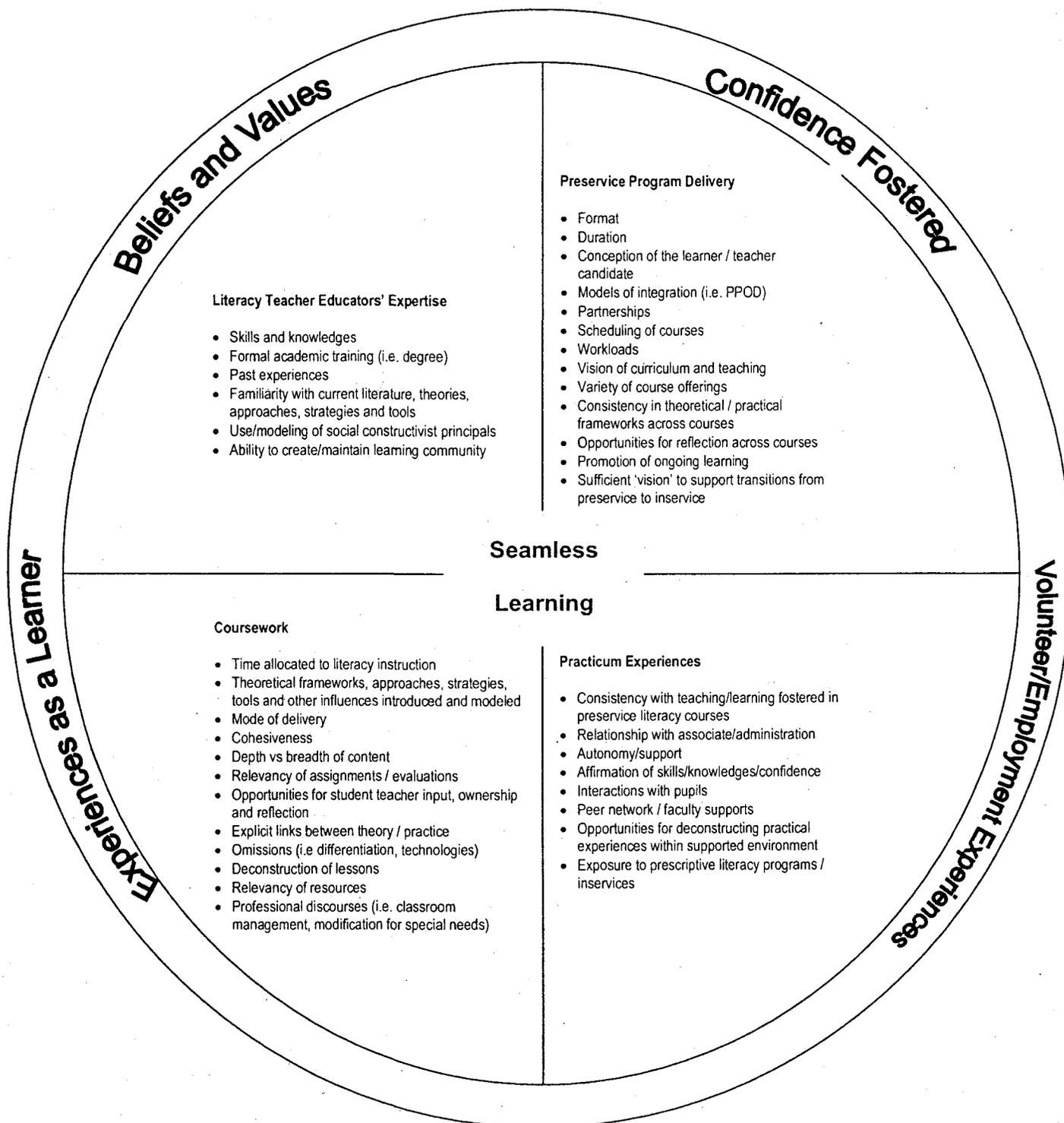


Figure 2. Factors Influencing Student Teachers' Development of Professional Skills, Knowledges and Confidence

## CHAPTER FIVE

### INSERVICE LITERACY TEACHING

#### A Case for Assisted Entrance to Inservice or I Can Do This! Can't I?

My first teaching position, Grade 7 homeroom / half time teacher-librarian, was secured on a promise.

I would have promised anything at the time!

Promising to seek teacher-librarian qualifications as soon as possible seemed more than reasonable.

Hurdle number 1 cleared with finesse

First day arrives and I'm literally shaking in my shoes.

What do I really know about teaching and learning?

Recent advice from more experienced educators includes:

Don't smile till the end of the first month!

Seek out the worst behaved student and make an extreme example of him or her.

Be strict, but fair.

Be consistent.

And that's before I even begin to consider the content...

What to do, what to do?

First half day ends on a positive note.

They like me and I adore them.

Hurdle number two, access, cleared.

Mr. Experienced refuses to have any identified students in his classroom.

How is this acceptable?

Can't relate to them – too dumb, slow, dull-witted...

I guess I understand the decision;

I wouldn't want my special needs child(ren) in his class either.

Thirty six rambunctious individuals smile from a sea of faces and gangly limbs.

All of the academically and behaviourally identified students have a home...

In my room!

I can do this!

Hurdle number three is a large one,

Not yet cleared.

Do I have the skills to meet so many different special needs?

What exactly is cerebral palsy?

Better consult my education handbook from preservice.

The 'official' day one over, I plan for day two.

One day at a time.

For hours and hours on end, I reinvent the wheel.

My preservice materials offer strategies for teaching language arts,

But how do I string them together?

Math is easier to plan – just follow the text.

Better review Canadian history so I can stay at least one step ahead of my students.

And science?  
 36 /2=18  
 18 simultaneous experiments in this little room?  
 Can we do this?  
 Well, we are in the old science room.  
 The sinks are a bonus or a distraction,  
 Depending on the day.  
 I'm sent away for a weekend course;  
 Lions Quest should prove helpful for building a sense of community.  
 Not sure I can afford the lost planning time, though.

Sharon, Secretary Extraordinaire, reminds me to open the OSRs;  
 Sign my students in for the year.  
 Steep learning curve this...  
 At least I didn't forget to send the attendance to the office today.  
 So many school routines;  
 Wish someone, anyone, could fill me in,  
 Be my mentor!  
 I do have an assigned mentor;  
 Like me, he's busy settling into the year!

Day 2, week 2...  
 Mr. Mentor checks on me daily;  
 Shares long range plans and short range lessons;  
 Gives a heads-up on forms due to the office.  
 I cling to these kindnesses.  
 I'm in over my head!  
 How can I hear every child read every day?  
 It takes me a week to get through 36 students.  
 I know my strongest students and my weakest ones;  
 The average students remain anonymous.

Every day I modify every lesson;  
 Enlarged print for the child with CP.  
 No note-taking for her, spatial sense is non-existent.  
 Metraya, from Ukraine, reads and writes so little English;  
 Her Grade 1/2 independent language program  
 Is far removed from our Grade 7 curriculum.  
 Sean, functioning at Grade 12 level,  
 Devours anything and everything.  
 Hard to keep up – so many demands.

And what of the alternative curriculum on homosexual lifestyles?  
 Will there be resistance / repercussions to introducing meaningful and progressive  
 curriculum?  
 I'm already an oddity...  
 City girl teaching in the heart of Dairy Land.  
 They even made fun of my umbrella!  
 Should I put that curriculum aside till next year?  
 Could I tie it into my language arts program; use picture books to target issues?  
 I can do this, I can do this, I can do this...

L.E. Leslie

This chapter considers the findings and interpretations as related to the data on the teacher participants, then in their first and second years of inservice teaching. The chapter has been divided into three main sections. In the first section, I describe the findings for the second year of the study, Year One of inservice teaching. In the second section, I describe the findings for the third year of the study, Year Two of inservice teaching. The final section discusses the interpretation of the findings on inservice teaching.

### **Sink or Swim: Year One of Inservice Teaching**

This section begins with a description of the inservice teacher participants followed by the perceptions and experiences of these participants during their first inservice year as literacy teachers. The data have been organized into the following themes:

- Profiles of the inservice teacher participants
- Re-conceptions of the literacy preparation provided by the preservice program
- Language arts programs
- Induction and mentoring
- Successes and challenges

#### *Profiles of the Inservice Teacher Participants*

The student teacher participants had graduated from their preservice education programs the previous May. Two of the original ten participants, Sandra and Candice, were able to continue on into Year Two of the 3-year study. Eight of the original participants were unable to secure teaching positions; five found themselves teaching areas other than elementary language arts; and three, concerned with the overtly busy schedule of a novice teacher, elected not to continue. Three new participants, Don, Jane and Marnie were invited to join the study. Two of these individuals, Don and Jane, had completed the original survey

in year one of the study. The teaching positions secured by the five participants for their first year of inservice teaching were spread across a vast geographical range. Three were in northern Ontario and two were overseas.

Sandra taught in a split Grade 3/4 classroom in a remote Northern Ontario school predominantly populated by First Nations students from a nearby reserve. The school had a student population of approximately 110 students in total, with six classroom teachers and thirteen educational assistants. An early literacy specialist, stationed within the school, had been hired to assist teachers with planning and implementing their language arts programs. Sandra described her school as "*a little place with a big heart, and working with these kids, a big heart really helps.*"

Candice secured her first teaching position within a small First Nations' school located on a reserve in Northern Ontario. Forty-seven students attended this school. Candice lived near the school during the week and returned to the city on weekends when possible. Candice taught Junior Kindergarten [JK] and Senior Kindergarten [SK]. JK students attended for half of the day (afternoons), SK for full days. There were eight students altogether in Candice's JK/SK classroom.

Don also taught within a small reserve school located in Northern Ontario. The school employed three full-time and two part-time teachers. Don taught Grades 7/8 half-time and was assigned to the role of Special Education Teacher during the remainder of the day. A mature novice teacher, Don had recently left a career in the area of psychology before embarking on a teaching career. In addition to his previous career, he credited his role as a parent (one adult child, one teenager) with helping him develop his teaching skills.

Jane taught overseas in a Mediterranean country. She instructed rotary English in a private primary school located within a major city. Students attended the school from Kindergarten (age 6) through Year 4 (age 11). The school was described as a “*small but growing*” school. Before taking her Bachelor of Education degree, Jane had taught EFL in China.

Marnie also taught overseas. Her first teaching position was in a private international school located in the suburbs of a major Asian city. Students received 80% of their schooling in English. Marnie taught Grade 5. She instructed eighteen students – seven boys, eleven girls.

Please find a summary of the inservice teacher participant profiles included in Appendix IV.

*Re-conceptions of the Literacy Preparation Provided by the Preservice Program*

The student teacher participants had only been able to pinpoint a few gaps in their knowledge base and a few areas in which they felt inadequately prepared when they left the Faculty. Immersion in the field of inservice teaching brought new awarenesses of the ‘perceived’ gaps in their skills and knowledge and more informed ‘re-conceptualizations’ regarding the adequacy of the preservice program for preparing teachers to teach language arts and literacy. I begin with critiques of the program in general and then discuss the critiques specifically related to literacy education. These are followed by the recommendations made by the participants.

The first year inservice teachers expressed extreme satisfaction with their ability to employ a range of strategies in the teaching of language arts. They credited exposure to diverse strategies, instructor modeling and in-class opportunities to practice varied and

numerous strategies with their emerging feelings of confidence regarding strategy usage. Two teachers described their preservice involvement in the Professional Program Onsite Delivery (PPOD) as providing positive reinforcement for strategy development and usage. Conversely, some teacher respondents attributed their lack of confidence for using specific strategies to insufficient opportunities for strategy practice.

Teachers developed confidence in their own abilities to employ strategies through modeling and practice of strategies during their coursework:

*I did a unit on... How many slices in an orange, or something like that. It integrated math and literacy and I did it in my language arts class and it was a big help. (Candice)*

*A lot of the stuff we did in the language arts, I'll definitely use this time around 'cause I'll have the situation and set up to do it . . . I'm looking forward to having centers where students can work in groups, independently, or with the teacher. (Jane)*

At least in part, teacher participants attributed participation in experiential learning programs/experiences, including the PPOD program, to their successful usage of strategies:

*All of the 'stations' and ideas that we got in our PPOD have helped a lot - just being able to actually DO the activities in the PPOD classroom made it a lot easier when it came time to teach them on my own. (Sandra)*

In two instances, Year 1 teachers expressed a desire to more fully implement the ideas and resources modeled/created in-course:

- *I got introduced to running records and I haven't used them. I would like to use them. I don't feel comfortable. I should use them. That might have been a nice exercise to like pretend... and have us do writing records on each other. (Candice)*
- *If we had developed a unit and then taught it (either to our peers or to a class) - that would have been more beneficial I think, than simply making a unit. (Sandra)*

Commenting on the probability of incidental learning of strategy usage, another teacher noted:

*While I am not conscious of utilizing any strategy, theory, or assumption learned in language arts, I am sure these things were added to my general knowledge pool of information and, when combined with other information and prior experience and training, absorbed into my own personal style and methodology. (Don)*

Teacher participants felt generally prepared in strategy usage but were less confident in their abilities to integrate approaches, strategies and tools in order to develop cohesive programming for language arts.

From their new vantage point as classroom teachers, the participants were able to identify a number of areas related to the teaching of language arts in which they felt inadequately prepared. Teachers described minimal in-course coverage and/or lack of exposure to various topics, including: specific literacy tools, program modification to meet students' special academic, behavioural and cultural needs, prescriptive language arts programs, and ways in which to bridge gaps between home and school. Don emphasized a need for more extensive coverage of emergent literacy strategies:

*Things I would like to have learned more about (we got a little, but not enough):*

- *all of the emergent, early, etc. literacy strategies in a balanced literacy program*
- *in-depth work on these areas, not the usual divide the strategies amongst groups in the class and report back to the whole class (while input from others is important, it should not replace learning from pros)*
- *how to expand and modify strategies for students of differing abilities*
- *how to tailor strategies for older children (i.e. teaching emergent literacy skills to grade 4 students)*
- *discussion that emergent literacy can apply to all ages, not just the ideal JK to grade 1 student*

Sandra wished she had been exposed to levelled readers in her preservice year, particularly the how-to processes of levelling readers for student usage: “*Maybe more*

*training on 'levelling books' - like knowing what types of books to include in your grade three library - would have been good."*

Teaching ESL, in an overseas community, Jane felt unprepared for the language demands of her position. A lack of strategies for introducing the same concepts in multiple ways contributed to feelings of frustration:

*Perhaps more could be said about the amount of varied repetition a topic requires... More and more I am learning patience and generating new and different ways of practicing the same topic over again. This was covered to some extent in my practicums, but since they were so short, the lesson only hits home later when you have your own class.*

In addition to these perceived gaps in their literacy teaching/learning, year one inservice teachers expressed a need for greater preservice preparation for meeting student needs, whether behavioural, academic or cultural:

- *I wish there had been a more effective discussion of the practicalities of having behavioural and developmentally challenged students in the classroom. I have encountered most of my difficulties from this front. (Jane)*
- *Things I would like to have been exposed to (like it was non-existent in the program):*
  - *how to manage and tailor lessons to special needs*
  - *since 10% to 25% of average classrooms now have students with special needs (isn't integration a treat) and these students can end up driving learning levels for the whole class, why were we only taught to teach to the ideal "Level 3" student*
  - *in my school, up to 90% of the students in the classrooms display significant delays (2 or more years behind, FASD, ADD, autism, deafness, etc.) in any given subject – and there was no preparation for this (Don)*

In some cases, teachers felt ill-prepared to navigate divisions between school and home. Describing the complexities of his community, Don explained:

- *imagine students who have never played with other children prior to entering school (because the parents can't get along)*
- *imagine students who have not learned play skills from parents because the parents do not "play" with their children*
- *imagine parents who keep their children up until midnight or later*

- *imagine parents who are no help with homework, study skills, etc. because they have very little (and very poor) education themselves (on average, grade three curriculum expectations exceed parental abilities)*
  - *and don't forget that 50% of the children entering JK are non-verbal*
- This is where I teach and education at school seems to be in a vacuum within the community and there was no preparation (or even discussion) of this at LU.*

A statement made by Jane, who was teaching in the Mediterranean, becomes even more interesting, when read in context with Don's comments. Describing her perceptions on the preservice experience, Jane pinpointed a lack of preparation for teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds: *"The multicultural course here is an Aboriginal education course. There isn't multiculturalism. There is very little in it to do with cultures other than native."*

In addition to insights into culturally responsive education, year one inservice teachers also highlighted a need for increased familiarity with many of the programs adopted by their local school boards and / or schools:

- *More information on the provincial testing that students are expected to do (not just EQAO, but all of the testing that we are responsible for). More work with 'exemplars' and writing levels and stages would have been good - we are doing 'First Steps' training now, but had I done it in university I think that I would be much more confident in the language arts classroom. (Sandra)*
- *More exposure to different programs (like, PM Benchmarks and Flynt-Cooter). (Sandra)*

The depth of coverage allocated to topics in the preservice program emerged as a recurrent theme in year one inservice teachers' reflections on their preservice preparation for teaching literacy. Don described a general lack of detail in the preservice program:

*It seems like we never got enough detail and practice to learn anything really well at LU, or on placement. If there was no prior knowledge or outside influence on teacher year learning, I seriously doubt that one could be successful as a teacher right out of school. Sort of sets folks up to fail, doesn't*

*it? No wonder there is such a high dropout rate from teaching in the first three years.*

Other first year teachers shared feelings about their lack of preparedness for programming for literacy:

- *There is a need for better understanding of how to set up a language arts program (how to put the components together cohesively) (Jane)*
- *I really didn't develop an approach to literacy teaching, I wasn't quite sure what I was supposed to be doing . . . I honestly wasn't sure until now. I know we were doing it in school but I didn't know the purpose, I didn't know the connection. (Candice)*

Don suggested preservice candidates are overwhelmed by an abundance of information and a lack of practical/experiential knowledge:

*My feeling is that teachers (and many other professions) need to build a core comfort zone and then continue to build upon this with ongoing education and exploration. The Education Year University experience is therefore pretty useless as most people simply cannot absorb all the information offered - they need this as their career develops when they are able to truly work with the information provided and adapt it to their own personal style.*

Don described mounting frustration caused by incompatible views introduced by Faculty and failure of teacher educators to make explicit connections between theory and practice:

*Given the variety of instructors and their styles, many things learned were simply not compatible, but the beginning teacher has no way of knowing this - they simply end up feeling inadequate and question their ability to do their job.*

Year one teachers clearly valued experience acquired during the teaching practicum over the theoretical teachings and applications offered in-course:

- *I learned A LOT about teaching language arts in my placement (though I know not all classrooms were as literacy-rich as the one that I was in). (Sandra.)*
- *It seemed as if the LU classroom info was listen/memorize/repeat on tests/get marks/forget while the real education was in the placements. (Don)*

- *That which was learned at University could not compare to the placement experiences. (Don)*
- *I would say my practicum in the second half was the part of the preservice program that influenced me most as a literacy teacher. (Candice)*

Respondents were able to offer many suggestions for improving the overall effectiveness of preservice education. Some of these suggestions gave consideration to the delivery of the preservice program as a whole. Don suggested preservice candidates be instructed in “how to teach” ahead of learning “what to teach”:

*The Education University year should focus on placements, classroom management, curriculum expectations, legislation, legalities, ethics, and "how to teach" tools and techniques. Train people to be "teachers" first. Then, provide the detailed subject area content as continued education. This would mean Math, Language Arts, Phys Ed, Social Studies, Science, History, Geography, Health, and the Arts should be taught after the education year as mandatory continued education upgrades.*

Discussing the three hour weekly model of course delivery (in the regular professional year program), Don expressed a need for increased instructor-directed teaching over student-centered tasks. He proposed the format of Faculty of Education courses be remodelled in accordance with other university courses:

*What if LU professors taught during class time and had us students explore, expand, practice, and make presentations outside of class time . . . Use TA's to assist (hear presentations, specialized seminars, etc. if profs too busy, etc.).*

Sandra contended that opportunities for dialogue with classroom teachers, beginning prior to the elementary school year, might help student teachers gain insights into practical applications, including classroom set-up:

*At the beginning of the school year send the student out to help the teacher set up their classrooms – that would be awesome. There are no students in the class, they're setting up the classroom and you're helping them so you can ask all the questions you want, before the kids even come in, you'll know what you need when you set up your classroom.*

Candice felt overwhelmed by the 'bits and pieces' offered in her courses. She reported a personal need for more explicit connection-making and deeper organization of the learning experiences to which she was exposed.

Sandra's proposed solution included a grade-by-grade, subject-by-subject comparative learning process:

*I think, if they would have started like, "Okay you walk into kindergarten on the first day of school for the first time this is how we're going to set up, this is what we do," and then grade 1, then 2, that sort of thing so it was organized... they'd go one subject to another.*

She suggested that implementation of a "journal of strategies" might have facilitated learning and memory recall beyond the preservice year: "Almost like a portfolio - with sections like 'responding to reading,' 'oral language activities,' 'reflection activities,' etc.. to take away at the end of PPOD would have been great!"

Faced with the challenges and practicalities of daily teaching, the novice teachers became aware of 'perceived' gaps in their learning/understandings.

#### *Language Arts Programs*

In this section I describe the Language Arts programs the novice teachers adopted in their first year of teaching. How did the year one inservice teachers plan for language arts? What components did they include/exclude in their programs? How were their efforts supported and/or hindered in the school setting?

Both Don and Sandra emphasized literacy teaching. Don commented,

*If you're looking at a well-rounded literacy program you have to be able to read as well as you speak and speak as well as you comprehend. If you can't express your ideas verbally, you're not going to be able to do it in written form as well.*

Sandra provided details regarding the ways in which her school board actively supported a balanced approach to literacy through scheduling, and involvement of specially trained support staff:

*Language Arts is HUGE. My whole first 100 minute block is dedicated to Language Arts... I have two specialists coming into my class: the later specialist comes in two times a week to do oral language activities for about 30 minutes, and every day, the early literacy specialist comes in for 30 minutes to do guided reading and guided writing groups with the students. All the students have been levelled according to PM Benchmarks.*

Sandra also noted that board-mandated policies and programs were in place for facilitating remediation of literacy:

*There is also funding for 'Reading Recovery' - in which all the 'targeted' students (who are behind in the reading levels) get extra practice and assistance to help them gain confidence and improve in reading levels.*

According to Sandra, withdrawal of identified students represented a second board initiative for further facilitating development of reading and comprehension skills:

*All students who have language IEPs are also excused from class (at least three times a week) to have help developing language/reading/comprehension skills. The early literacy and later literacy teachers spend time every day in the classrooms (usually doing guided reading and writing activities with the students).*

In contrast to Sandra's portrayal of the prioritization of literacy in her board, Don described board practices which offered little support for his school's perceived literacy needs:

*All of our EA s are unqualified . . . because the band wants to hire local people. You're providing services for those children who need the most assistance with people who have the least qualifications. You're not doing any services for those kids.*

Don prioritized teaching and practicing of literacy processes over the curricular emphases on content specified in the Ontario Curriculum:

- *So much for the Ontario Curriculum. I have learned a whole new way to read the expectations. Content means very little for all subject areas –the content is of far more importance. I only use the “content” as a way of scoring the process used to complete quizzes and assignments (i.e. Who was the first prime minister of Canada? – 1 mark for correct answer; 1 mark for spelling; 1 mark for full sentence answer; 1 mark for including the question in the answer so the answer can stand on its own as a statement; etc.).*
- *Process for these guys is far more important. Whether they remember all the names of everything in the digestive system when we’re doing science, I don’t really care. I want them to know how to be able to take notes, make notes, think one step beyond the other and go in and enquire further when they don’t know. It’s far more important to me than memorization.*

Year one inservice teachers reported being influenced by coursework and assignments, practicum experiences and independent readings undertaken during the preservice year. Practicum experiences emerged as the factor they credited most for having shaped their pedagogical understandings and strategy usage.

Marnie explained, *“In all honesty, I have learned so much in my practicum and at LU that I have carried them through to my teaching.”* Her comment about the approaches she adopted suggests potential misunderstanding of the differences between approaches and strategy use:

*Approaches I used from LU: Literature Circles, guided reading, reader response, many reading strategies from the Tompkins text, read aloud, comparison study (Venn diagram, etc.) stations (especially in Media studies).*

Don credited independent reading study with contributing to his overall pedagogical understandings:

*I can’t tell you how much I learned from additional readings and cross-curricular tie ins that I spent time on - on my own – someone mentioned that they existed – but we were never shown examples of them (the cross curricular stuff that is).*

Don commented, *"I will always remember the "Book Walk" examples and discussions in class, and utilize this idea all the time (in all subjects).*

Jane described the relevance of practical experience to her learning: *"I have been using more of the ideas I obtained at my first practicum."* She explained, *"I have been using language centers, many based on ideas from Fiona (LU preservice teacher educator)."* Jane described using a balanced literacy approach similar to that modelled in preservice:

*With the use of more forms and books, I am using techniques from balanced literacy, particularly in the shared reading aspect... I have been using shared and guided writing to create poetry and tongue twisters to practice pronunciation.*

As well, Jane reported on the transferability of ideas learned in preservice: *"Some of the questioning techniques, games and activities I learned have been useful when recycled and revised for the foreign language classroom,"* including ideas for literacy assessment:

*"Towards the end of the year they had these portfolio presentations which are things we talked about in our language arts class at the Faculty, keeping portfolios and whatnot."*

Candice implemented drama activities, *"I have found I am using more drama activities discussed both in my language arts class and the drama seminar offered last fall."*

Year one inservice teachers employed a wide variety of strategies within their language arts classrooms. Many of these strategies were strategies designed to engage readers' attention, and promote heightened reading comprehension and/or reading fluency:

- *Read aloud and group reading is the favoured approach with dramatic re-enactments of the text. (Jane)*
- *We were doing these video stories and there was the raccoon family and Eddy the earthworm and whatnot and they would kinda do a readers' theatre of them. They would take on the parts and they would read the different parts of the story and act out the characters. (Jane)*

- *Things I have used are Literature Circles. I used a bulletin board to show the different roles as well as make it look inviting for them to read the novel they were to read. Each student took turns in being the leader as well as taking responsibility in getting their work done. Other ideas I used were the Book Box and the Mind Portraits for our monthly reading assignment. Students preferred it over writing a response log. (Marnie)*

Participants reported using a variety of comprehension strategies to support differences in students' preferred learning styles:

- *We use a variety of strategies, including shared and guided reading, drama (using reader's theatre), read-aloud, and others. I make sure to 'follow-up' stories with oral and written re-telling - using different activities, like sequencing of pictures, or drawing a favourite part - making sure that the children have a chance to process and reflect upon the stories. (Sandra)*
- *Probably the most fun I have had so far with my language teaching was a simple machines unit I added to follow with a book called "No Garden for George." In the book, the boy builds a couple different machines to help his cat get out of his Grandmother's second story flat to the park below. The book was a bit dull to the students, but they had a blast with the machines. We learned vocabulary for simple machines, and built a machine at the end of the unit to lower an egg from a two meter drop. They were so enthusiastic about the activity that they worked on the project during their other classes and in the breaks. There was still a lot of native language speaking, but it was wonderful to hear things like "too much force" and "make the inclined plane longer." It brought a smile to all the English teachers' faces. (Jane)*

The role of student choice was largely under-explored in teachers' descriptions of their language arts/literacy programming.

Use of multimedia was evident in comments shared by two of the study participants. Multimedia was used to engage student interest in learning and/or increase exposure to resources. It was also used, in cross-curricular applications, to foster heightened response to messages presented in written and oral symbol systems. For example, Jane described several instances in which she used media to "give a variety of speaking voices, accents, etc." Jane used poetry, prose and non-fiction in her reading classes. She also used the pre/during/post reading strategies she learned in preservice and on her teaching placements: "These have

*been successful, though the range of their use is somewhat limited by the comprehension capabilities of my students.*” Other multimedia resources used by Jane included English films, internet materials, music and audio books.

Marnie used multimedia to facilitate cross-curricular understandings:

*Every Friday we do Art integrated with Language Arts. We listen to a song [inspirational and educational (ex. Heather Small’s “PROUD”)], look and read the lyrics, understand the vocabulary. Students then choose one or two lines from the song that mean something to them and create an image (with whatever medium) that goes along with the words. The students absolutely love it and it is funny to watch them sing the song as they work on their project.*

Marnie also reported using strategies associated with literacy in contexts outside the literacy classroom. Such strategies were generally used to facilitate learning in science, social studies, mathematics, and art. For the most part, her cross-curricular usage of literacy strategies targeted reading and writing skills:

*I am currently teaching about Jamaica. In the workbook, I have included a number of Language Arts activities such as making a comparison of [name] culture to that of the Jamaican culture. After reading what a Jamaican town is like, we created a journal entry of a typical day where students had to imagine living in a town in Jamaica and what they did that day using the vocabulary they learned. We are also reading a traditional Jamaican story to which students have to answer comprehension questions and then create their own version of an Anancy story.*

The influence of literacy course and practicum experiences could be seen in the approaches, strategies and tools implemented by the year one inservice teachers. They emphasized reading, writing and oral language development (to a lesser degree) in programming for language arts. They reported using constructivist teaching / learning processes during language arts. Year one inservice teachers employed a wide variety of strategies within their literacy classrooms, many designed to heighten reading comprehension and reading fluency. These ranged from read alouds, to drama activities and use of literature

circles. Reader response activities included drama, retelling of stories, sketching and other discursive and non-discursive activities. An emphasis on use of multimedia in planning for literacy experiences was evident in two participants' comments, as was the implementation of literacy across the curriculum.

### *Induction and Mentoring*

The support and mentoring participants received during their first year of inservice teaching varied from one location to another. Only Sandra was involved in a formal mentorship program during year one of inservice teaching. Prior to beginning her first year of teaching, she attended an intensive training program. She was also assigned a mentor with whom she met regularly in the first year and with whom she continued to speak each week into her second year of teaching. Sandra explained the value of the formal mentorship program endorsed by her board of education:

*The [Name] District School Board has a mentorship program in place for all first year teachers. This is a mandatory program, and teachers are trained in August, before the school year begins. First year teachers are placed with a mentor from the board. Mentors have to apply, and have a minimum of two years of experience. Throughout the year, mentors and mentees meet together and do different types of training – going to other schools to watch other teachers and gain resources and ideas, watching 'best practice' videos, and having someone to call in 'I don't know what to do' emergencies.*

Sandra was enthusiastic about the support she received from her school board through the formal mentorship programming: “*as part of the mentoring program, I learned so much in my first year . . . to have her know the kids, to know the school, to know the program, to know the principal and be able to give me that kind of insight was really helpful.*” Sandra stressed the importance of ensuring mentors bring experience and familiarity with the school and community of their mentee:

*There were a lot of mentor teachers who have never taught at [School] or who aren't part of even that community, which is hard because it's hard to be a mentor to someone when you've never really done what they're doing.*

Teaching ESL overseas, Jane sought informal mentor relationships to support her planning for literacy:

*One teacher I worked with a lot. She had a bit more experience, and we got along really well so I learned a lot of things from her and we really worked well together. Yah so that was completely informal and it wasn't acknowledged by the school at all.*

Jane described a school-wide push to become accredited as an International Baccalaureate School. This push dictated the nature of training and support offered within Jane's school:

*We were doing a lot of work with the Primary Years Planner. I'd have to say the implementation of what was written in the books and what was done in the classrooms was somewhat limited. They were really pushing to use the resources from IB.*

In the absence of formal mentorship, Candice sought informal support from other teachers in her band school to assist her in planning for literacy. She managed to acquire long range plans from other teachers and gained insights from the school resource teacher:

*Luckily they had a resource teacher come in and talk with the educational assistant. They thought there was only going to be five students and I do have eight... they had a resource teacher that left a lot of hints for me... I was a little overwhelmed. Now we've had the resource teacher come into my classroom for another three days.*

As part of his teaching duties in a reserve community, Don, a beginning teacher himself, was charged with providing and developing mentorship for other beginning teachers:

*I also ended up in the role of "advisor" to most of the other staff throughout the year - how to modify lessons; how to reach difficult students; what materials to purchase; career advice; other staff relationship problems; and, sometimes just a shoulder to cry on.*

Don provided training during staff meetings to target a number of areas related to the students' and teachers' needs:

*During monthly staff meetings I was able to provide 15 minute in-service sessions to the rest of the staff on topics such as Fetal Alcohol, Attention Deficits, daily/weekly/monthly lesson planning, policies and procedures under consideration, how to conduct parent-teacher interviews, etc.*

Don enjoyed developing policies and guidelines even though the work was challenging:

*It was pretty neat to be acknowledged as a resource for the whole school and Band management based upon my current abilities and previous experience. There is lots of extra work, but I love that policy and procedure stuff and really enjoy training others.*

He criticized the general lack of guidance/leadership and teacher experience within his band school and linked it to delays in student learning:

*What if when you start you are amongst the most experienced member of the staff and have no school board to rely on for other human resources. No wonder the trend on reserves is to end up with new teachers who don't stay long. I am in the midst of trying to undo the damage caused to the current students. I have reached the unfortunate conclusion (along with some colleagues) that environment, community, disability, etc. only accounts for half the student delays – the prior teachers have been responsible for the rest.*

Just as the existence of formal mentorship programs varied across participants' schools and school boards, so too, did the quality of professional development activities. Marnie was particularly disappointed by the absence of professionalism in the professional development activities to which she was exposed: "*As for Professional Development day... we had an inservice with a number of teachers sharing ideas. It was not as well planned as I had imagined (to Canadian standards)... so I don't have much to say about it.*" At a second professional development activity, the presenter "*started off with 'I wrote this speech on the bus on my way here this morning' and ended it off with three Elvis performances.*" In the

end, the overriding lack of professionalism within Marnie's school contributed to her decision to seek employment elsewhere: *"There are too many things that (school) has to fix up right now. I am happy to say I am leaving for good. Too much has gone on which seemed unprofessional."* Marnie explained, *"I don't recommend any qualified teacher teaching here. It is the students that kept me here for the long run. They are fantastic and thank goodness they don't see the outside picture."*

In the summer between years one and two of inservice teaching, Don took a professional course online [Basic Intermediate Qualification] to extend his teaching certification from JK to Grade 6 through Intermediate, Grades 7 to 10. As well, Don participated in a number of regional conferences and workshops during the school year. He reported varying degrees of satisfaction with these professional activities:

- *I attended the Principal/Supervisor stream and learned very little - I got more from the OPHEA presentation on methods of including all subjects into exercise activities. No follow-up at school except some informal discussions amongst a couple of staff.*
- *A one day workshop concerning Federal government funding requirements (for Reserve Schools) - one shot - very informative.*

In each of the cases described above, the format of delivery consisted of a "one-shot" approach to professional development, with little or no follow-up within the school.

By contrast, Sandra was extremely impressed by the on-going professional development opportunities in her board: *"Our board offered extensive professional development last year. The list of courses and sessions that I've attended is very long."* In addition to the formal mentorship opportunities provided by her school board, Sandra enrolled in an Additional Qualification [AQ] reading course. Sandra did not mention her involvement in AQ Reading courses until late in her second year of inservice teaching when

she mentioned having completed her Reading Specialist Qualifications (Parts I, II and III of the AQ Reading courses). This information is presented in the report of the findings for year two of inservice teaching.

The year one inservice teachers identified school board support in a range of formats, including: timetabling, support staff, provision of training in balanced literacy approaches to teaching language arts, prescribed programs for supporting literacy, and funding and availability of resources. Participants experienced varying levels of autonomy in selecting their approaches to literacy teaching. Several reported minimal support in terms of programming and resources.

### *Successes and Challenges*

Each of the participants identified specific factors as challenging or supporting their implementation of programming for literacy within the school system. Some factors were specific to certain schools/regions, others appeared across the range of settings in which the year one inservice participants taught.

#### *Situational Challenges*

Year one inservice teachers teaching in reserve schools and/or schools predominantly populated by First Nations students described a number of unique challenges they attributed to teaching within remote and/or reserve communities. One such pressure included the perceived limitations in student skill levels. Don estimated that students were “*about 2 to 5 years behind where they should be.*” Candice iterated similar findings, “*Our schools are basically two grades behind. A lot of the native schools are two grades behind.*” In part, Candice attributed these delays to students’ pre-school literacy habits, “*In this community...*”

*there is a lot of television, only satellite, so when they come to school they don't know the letter A."*

Don was alarmed students' behaviours. He explained that "*Kids would break windows all the time and go up and down the hallways with a skateboard.*" Sandra, too, found her position challenging. She explained: "*The challenges that I am facing as a first year teacher are not the ones I thought I'd have. I find myself teaching more about 'life' and 'positive choices and behaviours' than I thought I would need to.*" Sandra hoped her students would continue to progress academically, particularly given the school's designation as being 'at risk:'

*My principal told me that out of the 6000 schools in Canada, there are only a handful of schools that are on the 'difficult' list. Ours is one of them. That said, our kids are achieving at or above level on the things that they were expected to do poorly on. So, even though some days it seems like I'm getting nowhere and nothing is sinking in, I hope that I am making a tiny difference - giving them that 'spark' that they need to build upon in life.*

Sandra described being particularly affected by the hardships within her community: "*Things have been very hard. Three people died here this week... so things have been really tough. I think that the holidays will bring a welcome break to the community.*"

Perhaps most memorable of the comments shared by year one inservice educators, is the story Sandra shared regarding the lack of self-worth felt by her Aboriginal students and the ways in which these feelings influenced her curriculum development and implementation decisions:

*We've been working with voice. Doing a huge variety of oral things, like singing a familiar song in different voices, using our voices to show feelings, and practicing talking. They are still quite shy, and in the past few weeks, I have seen many of them start to come out of their shells. Here is a little story, demonstrating the power of voice: Slightly off-topic, but a success story nonetheless.*

*I was teaching one afternoon, on a particularly 'bad' day, when one of my students told me that she was 'dumb' and 'bad'. I couldn't believe what I was hearing, especially when other students started to agree with her, telling me that they were from a 'bad' reserve, and were therefore 'bad kids' and 'bad at school'.*

*I stopped what I was doing, and asked the students to stand up on their chairs. They couldn't believe it (because I would NEVER let them do something like that on a regular day!). I asked the original student to turn and tell the class that she was a 'good kid'. She turned around, and quietly grumbled, "I'm a good kid." I asked her to repeat it in a strong, believable voice, and she yelled out 'I'M A GOOD KID!' Then, we went around the whole class, and each student yelled 'I'm a good kid.' Finally, they all yelled it together. Then the bell rang, and they left for home.*

*About a week later, we were doing a story-writing activity in the classroom. As I walked by the student's desk, I made a positive comment about her writing. She stopped, looked up at me, and said, "It's because I'm a good kid, right Miss?" I smiled, and replied, "Of course you are."*

The two year one inservice teachers teaching overseas also described certain pressures they attributed to their specific overseas settings. Teaching English literacy in an international school overseas, Marnie was frustrated by the lack of resources for teaching literacy in her school:

*No literacy program or special resources, especially with interactive and inquiry learning. Most resources are outdated. All resources for Language Arts were brought along with me . . . Specifically, resources dealing with mind mapping and concept mapping.*

Marnie explained that diverse ranges in student skill levels posed additional challenges for designing and implementing effective literacy education:

*Challenges still occur in the wide range of different reading levels (ranging from grade 1 to grade 6) in my grade 5 students. However, with a lot of one on one or group reading, it can be attained.*

Jane also taught English overseas. As an ESL teacher in her school, Jane co-taught with other teachers whose first language was not English. Jane was expected to teach ESL on a rotary timetable, moving from one classroom to another. As such, Jane did not have

classroom space for housing her materials and/or showcasing student work. Jane identified several challenges imposed by language barriers unique to her assignment:

- *I have tried to use different approaches from the [preservice] models, unfortunately most of these are intended for first language speakers and not for ESL.*
- *The challenges I face in the ESL class are unique to this discipline. Conveying instructions and initiating activities is more difficult as the students in my classes have a limited understanding of spoken language.*
- *Though students are taught reading, the emphasis is to get them to speak, so much of the balanced literacy goes by the wayside.*
- *The biggest challenge was the language barrier between myself and the other teachers.*

Jane highlighted physical space and the rotary timetable as factors further contributing to the frustrations she felt in trying to implement her literacy program:

- *My attempt to create language centers kinda got aborted because of the difficulty of when you're a rotary teacher and how to set things up; you have to carry everything in and out with you.*
- *I tried to be as active as possible. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to book the gym at all. We had talked a lot about using physical response to do other subjects, and, I took them outside a fair bit. We went on the playground equipment for vocabulary and played games.*
- *Probably my biggest limitation in implementing a lot of the ideas was my physical space limitation.*

She also described co-teaching with other educators, "*Finding a comfortable arrangement for our divided lesson time,*" as being difficult. Particularly frustrating, according to Jane, was administrative pressure at her private school, to ignore instructional challenges and individual needs:

*There was a lot of problems in the private school of how do we help this student who needs to be identified because if he is identified he can't go to this school... they said they weren't going to take special needs students with the exception of physical disabilities.*

### *Time Pressures*

Several pressures emerged as being more common across teaching sites. Two participants cited time pressures as interfering with programming for literacy. Marnie explained, “*I try to use balanced literacy as much as I can, but I am limited by time.*” Sandra commented:

*I find one of the big struggles I have is time. I get 20 minutes of native language, the native language which means we go outside before that and it takes 10 minutes to dress and 10 minutes to undress... so one of my struggles is squishing everything in and still keeping to a routine...*

### *Support Personnel*

Don identified availability of trained support staff as particularly problematic to effective implementation of literacy:

*Ideally I would just set the curriculum expectations that we need for the kids in that class. For the whole school, because I do Special Ed and everything and those guys would run with it. Unfortunately, none of them are skilled enough to completely run with it so I have to provide a bunch of sample type lessons and things to go along with the expectations.*

### *Administrative Decisions*

Administrative decisions had potential to support and/or hinder teacher feelings of success entering into and during year one of inservice teaching. Candice explained that she obtained her teaching position just prior to school opening in September and that this contributed to her feelings of unpreparedness:

*Getting started was hard because I didn't think I was going to teach last year and I got a job a few days before I started, so a few days before the 6<sup>th</sup> of September. And I was on my way out of town so I went out of town and came back and started work and started on my 1<sup>st</sup> day without any prep or anything with all these parents staring at me so it took a couple of months to get into routine and find resources...*

According to Candice, these feelings were further heightened by her lack of familiarity with board-mandated programs for supporting literacy in the classroom: *“My language arts program is getting really good. It was weak at the beginning of the year because I didn’t know anything about Jolly Phonics or how to teach the letters and just the basics I was unaware.”*

Jane opposed the administrative decisions enforced at her school regarding rotary teaching of ESL:

*The limitations of the rotary I felt I can’t say it enough because it’s probably what left me most dissatisfied and is a big part of my reason for not going back... because there was no room to leave a project to come back to and there was no room in the English room for it either, so it was difficult to have ongoing projects like that when you didn’t have a classroom of your own to work in.*

Jane described administrative decisions designed to promote uniformity in curriculum implementation, as both “good” and “limiting”:

*The policy was that all the classes, there were three classes of grade one and all of them had to receive the same worksheets, you know, do all the exact same things in all the classes which was both good and limiting.*

#### *Factors Contributing to Feelings of Success*

*Establishment of rapport.* Year one inservice teachers identified development of relationships with students and familiarity with teaching assignments as factors that contributed to feelings of confidence and success in their programming for literacy.

According to Jane, teaching in the second semester was far easier than the first. She reported using more of the strategies learned in the preservice year and feeling more confident in her program delivery:

- *I am finding that in this second semester I am using far more of what I learned at LU than I did in the first. This is likely due to two factors. My*

*schedule and class assignments have changed and the students I teach have begun written forms of English.*

- *I have been having a better time this semester than last semester and I feel more confident about delivering a Language arts program.*
- *Some of what I am able to do now is because of my changed schedule. Having more lessons with fewer classes allows me to do more focused work with my students. Also, some things require a certain degree of spoken language to provide instructions for activities which I feel more confident in expressing now.*

*Supports.* Two participants also associated availability of resources, particularly print materials, with general preparedness for literacy teaching:

- *I was very fortunate the school had a lot of English resources already existing compared to the other time I taught abroad teaching ESL where I had almost no materials. I had lots and lots of resource books. I had lots of course books with a variety of things to do. We had lots of readers and books. (Jane)*
- *The English teachers would sit down and we would go through and pick out books to add to our resources so that was something really good that was happening. There were new resources coming in... (Jane)*
- *When I found out I got the job I had a week, and I know I was going to show up on the first day of school without being prepared and without knowing what I was doing and all this sort of thing, so I happened to be in the states in [State] at the time so I went to a couple of stores and grabbed basics and whatever I could get my hands on. (Candice)*

Supportive staff further contributed to Jane's sense of positivity:

*The classroom teachers in that class were very, very supportive of our English program, particularly, the Kindergarten B. The teacher there, she may have had somewhat limited English skills but she was so supportive of our program and I know in her lessons she tried to bring in words as much as she could and we were free to leave things up on her walls.... things the students had done.*

Jane viewed her involvement in supplementary preservice training activities as instrumental in providing practical ideas she could apply inservice:

*I'd taken a couple of workshops here (LU) not last fall but the fall before that. It was just a weekend workshop. It wasn't a full course or anything. A weekend of activities but we got lots of things out of it – lots of very practical things.*

She also recognized ways in which her inservice ESL teaching experiences contributed to new pedagogical understandings about teaching and learning:

*I think that the ESL experience has taught me a lot about how to think through my instructions, how to be very concise and precise in what you tell the class to do. I have a stack of activities that I'll be able to do with the class, things that worked well, games that we enjoyed that are applicable in any language really.*

#### *Summary*

The participants reported a number of factors as inhibiting and/or contributing to their successes within the classroom. Factors associated with hindering teacher success included: ranges in academic performance; poor student behaviour; community challenges; language barriers; physical space limitations; availability of trained support staff; late grade assignment; and, administrative timetabling decisions and policies. Conversely, increased familiarity with course content, expectations, students and physical environment, and the provision of extra training were reported as factors contributing to heightened confidence and feelings of teacher success.

## Growing Confidence: Year Two Inservice Teaching

### *Hush... Listen (Finale)*

So many perspectives were shared that day!  
 Ballads praising the knowledge, approaches, strategies and tools  
 Informed teacher development  
 Was the Great One a deceiver or a genius?  
 Should they rally against her?  
 Demand repayment of the entrance fee?  
 Oh bitter elixir  
 "It is one thing to aspire to teach like an expert  
 And another to achieve such a state!"  
 Her closing arguments grew increasingly sour and increasingly sweet  
 "Experienced teachers come to know what constitutes success  
 In their classrooms," she continued  
 "They know when students are learning,  
 When their literacy program is effective.  
 They have an intuitive response that is embedded  
 In formal and informal theories about teaching and learning."

Some in the crowd grew agitated.  
 "The recipe, we want the recipe. You promised," an accusatory arm sliced the air...

"You, sir, are beginning an arduous journey –  
 One through 'fantasy', 'survival', 'mastery' and finally 'impact'  
 Best move along, beyond 'fantasy'  
 Embrace learning, be empowered by opportunity, by knowledge...  
 Create your own recipes as you go, but be prepared to change them."  
 A wild flourish of her cape  
 And with that,  
 The Great One was gone!

Mixed reactions that day...  
 Many smiled, affirmation written across their faces  
 Determination propelling them into new classrooms  
 Enthusiasm chomping at their heels  
 A few looked distraught, others angry  
 Certain they had been short-shifted or woefully underprepared.

And off in the distance...  
 An army of partnerships ebbed and flowed, ebbed and flowed  
 Formulating game plans to support new members in-the-field.

L.E. Leslie

This section presents the findings and interpretation for the inservice teacher participants during their second year as literacy teachers. It also explains the decision to re-interview Fiona, one of the teacher educators.

In order to facilitate comparisons across years one and two of inservice teaching, I discuss the findings using similar themes. Minor changes are reflected in the wording of one theme: the year two category, "Induction and mentoring," was amended to "Induction and support" given that most of the participants received support in different forms but only one received any formal mentoring during year two of inservice teaching. I begin by describing participants' profiles in year two of inservice teaching. I then present the findings.

### *Second Year Inservice Teacher Participants*

All five inservice participants signed the consent forms and intended to continue in the study in year three. Jane met with the researchers at the beginning of the year. At that time, she was enroute to beginning a new teaching position in a school in Northern Manitoba. Efforts to contact her after she had begun her new position were met with sporadic response. In effect, there were really four and not five participants during year three of the study. I include data on Jane for the time that she participated.

Marnie continued teaching overseas. In her second year of teaching, she moved provinces to a new position in an accredited private international school within the same Asian country. The school was designated an International Baccalaureate [IB] School. Ninety-eight percent of Marnie's students were Thai. Students were only instructed in Thai during three classes per week; the majority of language instruction was given in English. Marnie taught Grade 4 in her new position.

At the end of her first year of inservice teaching, Jane, altogether dissatisfied with her first teaching placement, left her position teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) overseas in a private elementary school. She moved to an Aboriginal school in northern Manitoba, where she taught Grade 1. A condition of Jane's new position was her enrolment

in an additional 21 hours of education classes/workshops and four hours of math, to upgrade her teacher certification. Correspondence from Jane, initially a very communicative respondent, became increasingly sporadic as she settled into the demands of her new position.

Don remained at the same school for his first and second years of inservice teaching. In his first year of teaching, Don worked half time in special education and half time as a Grades 7/8 teacher in an Aboriginal school. Don's position changed in his second year of inservice teaching. Don taught eleven students in a combined Grades 3/4/5/6/7 classroom and continued to assist with special education work in his spare time. From time to time, a supply teacher covered Don's classroom responsibilities to enable Don to provide literacy support/mentorship to other teachers. The school principal did not have the Ontario principal's certification at the time of the study. Don intended to enrol in principal courses. He commented, "Next year, I'll probably be principal (two years for the community to get to know me and I start principal courses next summer)."

Candice, too, remained at the same school for her second year of teaching. She taught Junior Kindergarten (JK) and Senior Kindergarten (SK) in an Aboriginal school. Three JK students came for half-day instruction, four SK students for full-day. Candice's hectic teaching schedule prevented her from forwarding emails with any regularity and meeting with Mary Clare and me. As a result, insufficient data could be obtained to portray Candice's growth and/or changing perceptions.

Sandra's position at her remote northern school changed dramatically between her first and second years of inservice teaching. Where she taught Grades 3/4 in her first year of teaching, Sandra became the early/late literacy teacher during her second year. Sandra

confessed to feeling “*so overwhelmed in this new position.*” In addition to serving as the early / late literacy teacher, Sandra also provided preparation coverage for French and Grades 6/7/8 Science, Social Studies and Art. Thus, while three respondents continued to teach in the same school in their second year of teaching, only Candice remained in the same teaching position.

As explained in Chapter Two, data included emails from the four teacher participants, then in year two of inservice teaching, as well as interviews with the teacher participants and with Fiona, the instructor of the on-line Additional Qualifications [AQ] Reading course. Data collection was compounded by the hectic schedules of the novice literacy teachers, most of whom were so busy with their teaching responsibilities that they responded only occasionally and briefly to emails and had to be contacted numerous times for clarifications. Often, I found myself resending questions multiple times and/or modifying questions to include prioritized questions from two or even three question sets. For example, in communication with Candice, I wrote, “*Please don’t worry about completing the last set of questions. You are too busy for that and too much time has elapsed. Instead, I will forward a new set of questions shortly.*” Data collection continued through to August to permit subsequent interviewing of Sandra and Fiona and to allow time for additional correspondence (by email) between the teacher participants and me. Sandra’s email comment, “*I apologize for taking so long to respond...My days are insanely busy, and I am just getting a handle on the job now – so I have little time to reply,*” sheds light on the difficulties the researchers encountered trying to maintain contact with busy teacher participants during year two of inservice teaching.

### Findings: Year Two of Inservice Teaching

This section describes the findings for year three of the study, Year Two of inservice teaching. The data have been organized into the following themes:

- Re-conceptions of the literacy preparation provided by the preservice program
- Language arts programs
- Induction and support
- Successes and challenges

#### *Re-conceptions of the Literacy Preparation Provided by the Preservice Program*

Generally, novice teachers' attitudes towards their preservice program and the effectiveness of the program in preparing them to teach literacy remained similar in tone to views they had expressed the year previously. Sandra continued to expand upon the ways in which her preservice and other experiences contributed to her growing confidence and skills as a teacher. Sandra felt her participation in the PPOD "*benefited my teaching a lot – because we did so many 'hands-on' activities.*" She emphasized the experiential value of the PPOD experience:

*The PPOD that I did was amazing. A lot of the things that I learned in that classroom, that setting, I've used as a literacy teacher and as a teacher last year as well, in my grade 3/4 class. I think that it's really important to have people who have been in the classroom, and who have had that hands-on practical experience being able to tell the stories and give you that real experience as opposed to theories.*

Don, who was not in a PPOD course, continued to express the largest number of specific and detailed criticisms of his Faculty of Education experience. Some of his criticisms addressed the perceived lack of direction:

*My BEd degree was an absolute joke! I found the whole College experience really, really disappointing. When I went to university before, I learned so much every day... It was scattered. There was no clear direction for anything. Classroom management*

*skills were severely lacking in many classes. The course outlines were constantly being changed because it was too much marking. My classroom management course was with three different TAs and one had a nervous breakdown and you'd be months getting anything back and all the things that we teach not to do ... For the most part, it was all just lecture style.*

Other criticisms focussed on the nature of in-class learning and group assignments:

*We spent a whole lot of time summarizing hand outs and the text. "Can you and your group summarize these handouts and then present them back to the class?" I'm really cynical and referred to that as 'busy work.' As soon as she pulled out the flip charts and markers I left. There's better ways of teaching how to do this. "You've assigned it and I read it. I don't need my classmates to regurgitate it to me especially when half of them haven't read it."*

Don felt that the depth of coverage was insufficient to guide future teachers: *"I don't think things were emphasized enough as to what was actually needed in the classroom and how everything could be extended throughout the whole day."* Don used his exposure to literature circles as an example of the ways in which topics were introduced with insufficient coverage/practice during preservice literacy courses:

*[Literature circles] were talked about but again, it was like one lesson, part of something else, it was you can use literature circles. Somebody asked what literature circles are. It was briefly described, but was there a big emphasis on that? No.*

According to Don, concepts and strategies were often introduced with the same brevity, *"Here's how you describe it or what it involves but nothing as to hands on, it wasn't there. It became up to us to find out more or ask someone else about their experience."* Don expressed discontent with the abundance of theory introduced and the emphasis on reflexive practices in his literacy courses:

*There was not a lot of how-to's, it was more general philosophies and theories and if we spent another class sitting around and sharing how everyone felt about their first placement. It was a waste of time. Teach me something. Sorry, I have a personal bias.*

He was also disappointed with the choice of course textbook: “*But even then, a lot of text books were American versions.*” The text used in Don’s language arts class, originally an American text, had been adapted by Canadian scholars to reflect Canadian content and perspectives.

Sandra, Marnie and Don each had different instructors for their literacy courses. Don was a mature student who was already an experienced professional (twenty years of experience) when he entered the Bachelor of Education program. During his year at the Faculty, there had been many problems with the classroom management course which was organized into two components – a large group lecture and seminars. As well, there were difficulties with several instructors of the seminars. Some or all of these may have factored into Don’s detailed list of disappointments with the preservice program.

#### *Novice Teachers’ Suggestions for Improving Preservice Education*

The novice teachers offered a variety of suggestions that they believed would improve the preservice education program. These suggestions included greater emphasis on social constructivist learning processes, lengthening of the program, and preparing teachers for remote and/or overseas teaching positions.

*Emphasis on social constructivist learning processes.* Don offered many suggestions for improving the preservice program, including greater incorporation of social constructivist learning processes:

*Focus on the how-tos. Not just summaries, or being able to regurgitate a description of a learning style, practice it, try it out in the class, or watch videos of other people trying it, and then practice it in the groups . . . Have each one of us pretend to be the teacher for the other students and practice it.*

*Lengthening of the program.* Don also advocated for lengthening the BEd program as a whole: “*Make it longer ... The classes for literacy should take up much more of a student’s education in this program.*”

Sandra, too, felt there was room for portions of the preservice program to be extended; however, her suggestions focussed around student teachers having opportunities to spend more time in actual classrooms, rather than in course:

*More classroom observation -- I know we had our practicums, but maybe being in the school a bit more, actually having time to go observe in different classrooms . . . getting to know the school environment, what it’s like to be in a school, watching the teachers, kind of shadowing before we do our practicums.*

Similar sentiments were shared by several participants at the end of the preservice year.

*Preparing teachers for remote and/or overseas teaching positons.* Marnie indicated that the approach to literacy emphasized in the IB program at her school demanded different skills and knowledge than those to which she had been exposed in preservice:

*In the beginning, I had a really hard time because in university we learn about guided teaching and guided learning, but not what the program [IB] was expecting . . . I never developed a lesson plan that was inquiry-based like that... it can’t be theme-based. They [IB curriculum developers] don’t encourage theme teaching.*

Similar viewpoints were shared by respondents teaching in schools predominantly populated by First Nations students. They, too, felt that the preservice program had not adequately prepared them to meet the challenges and demands associated with teaching all students, including students in less ‘typical’ remote/rural/‘out-of-country’ settings.

#### *Language Arts Programs*

The second year teachers provided information on the changing nature of their language arts programs. Where most participants seemed to ‘fly by the seat of their pants’ during year one of inservice teaching, by year two, three participants had adopted and/or

modified prescriptive programs (some board-mandated, others not) and/or developed their own guidelines to provide a base format for delivering their literacy programs with greater cohesiveness.

Sandra explained the role of prescriptive literacy programs in supporting novice teachers' literacy planning:

*The language block is one of the hugest struggles for teachers because for science usually there's some sort of a resource or a binder and it tells you what units you're going to do and what you need to cover . . . For all these different subjects you have a resource that you can use, but for language there are so many. What do you pick and how do you do it? With this [prescriptive program], it gives you the program, it gives you the base. If you want to draw from other resources, it will be easy because you already have your base and you know where you're supposed to go. You can use it all year. There are hundreds of lessons.*

As early/late literacy teacher, Sandra was trained by her school board in the *Comprehension Attitude Strategies Interests* [CASI] Reading Assessment Program. It was a board expectation that Sandra would implement the program school-wide and use it to inform school-wide planning for literacy. Sandra described the testing and follow up processes:

*We did it in October, January and then May. We did it three times throughout the year to show growth and that our students are doing better. After you do CASI, you have a booklet and basically it says, "If your students were low in this area, here are some activities you can do to help them get better at this area." I would photocopy those for the teachers and give them to them and then go in and make sure they were doing some of those activities to build the students' skills in those areas.*

She referred to CASI as "a really good tool to use to guide your teaching." Although she was expected to implement CASI, as well as *First Steps*, Sandra felt that she had a lot of freedom in designing and implementing her school's approach to literacy:

*I don't know that anything has technically been mandated. I know lots of schools are using different things. I think *First Steps* is mandated, other than that I'm not sure what are. There's books that the literacy heads will give to us and say,*

*“Show this to your teachers. Put it in your book room.” Every school has similar resources, but as far as mandated programs, I’m not sure that there are too many.*

Sandra described the school-wide literacy schedule as follows:

*We work on a ‘balanced day’ (teaching in 100 minute blocks) and we are required to have a language block. Everyone in the school does language for the first 100 minutes of the day. My language block consisted of shared reading with the morning message, lots of oral language and discussions, quiet reading, guided reading and writing, modeled writing, etc. Here is a sample timetable:*

*8:45 – 9:00 Good Morning and Announcements*

*9:00 – 9:20 Quiet Reading (I read with individual students)*

*9:20 - 9:30 Reading Response/Journals*

*9:30 – 9:45 Lesson – phonics, strategies (whatever is needed)*

*9:45 – 9:55 Writing Activity*

*9:55 – 10:35 Guided Reading and Writing Stations (teacher-led)*

Sandra valued and emphasized differentiated instruction in her approach to literacy teaching/learning:

*I think it’s really important. We talk about differentiating instruction all the time and one of the main things is looking at the student. What does the student love and how are we going to get that into their literacy learning? It’s just getting something from every student, something that they’re passionate about. Again, having shared experiences where they will have opportunities to write and get their thoughts out making it comfortable and easy for them.*

Candice’s program was similar to Sandra’s. Her morning was also devoted to literacy.

She described her program in detail:

*We start by signing in and writing our names in the sign-in book. Then we read the calendar and morning message together, we have writing in the form of an art activity (making names, letters with art supplies) or we complete worksheets from the Jolly Phonics program Tuesday and Thursday, journaling on Mondays, and phonics books on Wednesday and Friday. We have shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, approximately four or more books a day (big books, audio books). Our centers include the stamping centre, magnetic letters, writing centre (with various writing materials) and reading room. We have songs, poems and finger plays which are exhibited throughout the classroom. We also have a letter of the week and sing Jolly Phonics songs with actions to go with that letter and we also have ‘power boxes’ where we keep a collection of our letters we are learning paired with an object which starts with the same sound (the letter S, and a piece of snake skin).*

Candice explained that she used big books, picture books, and audio books as well as *Jolly Phonics, Handwriting without Tears* and *Power Box*.

At Marnie's school, teachers met on a yearly basis to co-plan for literacy. The teachers randomly selected 'Agreements' to guide their independent programming. 'Agreements' were essentially grade-by-grade expectations selected by a team of staff members to guide content focus and skill development. Marnie directed her colleagues to the Ontario curriculum guidelines via the internet to facilitate program planning. Marnie explained the way curriculum decisions were made:

*At the end of last year, they [the teachers] came up with what the students need to know at the grade level. One of my units said, "matter, teach matter." Matter is a very broad topic. Matter should be taught not only one year, it should be taught throughout, starting in Grade two or Grade one. I said why don't we do matter using sound.*

According to Marnie, teachers were expected to select a different "text type" or genre of writing for emphasis with each unit of study:

*We are expected to use a specific text type . . . a 'writing style, for example, procedural writing, expository, narrative, something like that. One unit I had to do was significant people. How people in the past influenced us today, specific heroes. We had to do a narrative for that text type because we read a lot of biographies and autobiographies about people. In our writing class, we had to write our own narratives.?*

These "text types" were to be approved by the school principal. Marnie explained that the system, in her experience, did not always work as planned:

*A lot of times I thought of it on my own. They never told me that I was supposed to do a text type for each unit. They forgot to tell the new teacher these things. So, the first three units, I never had a specific text type. PYP [Primary Year's Program] is new and I guess they forgot to tell me.*

Marnie described how she implemented a sound unit using procedural writing as her 'text type':

*When they play their own instruments, they have to write the procedures of how to create their own instruments. I would do mini lessons on what is procedural writing, how do we write that kind of writing style and then at their end of unit assessment, I would see how they wrote their procedural writing.*

Marnie spent approximately 120 minutes per morning on literacy activities. She implemented a *Four Blocks* program: a multilevel, balanced literacy framework that incorporates guided reading, independent reading, writing and word work each day to teach children how to become better readers, writers, and spellers. She also used *Sentence to Paragraphs* by George Davidson for grammar lessons and the *6 + 1 Writing Traits* program to support her students' writing processes.

Don explained that his curriculum focused on literacy and that he used content areas primarily as vehicles to promote literacy:

*On the reserve the literacy skills are so lacking that it became my primary focus throughout the day. Students read silently, aloud, interpret, and write about all subjects from a variety of fiction, text, magazines, and internet sources. All subjects lend themselves to literacy development.*

Don described the ways in which he fostered literacy development in his health class:

*We will do a play about sniffing [gas] and peer pressure. Starting with a read aloud to build them up, they'll write their own play, so it becomes a mini language arts class even though the topic is health related.*

According to Don, all of the students in his combined Grades 3/4/5/6/7 class were two or more years below grade level. Two of the students had special needs and one worked with an Educational Assistant full time. Don had complete freedom to design and implement his own and the school-wide literacy plan:

*I had complete autonomy. I pretty much set it up for the rest of the school including ordering and cataloguing an entire range of levelled readers showing the other teachers how to do that, showing the other teachers how to do running records so they can manage and maintain their own kids.*

Don's language arts program consisted of the following components: phonics workbooks, language power workbooks, spelling, reading comprehension mini lessons, daily grammar corrections, read aloud, independent reading, shared reading (across the curriculum), story writing, book reviews and movie reviews at year end. Don did not use, nor was he familiar with any prescribed programs for literacy. He reported having abandoned a balanced literacy approach in his classroom though many components of a balanced approach were evident. To facilitate programming for literacy, Don ordered, catalogued and introduced levelled reading books as a school-wide teacher resource. He also assisted other teachers with running/reading records and initiated a book bag program in his own classroom. Don taught language arts to all grades simultaneously, modifying for grade by using "*greater detailed questions for the older grades.*"

#### *Tools for Supporting Language Arts Programming*

*Levelled readers.* Sandra, Marnie, and Don each used levelled texts in their literacy programs. While Candice encouraged independent reading in her JK/SK, it was not clear what types of resources were used.

*Worksheets.* In addition to using interactive activities, several of the respondents assigned worksheets as well. Marnie integrated interactive activities, in centers, with follow-up/response worksheets:

*Twice a week, we do Grammar studies. Sometimes this will fall during Writer's Workshop time. I use the book Sentences to Paragraphs by George Davidson. This book has interesting and fun grammar worksheets. Before I have students work on the worksheets, we always do an interactive activity for each grammar lesson.*

*Example activity: for statements and questionings, I had three stations.*

*Station #1: A mini story was written on poster paper with the punctuation missing. The group had to work together to place the correct punctuations in the correct spot and read it together.*

*Station #2: The group had to come up with 3 statement sentences and 3 question sentences and write it in the correct column.*

*Station #3: Each student in the group took a turn pulling out a sentence from the magic bag. The student who pulled the sentence out had to read it to their group members. The group members decide whether it was a statement or a question.*

Don used language worksheets to facilitate classroom management issues. While some students completed their spelling, phonics and language power exercises, Don would teach math to other small groups of students:

*I'm not a huge supporter of spelling for spelling sake, phonics, language power, etc. These are rotated throughout the week (essentially book work – minimal instruction from me required) while I do math with two grades.*

All respondents implemented a variety of configurations such as whole class, groups, pairs (for example, peer editing), and independent work.

*Media.* The teacher participants focused primarily on traditional print literacy. While two mentioned use of media or digital literacy, media and multiliteracies did not appear to be integral to their literacy programs. Interaction with media was largely restricted to viewing and written/ oral response modes, with students having few opportunities for creating presentations or responding through multimedia. At best, multimedia was used sporadically and in limited contexts. Don's students read the newspaper daily and, occasionally, used the internet for research. He used multimedia to hone comprehension skills:

*We have the internet up there so we can get into research or advertising, all that kind of thing. We get newspapers every day so we're having time to read the newspapers. The most important goal is comprehension. "What does that actually say to you? What does that mean? Use your skills, put that news story into your own words."*

Sandra and a colleague designed a power point presentation to springboard an adventure unit in a Grade 2/3 classroom. The power point modelled the components of an adventure story. It was followed by an experiential language arts lesson in which Sandra's students went outside:

*We did a project with the grade two/three class where we wanted them to write adventure stories. The teacher and I came up with an adventure story and we made a big PowerPoint Presentation about the two of us on an adventure. We brought the kids out and pretended that we were on an adventure being able to give them real life experience to bring back to their writing. Almost all the kids wrote a camping story.*

This activity also illustrates Sandra's role as a model writer for her students.

Marnie implemented a media unit late in the year to support student learning/practice of persuasive writing. As well, Marnie's students responded to a wide selection of novels through a variety of sign systems. Marnie reflected on missed opportunities for using the computer as a word processor:

*I always think, when they do their story, when they publish it, they write it in pen or in pencil. At the end of the year, I thought the students needed more experience on the computer and what a better way than to bring the literacy into that, so they can publish their work on the computer.*

Although four of the participants taught in schools largely populated by Aboriginal pupils, only Sandra reported using First Nations and/or multicultural resources:

*We have a huge shelf of Aboriginal content books. Also, the board has trained all our teachers in something called Heart and Soul. It's like a leadership conference almost, that talks about the seven grandfather teachings and how they're really vital in our education system. We've got books that support those teachings as well. I think that especially for our students to have culturally appropriate resources in the classroom and in the school, and to have positive role models from their culture is huge.*

According to Don, the pupils registered in his school preferred not to see themselves portrayed in the literature: "There is no group that is more racist and hateful of their own

*than folks on reserves. They hate all that quote Indian crap. They don't want to have anything to do with it.*" Don described tremendous resistance towards anything "native:" *Any time we have tried to bring in anything, the parents will call up in arms, 'What are you doing. We want them to get along in the real world.'*" Instead, Don made an effort to expose his pupils to the 'classics,' including books by authors such as Hans Christian Andersen. Don's comments may illustrate tensions between Aboriginal and Western world views. Aboriginal parents may feel pressured to enculturate their children in Western ideologies. Assimilation may be viewed as a means for supporting their children's successful participation in a dominant society (education being one arena). Such pressures work against maintenance of Aboriginals' own cultural beliefs and values.

*Use of strategies.* The teacher participants used a wide variety of teaching and learning strategies, some of which they had learned in preservice, as well as others gleaned from inservice classroom and /or professional development experiences. Many of these strategies were designed to support reading comprehension. They were often implemented in context with other literacy activities. For example, Sandra explained how she incorporated comprehension strategies (rereading and pre-teaching of vocabulary), while using levelled books and *Reading Recovery* to supplement the *PM Benchmarks* reading program:

*We were using the PM Benchmark levelled books and they have a lot of activities that go along with the books. We used the National Geographic Series, the Inquisitive Series, Sales, Literacy and the Porcupine collection. We would focus on reading the books and then doing the activities. We would read the book a couple of times until the student got familiar with the book. Then, when they got really confident with the book, we would bring in a new book and tell them, "This is going to be a little bit harder, but that's okay, you're doing a really good job." Pre-teaching the vocabulary helped a lot in that situation, so they weren't stumbling over it and getting really frustrated.*

Marnie described, in detail, a range of teaching and learning strategies (cognitive and metacognitive) she used in succession to support reading in her classroom. These included “round-robin reading” as well as a variety of reading response activities. Four of these strategies are described following:

i. BOOK BOXES

*The class was divided up according to their reading levels (however, students don't know this). Each group had a specific colour and a basket of that colour (i.e. Red group had a red basket).*

*In each basket are 15-30 books that are appropriate for their reading level (there were about 4-5 students in each group which means there are more than three books for each student).*

*Students take the responsibility of choosing a book from their box and reading silently for 30-35 minutes. At first, students had difficulty reading that long, so we started off with 15 minutes and everyday added more time so that students would be comfortable with the time.*

*After completing the novel, students choose a worksheet (one worksheet touching each multiple intelligence). Students have a contract, and follow through that until all worksheets are complete. They also self evaluate their reading performance and their worksheet performance.*

*Throughout, I conference with them, using conversation sticks (multiple tongue depressors containing one specific question about character, setting or plot are in a cup and the student chooses one to answer).*

Marnie taught a mini lesson on the Three Bears Method (Tompkins, 2003) to show her students how to assess books for suitability. She also surveyed student interests so that these could be included in the Book Box.

ii. MORP (MY OWN READING PROFILE) BOX

*Each student has a designated MORP BOX. Within each box, students have seven books at their levels (using the PM Storybook Readers). A work booklet is included in their box.*

*Students take the responsibility of taking one MORP book home, reading it once to themselves, once to their parents and signed, and completing one worksheet of their choice from their booklet.*

Marnie met weekly with each student, conferencing on their reading and worksheets. After completing 7 books and their accompanying worksheets, students were tested for the next reading level. MORP was designed to be used by students as an 'at home' program.

### iii. CLASS READ-OUT-LOUD

*A class book was chosen (mid-ranged reading, closer to the lower levelled readers) for a read-out-loud. Since the project fell around Halloween time, I chose Junie B. Jones: Boo... and I mean It! by Barbara Parks.*

*Fortunately, I have a reading assistant, so half the group went with my assistant, the other half went with me.*

*During Reader's Workshop time, students read a chapter "round robin" style; or once a student is finished reading a page, they would choose another reader.*

*Once students complete reading the chapter, a reflection is made or an activity sheet from their Book Report file.*

Marnie had initially grouped students according to homogeneous reading levels. Readers in lower groups were less productive than the cohorts in higher reading groups. Remodeling the groups into heterogeneous levels alleviated this problem. At the end of the read alouds, Marnie encouraged students to complete a "Biggie" project, such as a story box, poem, song, or chapter re-enactment to showcase their learning.

Lastly, Marnie employed literature circles as a follow up to read alouds:

### iv. LITERATURE CIRCLES

*Three books were chosen for three different groups: Higher/middle and lower readers. The lower readers do not read a chapter book, but rather a short novel (Nate the Great). Throughout there will be oral questionings and interactive activities.*

*Before starting, I spent each day doing a minilesson on one role sheet. For example, on Monday I read to them the Asian version folktale of Stone Soup.*

*Before, throughout and after we talked about the book. I explained that what they were doing was summarizing which was our role for the day. The following day, I re-read the story and they did Connector [one of several possible roles / sheets]. On Wednesday, they did Illustrator; on Thursday, Word Wizard and on Friday, we finished off with Discussion Director.*

Don also used a range of strategies (i.e. book bags, scaffolded reading and prompt questions) to support reading in his multi-grade classroom:

*I have started book bags. We have 20 minute of independent reading daily. I also model reading with feeling with daily read aloud with chapter books starting with the "My Father's Dragon" series. I start with where did we leave off? What do you think will happen next? Finishing with what happened with some pretty detailed questions to get at comprehension.*

Other strategies used to support reading comprehension included the following:

- *Book walk - There's essentially a mini book walk before each story even if it's a short story. Here's where we find the publisher and this was when it was done and for the picture on the front – 'What do you think it's going to be about' and for the picture on the back. We flip through the pages and make predictions and things like that and comprehension questions like crazy at the end. (Don)*
- *Reading logs - Each student has a reading log (title, author, date started, date completed, personal review) and once a book is completed the student gets a "star" with their name, book title, and date that is placed on the hallway bulletin board for all to see (three weeks is about three stars per child on average). (Don)*
- *Use of phonics / chunking - If they have trouble sounding out the words, or letter recognition, chunking the words. It really depended on the student. We really looked at individual students and figured out what the students would need. I had some really low students and would just practice letters and then we would practice really small words. (Sandra)*

Participants also employed a range of strategies to support the writing processes. Initially,

Don made use of "blabbers – the art of simply putting words on a page" to encourage greater writing productivity:

*This is a timed five minute lesson that is then reviewed and repeated. I started by modeling an example or two until students got the hang of it. Productivity has gone from a few dozen words to a few dozen lines (more words/lines with higher grades).*

Once his pupils were writing more prolifically, Don altered his strategy to incorporate a “directed story writing” activity:

*Students pick a word that they write down and keep to themselves. I then write all their words on the board and they have to write something that incorporates all the words. Next week it will be two words per student, then three words. The goal is by the end of October, students will no longer be able to say, “I can’t write anything” – there will be a journal in their desk and copies on the wall to prove otherwise. “Tell me a story about the first Christmas you remember” will be a heck of a lot easier than writing something that has to include ‘shark, puppies, ice cream, flying star, Sarah, fair, computer, picture of mom, sad, telephone,’ etc.*

Eventually, Don moved to story webs, drafting, conferencing (peer and pupil / teacher), and proofreading to support his pupils’ story writing processes:

*With the story web, we transfer that into a real draft of the story. The process is you just take the pointform and you build four or five sentences around that. Try to get them to expand on that. They do one draft like that and then they proofread and do another draft. Pass that on to a peer. They proofread it and I pick the peers. Then it gets read back again, then another draft. Then it comes to me and I get really detailed for some of them. It’s a whole process of, really positively as possible, telling them that what they’re writing is not very good and they need to give me more.*

Marnie implemented a dial-a-story strategy and quick writes to help students formulate ideas and express them in written form with greater ease. She supported students’ writing processes with timely mini lessons. Drawing from her background in outdoor recreation, Sandra took her pupils on nature hikes and scavenger hunts. She used experiential learning to stimulate her students’ writing processes:

*We went on a scavenger hunt, just to get them kind of searching and getting their imaginations ready to write. I think that if you give them an idea, an idea isn’t going to get them anywhere without some experience to go behind that idea. We just tried to give them that extra experience.*

She also emphasized the importance of publishing / sharing students’ written works to validate the writing processes:

*Having them share their work with other students, like having older students write stories and then bring them and share them with their reading buddies, and the same thing, having the little reading buddies bring something to share with their older reading buddies; just knowing that your writing isn't just going in a pile, knowing that it's going to be shared and that other people care about it. I think that that really helps give them ownership.*

Three respondents, Jane, Candice and Don, mentioned using drama to support reading comprehension and oral literacy development. Candice and Don described how they connected drama to reading:

- *We use finger plays, act out books we read and have a puppet theatre to encourage verbal language. (Candice)*
- *We're doing the read aloud plays for ancient civilizations, for the middle ages, like you know Robin Hood and that sort of thing. Comprehension is the main goal there. We usually sit around in a circle, the class is small enough. (Don)*

Sandra incorporated games into her language arts programming. According to Sandra, the interactive nature of games affords opportunities for authentic practice of oral language skills:

*With every activity there's a pre-briefing and then a de-briefing, so you talk about it before you do it and then you talk about it after you do it. Seeing the children being able to make the links was awesome because a lot of the times they have a really hard time doing it. I think by doing it through games and through hands on play, they were able to realize, which was awesome and really fun.*

Participants' strategy usage underscored their understandings of the need to support students' reading and writing processes through scaffolding of experiences.

#### *Induction and Support*

This section describes the various resources and types of training valued by the teacher participants as a means for supplementing their knowledge and skill levels during year two of inservice teaching. The year two professional growth activities have been divided into five sub-categories: curriculum guidelines and other professional print materials;

informal sharing/ networking with colleagues and other professional affiliates; formal professional development activities; previous professional and work-related experiences; and, specialist qualification courses.

#### *Curriculum Guidelines and Other Professional Print Materials*

In the absence of local curriculum guidelines Marnie relied heavily on the Ontario Curriculum to inform her teaching overseas. She and a colleague found that they needed the direction provided by the curriculum guidelines:

*We used the Ontario curriculum. The teacher and I felt that we needed more expectations, more guidance. She's American, but it's funny because she said that from all the [curriculum documents] she has looked at . . . the Ontario one is the best one. Because they have it online, we looked at what the expectations were for Grade four and five and we used a lot of that and put it into our own bridge of expectations.*

Sandra used board-developed information about scheduling and implementing balanced literacy:

*Balanced literacy is a huge focus. For every single grade, they've made a long-range plan that is balanced. The long-range plan that they give to every teacher has everything listed down the side, like guided reading, shared writing . . . How long you should be doing it every day, or when, what months you should be starting to focus on.*

Don browsed the internet for ideas. He noted, "They have some terrific online resources."

#### *Informal Sharing/Networking with Colleagues and Other Professional Affiliates*

Don spoke with other novice educators. He conversed on-line with peers from the Faculty of Education: "Talking with other teachers -- ones that I had kept in touch with since school here, networking and things."

Both Don and Marnie stressed the importance of sharing with colleagues in their schools:

- *These ideas are from going through other teachers with experience, teaching language arts. (Marnie)*

- *There needs to be somewhere to go, where you're safe and secure and whatever idea you can come up with is going to get some sort of feedback. (Don)*
- *I ended up with other teachers coming and talking to me and someone actually said, "What the hell am I going to do if you move away and I lose my mentor?" (Don)*

As well, Marnie engaged in both independent reading and peer instruction: *"A lot of independent study, a lot of teaching each other."*

Sandra kept in touch with her PPOD and AQ course instructor, Fiona:

*She was my PPOD teacher when I was in teacher's college so it was really good to have that continuity with Fiona. I learned so much from her. It was really nice to have her as a support kind of constantly throughout this. I know when I started this role, I emailed her right away and was like, "What do I do?" She was very helpful as well. I think that taking those courses [AQ Reading courses instructed by Fiona] has definitely helped. Just even in being able to plan a unit and having a literacy-based unit ready to go and I can use that in the classroom.*

Sandra also continued to benefit from the relationship she had developed with her mentor teacher the previous year: *"I found the [mentorship] program to be EXTREMELY valuable, and though it does not continue into the second year of teaching, I still talk to my mentor on a weekly basis, to make sure I'm on track!"*

As well, Sandra's emerging understandings were further influenced by her involvement in an educational association: *"I'm part of the Association for Experimental Education. I do a lot of reading and a lot of corresponding with experiential educators and I try to bring that into the program and into the school."*

#### *Formal Professional Development Activities*

Four participants, Sandra, Candice, Marnie and Don, reported having participated in formal workshops and/or seminars organized by their school boards during their second year of inservice teaching.

Sandra gained new insights through inter-school visitation and the opportunity to dialogue with educators teaching in other schools:

*We went to PLCs [Professional Learning Communities] at different schools, and we would sit in with the teachers at those schools and see what they were doing and then collaborate with them and then they'd come to our school and see what we were doing. So, there was a lot more school to school collaboration which I think helped because you'd see them using strategies and you would think, "Oh that's great, if that works for you, let's try it here."*

The practical training component of her role as a literacy coach meant that Sandra was expected to meet with other literacy coaches, to team teach with other educators and to co-develop a literacy plan for supporting students within their classrooms. These opportunities contributed to Sandra's deepening understandings about the teaching and learning of literacy:

- *As a coach our role changes again, so instead of doing modeling, we're doing co-teaching with the teachers. We'll have time outside of the classroom that the board is giving us, so I'll have a couple of days here and there to sit down with teachers and make a literacy plan and we can spend up to three/four weeks in a classroom working on one thing and then move on and the teacher will continue from when we leave.*
- *We started something this year called Professional Learning. Depending on your school, you'll meet with your intermediate division and your primary division. I sat in on a bunch of PLCs and watched what they did. They looked at their students and their reading levels and who was moving where and they had discussions as to why and what they were doing to help that student. Also, they were reading a book as a staff that was helping with writing and I thought we should read a book that would help our students with writing. So, that's the one that we chose as a school.*

During the summer, between years one and two of inservice teaching, Sandra had attended a regional board conference. At the conference, she participated in a workshop on *6 + 1 Writing Trait Analysis*. As a result of this inservice, Sandra incorporated *6 + 1 Writing Trait Analysis* into her work in the classrooms during her second year of inservice teaching and began "working on one strategy at a time." Throughout the year, Sandra continued to attend a number of professional development workshops.

Sandra's school was recognized as an at-risk school and received extra support through Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership [OFIP]. As a result, the school was able to tap into special funding for small group inservice sessions and one-on-one teacher support:

*We were allocated some funds to help build our school capacity and build our students' educational lives. Through that we did get time to meet as small groups. I got time to meet one on one with the teachers which does help.*

Sandra seemed surprised when she was asked to become a mentor teacher for the following year. She expressed concerns that the request had come "a little early" in her teaching career. Although she was prepared to assume this new role, Sandra felt "hesitant to take on more roles 'cause I know how this year was and it was a little crazy."

Candice acquired a range of new ideas by registering for after-school seminars. In a seminar on healthy living Candice learned a number of interactive games (such as non-elimination musical chairs), songs, poems and assessment strategies.

At the beginning of her second year of inservice teaching, Marnie was involved in an intensive one-week orientation on the International Baccalaureate Program at her new school. The initial training and follow-up were insufficient to provide Marnie and her colleagues with a clear vision of how to implement the program:

- *I had a really hard time at the beginning of this school year learning the [Primary Years Program] PYP program. As well, what made it very difficult is because we didn't have any teachers that had PYP experience. We were all new to this.*
- *We didn't know how to support each other. We were learning just as much as the other person. Our PYP coordinator had no experience as well. We had no one with experience, no one to really answer questions for you. We had to look on the internet to find the answers or ask other PYP teachers.*

Additional training in January of her second year of inservice teaching, combined with first-hand experience using the Primary Year's Program [PYP], helped Marnie develop a clearer understanding of the program, its components and expectations:

*We had three days of PYP training in January. After that training, it became much more clear how we were to teach equally, how to develop our well-rounded lesson plans and how to bring PYP into the classroom. I felt much more confident. After doing more and more units for the PYP I feel much better than I was at the beginning of the year.*

Marnie also received professional development on two literacy programs during her second year of inservice teaching: *Four Blocks* and *6 + 1 Writing Trait Analysis*.

#### *Previous Professional or Work-related Experiences*

Don entered teaching as a second career. Throughout years one and two of inservice teaching, Don heavily relied upon the skills and knowledges acquired in his previous career. Parallels between Don's previous career and his leadership role in special education facilitated Don in the performance of his duties as coordinator of special education and classroom teacher:

*[Previous career] gave me a whole lot better understanding of different strategies that children can use to learn because that was my job before, to take a child that was doing poorly in school and try and come up with strategies to give to the teacher to allow for better learning. Whether that's shorter time periods so they can focus on things, repetition, ensuring eye contact, those kinds of things, which going through the education program here, we sort of touched on lightly. I think emphasis in my previous career has helped in developing or looking for alternative strategies, or being more willing to try out different sorts of things.*

Sandra drew on the knowledge and practices she had earlier acquired (as a student in outdoor recreation and as a camp counsellor) in experiential-based learning. For example, Sandra's incorporated games and hiking into her classroom literacy activities:

*My background is in outdoor recreation and I worked at summer camps and used all these experiential activities. I've seen the growth potential that it has for struggling students, whether or not it's a student in the school or a kid at summer camp. I knew that there were some programs out there that are really good for these kids. I also worked at the [Name] Centre in [Name of city]. They use a program based on ideas from Product Adventure, so as soon as we got the grant I got in contact with people from Product Adventure and they sent us catalogues and I ended up ordering a huge duffel bag...*

### *Additional Qualification [AQ] Courses*

Where each of the participants received some form of extra training, whether formal or informal, ongoing or “one-shot,” only Sandra and Don pursued AQ courses, via an online format, during their inservice teaching. Don commented on the manner in which his Intermediate Basic AQ course, taken in the summer between years one and two of inservice teaching, served as a good review for making connections between theory learned in preservice and practice:

*[Information on higher order questioning] was actually in the intermediate course . . . I was able to go, “Hey, cool, that’s the way I’ve set up my questions for the first two weeks of school for the basic recall and then we do a little manipulation with the information and then we go for the higher order and try and process the stuff.*

Sandra began taking her Reading Specialist certification in her first year of inservice teaching. Over the course of her involvement in the study, she participated in three AQ Reading courses (Reading, Parts I and II and Reading Specialist). Each of these courses was taught by the same instructor, Fiona, who had also been Sandra’s instructor during her preservice PPOD literacy course. Sandra described having greatly benefited from the knowledge and skills of her online instructor. Given that Sandra’s online courses were specifically tied to literacy teaching and learning, Mary Clare and I received permission from Lakehead’s Review Ethics Board to re-interview Fiona to further explore the nature of the links between Sandra’s development as a literacy teacher and the substantive nature of the online AQ Reading courses. The following sections present Fiona’s description of the courses.

*Course content and theoretical influences.* Fiona provided a brief overview of the three AQ Reading courses:

- *Part 1 is just a survey course for literacy and the text is commonly used at other universities for preservice. By the end of the course they [students] say, "Oh, I didn't realize how much I missed when I did it in preservice."*
- *Part 2 is based on assessment-based programming. It looks at developmental levels. There are separate chapters for each developmental level where they look at assessment and then programming. In Part 2, I also do a lot of work on integrating literacy instruction in content areas.*
- *Part 3 looks at leadership, change and issues and trends in literacy.*

Each course built upon contents introduced in earlier parts. Fiona explained, "*There's a nice flow from Part 1 to 2 to 3, and I've tried to structure the assignments so there is a connection, but there is no repetition in terms of the assignments.*" Fiona described the AQ Reading courses as building upon and deepening preservice understandings:

*The AQ courses are 125 hours. That gives you more opportunity to focus in depth and because conceivably most of these students have had more classroom experience, their understandings are more comprehensive than the preservice student. It is more in depth and we're fine-tuning the generalities that we did in the preservice year.*

She stressed that "*each course is structured the same,*" therein providing added continuity.

Fiona described the structure as follows:

*This course is structured in 25 components. If they're doing a chapter reading, they understand that the guiding questions are going to be laid out, but that they have some opportunity to respond from their point of interest. Four times during the course is a journal entry. Four times during the course is a sharing of resources. They have an opportunity to find a print and a web resource. They will start to share those resources through the whole course. That's basically it in terms of the structure.*

As much as possible, Fiona used social constructivist principles to model effective approaches and strategies for supporting pupils' reading processes. One of these was her modeling of smart reading:

*At the beginning of Part 1 and 2, we talk about smart reading because so many teachers are reading word by word, and there's a lot of reading in this course. Not just the chapter readings, but then you have to read people's reactions to it.*

*We talk a lot about smart reading and what strategies help kids to become better readers . . . using tables and looking for bolded words.*

Fiona noted that course participants were often surprised by the interactive nature of the AQ

Reading courses:

*One of the benefits of my course is that it's interactive. A lot of people sign on thinking that it's going to be an independent study online because that's how a lot of the AQ courses operate. 30%-35% of the final mark is based on what I call shared learning.*

Fiona explained her underlying course philosophies: an emphasis on balanced literacy, hands-on learning and modeling of best practices:

*I really believe in hands-on. I believe in taking responsibility for your own learning. It's important to me that the learning is exciting, that they're challenged. I'm trying to model for my students what I want them to do for their students. I'm amazed at how many teachers don't understand that they're in the business of helping students to learn and don't get excited about their own personal learning.*

She also emphasized reflection as a means for promoting personal and professional growth:

*I ask for four reflections during this course. I have found that students fall into two categories: those that naturally reflect and those that don't have a clue. With the reflections I force the issue. I will respond to each. If there isn't sufficient information I will ask questions which lead them, hopefully, to reflection. I've seen people tracking their growth through reflection and then just being amazed at the end of the course with the learning that has happened.*

Given that on-line formats, where participants are unable to converse face-to-face, provide multiple challenges for establishing a sense of community, Fiona used a variety of strategies to facilitate building of a community:

*I've always done a lot of cooperative learning in preservice to develop that sense of community. I have other ways of doing it online because I feel we all have a commitment to our learning community and I really want to get that across. That's part of what you need to foster in a classroom setting, so again, I'm trying to model. At the end of the course they have to do a final reflection and every once in a while someone will say, "I really like the way you've modeled for us what we should be doing in our classroom."*

She tried to accommodate differences in learners' skills and preferences:

*We have text chats, but they are optional. I have found that some people love text chats and some people hate them. I would be the "I hate text chat" kind of person, and I would want that option, so I built it in. A lot of the people who take my courses have no technical skills at all, so it's all a huge challenge for them in the beginning.*

She also fostered a sense of ownership by having learners select their own groups and text chat sessions:

*They make up their own groups. They know groups are flexible. All the text chats are posted on the course calendar, so if they missed a text chat, they can go and see if another one's happening and they can join it. They understand that that's the way it is, it's open.*

By encouraging learners to negotiate their own assignments and discussion postings such that these might be used for real learning in real contexts, Fiona further fostered a sense of ownership:

- *In Part I and II, I've worked with a group of five teachers all in the same school and board, and for Part I they sat down with their principal and discussed what would be a valuable project for the school. The principal wanted to establish a book room, so they did research on book rooms, they did a mini-project.*
- *I give them basic requirements for the unit. They want a format, they want exemplars. I'm not giving those to them because I just feel you need to wrestle with concepts you don't understand sometimes. The only way you do that is by working with it. I don't want twenty copies/duplicates of a template or of an exemplar that I've given them. So, I refuse to do it.*
- *Within the structure of the course, many of the components are tied with chapter readings. They have their choice of probably six different leads, but they can discuss anything that pertains to the topic of that chapter that they're interested in. I encourage them to be creative and independent thinkers. I tell them that it's their course and I want them to make it theirs by focusing on things that are important to them.*

Fiona valued praise as a means for inspiring confidence in individual learners:

*Teachers are working in a vacuum where no one ever says to them, "That's really good." One of the strong values of the online courses is not only the instructor saying that's pretty interesting, but the participants are also saying*

*it. That's all part of a learning community. It's like kids, I catch them doing something right, so then everybody wants to be in on the praise, so they will do it as well.*

She modeled summative assessment by providing thorough feedback on assignments:

*I give detailed feedback and the worse the unit, the more feedback there is. Some of them will say when they read my comments, "I understand what you're saying and I see that I need to do this, this or this." But, there are others who just go ballistic and say, "I've never had such a poor mark." They are very focused on marks.*

Fiona lamented using American texts for two of her AQ Reading courses but tried to work around it by providing other options for supplementary reading:

*The greatest criticism is that it [the text] is American but I can't find an equivalent Canadian text. I do give the students an option to do online Canadian research. Nobody has ever taken me up on the offer.*

*Instructor perceptions of literacy teachers' preparedness for teaching literacy.* When

Fiona was asked about her perceptions of teachers' preparedness for teaching literacy, she explained that some of her course participants arrived without basic understandings about literacy:

*I have to define literature because most of them don't even understand the concept of literature. I had somebody this summer ask me to define fiction. What did I mean by fiction? I said, "You have a dictionary, use it." I'm not telling a teacher what fiction is. I walk away shaking my head.*

Several knew very little about balanced models of literacy:

*I'm still amazed at the fact that a lot of students in Part I, even Part II haven't even mastered the basics of literacy. I have lots of people who haven't even touched on balanced literacy. I don't know how that's possible in Ontario. It's unbelievable to me that you can work in a school for two or three years and not have some notion of balanced literacy.*

She explained that the majority of participants enrol in AQ Reading courses for any of three reasons:

1. They were frustrated after a difficult first year of inservice teaching and needed further guidance for teaching literacy:

*Many of my students will say, "I'm taking this course because I don't like teaching language arts and I haven't a clue how to do it." I would say that 30% of the students that sign up are people who are really struggling with their program.*

2. They sought a change in pay category: *"I would say 30% probably are looking for a category change in pay."*
3. Or, they were already committed to teaching literacy and seized the opportunity to gain extra knowledge and skills: *"I would say the other 30% are just committed literacy teachers who want to extend their practice."*

A few participants enrolled in the course as a prerequisite for remaining in their current teaching positions:

*Occasionally, I have teachers who are being supervised because of poor practice and they've been told they have to take the course. At some point during the course, they inform me that this is part of keeping their job. Most of them are nice people, they just need to have some strategies and some knowledge and some ideas how to proceed.*

According to Fiona, more females than males (reportedly 3% of all participants), and more elementary than secondary teachers (5% of the participants) enrol in her AQ Reading courses.

Comparisons across course registrants led Fiona to believe that student teachers registered in Lakehead's education program were better prepared than many of their peers from other Faculties of Education:

*I have gained a real healthy respect for what Lakehead offers in terms of literacy instruction because I am able to compare it to the whole province. Even students who come out of Lakehead will say in the online courses, "Oh, well we did this at Lakehead and we did that." Other students are constantly saying that's remarkable.*

Similarly, Fiona saw a correlation between school boards with strong mentor/inductee programs and novice teachers who were better prepared to teach literacy effectively:

*There's a pretty consistent connection between boards that have good induction programs and teachers who know what they're doing and boards that don't know. That's just a theory at this point in time but I see a lot of those people in my courses who have a learning partner who is an experienced capable teacher. They're the ones that seem to have the deeper understandings.*

Fiona explained that most novice teachers struggle with planning cohesive literacy programs.

She was surprised to see the lack of communication between novice teachers and their school boards as well as the lack of knowledge regarding Ministry resources:

*They don't know what's happening in their own board. They don't know what's happening in the province. They're not aware of Ministry documents, any of the resources. Most of them do not have anything other than basic planning skills. In our province right now, next to poor assessment practice, planning is in rough shape. For many of these people, planning is just a page number in a teacher guide book in a day log.*

She also reported weaknesses in teachers' abilities to link curriculum expectations with learning and assessment: *"In Ontario you have to plan from expectations. They will list the expectations in a lesson plan, but the instruction and the assessment is not connected to the expectations."* Fiona described the difficulties novice teachers encounter in designing and using appropriate assessment tools:

*Most of them take the provincial rubric, which is gibberish to some teachers, never mind to students. I like to see the rubric written for the student so the student can use it as a checklist or a guide. I have some students who want to do a rubric for everything. There's no way you can do that in the classroom, a rubric for every little thing you do in a day.*

As with preservice attendees, Fiona found that AQ course participants generally wanted recipes for improving their students' reading: *"Teachers want recipes; they don't necessarily want research-driven learning. It's something that I fight all the time."* She also

found that participants carried some misconceptions regarding how best to support their elementary pupils' literacy acquisition. Fiona advised her AQ course participants not to rely so heavily on the home for supporting learning that should be monitored closely in school:

*That was the biggest issue in Part III in the summer. They were doing things like the home teaching sight words . . . stuff that I feel should be done in the classroom and is the responsibility of the classroom teacher. . . Participation [on the] part of the home is a good thing, but you're not going to get all that participation. Stop giving yourself a headache and just get on with it.*

*Influence of AQ reading courses on teachers' understandings and programming.*

According to Fiona, enrolment in the online AQ Reading courses often led teachers to alter their pedagogical viewpoints and to incorporate different, more effective strategies for supporting literacy in the classroom:

*I have a lot of people who tell me right from the very front, they're basic teachers. They believe in lots of drill and lots of workbook pages. Many of them change their opinion, not because I tell them they have to, but because they take part in the discussion and do the readings and realize there might be better ways of doing things.*

The AQ Reading courses also improved teachers' familiarity with research in the field of literacy. Fiona explained that "By the time Part III comes they are citing authors in the field. . . A lot of them are starting to develop hypotheses and theories about literacy learning as these apply to their own classroom." Fiona described teacher registrants as feeling empowered by their new understandings and more willing to play an active role in their teaching:

*At the beginning of those courses, so many teachers are blaming outside influences or forces, and by the end of Part II, beginning of Part III, they're taking responsibility and understanding that they can influence what's happening, whether it's kids whose parents aren't supporting them in school, or whether it's the division doesn't have any concept of good literacy instruction. They understand that they can take their own personal power and do something about it.*

Fiona found that this sense of empowerment often led teachers to pursue leadership roles:

*Many of them, although they're not taking formal leadership positions, understand that they have something to offer their school community in terms of leadership. Many of them will have formulated a plan for what they're going to do. It might be working with a new teacher, it might be setting up a book room, it might be taking responsibility for a literacy night for the parents, but many of them see opportunities and are starting to make solid plans to follow through on those opportunities.*

According to Fiona, seeing heightened levels of personal and professional growth in her AQ

Reading course registrants provided tremendous incentive for teaching the courses:

*Yeah, there's lots of growth, lots of growth. That's why I continue to do this because I feel that I'm having a significant impact on education. I mean it's just with 50 or so students a session, but even so, over time that to me is significant.*

Enrolment in the online AQ Reading courses may have contributed to Sandra's sophisticated use of literacy strategies for supporting students' reading, writing and comprehension processes. It may also have factored into her decision to take on the roles of literacy coach and early literacy teacher in her first two years of inservice teaching.

For the most part, respondents received sporadic support for designing and implementing literacy programs and activities within their schools. One-shot professional development largely characterized the model of delivery for the professional development activities to which the respondents were exposed. The exceptions were Marnie and Sandra. Marnie's intense one-week inservice on the IB Program became more meaningful following sustained implementation of the program and a follow-up inservice session later in the year. The IB inservice was not necessarily related to training / acquisition of literacy skills. By comparison, Sandra received ongoing support at school and board levels in and through involvement with a variety of literacy programs and initiatives and was offered a range of professional development activities all in the area of literacy. In addition, she sought extra

training in literacy by enrolling in AQ Reading courses. Sandra also joined an association for experimental education. By the end of year two of inservice teaching, Sandra emerged confident in her abilities as a literacy coach and had achieved a heightened level of skill development and knowledge in terms of literacy teaching/learning. All respondents, Sandra included, reported challenging circumstances during inservice teaching. Sandra's acquisition of literacy skills and knowledge was exceptionally well supported from preservice through to inservice teaching, particularly in comparison with the support received by the other respondents.

### *Successes and Challenges*

By the end of year two of inservice teaching, the teacher participants reported feeling significantly more confident and more relaxed in their classrooms. Each recalled a number of successes and challenges s/he had endured over the past year. Generally, the teacher participants were very excited by their own personal and professional growth as well as their student's personal and academic gains.

Marnie described feeling more confident in her abilities to program for literacy:

*I feel much more confident in teaching literacy, using the different strategies and approaches I've taken. Whether it be individual reading for the projects, or going to another teacher and asking. I feel much more confident.*

These same sentiments were echoed by Don and Sandra. Don was confident in his decision to emphasize process over content:

*I'm far more relaxed about content. The process is everything. Last year I came to realize I wasn't comfortable enough to throw out the content. This year I have no qualms about throwing out content. We just use content as a springboard to get to the process. Where do you look it up? How do you write it out? Those types of things are far more important.*

Don described his second year of inservice teaching as “*fun*” and “*real life teaching*,” a contrast to the previous year spent “*doing behaviour modification with kids as opposed to teaching*.” Where Sandra described herself as “*freaking out for the first part of the year*,” she too acknowledged being “*a lot more calm about it now*.”

By year end, Sandra felt comfortable in her role as early/late literacy teacher. She felt a sense of accomplishment in having supported her colleagues during testing of their students:

*I would help teachers do assessments. I would level the students, take them out and do their reading tests, just to help the teachers. I felt more connected being able to help with the assessments. Although I wasn't technically reporting on anything, I was helping get the data for their reporting.*

Marnie was pleased that she had managed to implement a greater number of approaches and strategies during year two of inservice teaching:

*I've learned and through my learning I've taught different strategies and different approaches through reading, things I never tried in my first year. I would say I feel much more confident working with the students on literacy learning.*

Although teaching ESL had proven very challenging, Marnie emerged with “*a lot of ESL experience*.” She believed that the inquiry method of teaching/learning that she had practiced overseas would make her more employable in Canada: “*I think, from what I've heard, Ontario really wants to head in that direction, towards students being guided, inquiry learning, and having this experience really helped me a lot*.”

Don successfully designed and published a monthly school/community newsletter in year two and was pleased to have accomplished one of his goals:

*This year with the literacy, and actually with the mathematics program, too, things for the community, getting a newsletter going for the school, working with the other teachers who really wanted to try new things, that was good, too, with the kids themselves, the highlights.*

In addition to defining success in terms of their own achievements, Sandra and Mamie equated success to the influential roles they played in promoting students' social and academic skill levels. Sandra was excited by the way her students acted on an excursion to a larger center:

*Being in [city] with them, I was a little bit nervous, and they just blew me away every single day. How well behaved and how they could sit down and order at a restaurant, which none of them had done before. These were things that we practiced in the classroom, ordering off a menu, and how you talk to wait staff. You could tell that it had rubbed off on them . . . watching the students go from not being able to communicate their thoughts or feelings to being able to do that now. Not to the extent maybe that they should or will be able to do eventually, but it's come a really long way through the leadership program and just the experiences we were giving them in the classroom and the focus on oral language and having them be able to really practice those skills.*

Mamie was similarly impressed with her students' acquisition of new skills. She described ways in which one of her students transformed from a non reader to a more proficient one:

*What really impressed me is how much the students have developed in their reading skills and their writing skills. I had a student. At the beginning of the year, she hardly read anything, or she wouldn't choose a book. At the end, she knows how to use a book at her level. She feels confident in her reading and she's excited about reading a book. That makes me feel great, when students see themselves how much they've accomplished.*

Sandra also described how she had successfully introduced games school-wide. She purchased and catalogued the games before providing inservice training to staff members.

The final phase she initiated was to model game playing in the classroom:

*I had all the teachers sit down and I went through the bag with them and we played some of the games. Then, I made a conscious effort to go into every classroom during a time when the teacher would be there and do some of the activities and it was awesome, the kids loved it... It was part of oral language; The board is really focused on oral language and character education, so those two things are so linked to this that it just fit.*

Sandra credited the games with helping students develop greater oral competencies and confidence in group settings:

*Students who wouldn't even look at each other or want to be in a group together would be working together in a group really well and solving problems together and being able to figure out solutions and being able to work really closely together and they were happy with it.*

Several factors appear to have influenced the level of ease with which novice teachers made the transition into inservice teaching. For example, two participants, Sandra and Jane, commented on the availability of appropriate resources and the ways in which availability contributed to planning and implementation of literacy:

- *[Relevant resources] make them [students] more excited to write or to read... Really good resources help build, add to their imagination or skills. With the 6+1 Traits, there's a suggested list of books for the ideas trait. They give you a hundred books that would focus on ideas, and would help you teach the ideas trait. We started a little inner book room. All the ideas books are there and all the organization books are there. You can bring them into the classrooms and say, "Okay, today we're looking at organization. What is organization? I'm going to show you some books that have good organization." (Sandra)*
- *We have a fairly well stocked resource room with lots of games, magnet letters, several guided reading series, as well as a great collection of math and science resources. Our library is reasonably well stocked and our librarian has been very helpful finding things for me. I also have access to [Name] Library in [Name of city]. They send resources up as soon as they come available and most things can stay here for 15 to 30 days. (Jane)*

In part, Sandra attributed her professional growth and emerging confidence to the extensive support she received from her principal:

*He knew that I was doing a lot so he was like, "Anything you need, if you need me to do anything, if you need me to cover a class so you can do PM Benchmark testing or SK testing, or if you need help with anything just let me know." He was very supportive. We had really good communication.*

As well, Sandra's strengths as a literacy teacher were recognized and validated by her pupils' achievement on the Education Quality and Accountability Office [EQAO] testing. When the

results for the previous year arrived (during year two of inservice), Sandra was pleased to note that her pupils had performed better than ever. This unexpected validation served as a further confidence booster:

*This is a tough place to work, and coming back for a second year of teaching has helped us gain more student respect. I know, from the way students remember things I say, to the way they interact with me that my teaching has 'imprinted' them. I think one great accomplishment has been getting last year's EQAOs back. [School] got its first level 4 and I was the teacher!!!*

Although generally satisfied with their own professional growth and developing confidence, the teacher participants were quick to share the challenges of their second year of inservice teaching. Changes in staffing affected novice teachers' positions and interrupted literacy programs and activities already put in motion. Sandra explained how a reduction in staffing affected her role as early/late literacy teacher and resulted in her taking on extra duties in addition to assuming a new role within her school:

*The literacy role was supposed to be that of an elbow support. I'm supposed to be in the classroom helping the teachers, but because of our lack of available staffing, I was in the classroom by myself doing prep coverage while the teachers were on their breaks. It was hard because the role wasn't exactly what it should have been.*

According to Sandra the change in role was totally overwhelming at first. Sandra lamented missed opportunities to develop her emerging pedagogy as a classroom teacher:

*I was very ready to start my 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the classroom and make all the changes that I wanted to make to my literacy program. Now that I am not in the classroom, I feel as though I am an inexperienced teacher once again, and I am re-learning all the ropes that I worked hard to learn last year.*

Sandra found that she now faced a series of unfamiliar and complex roles and was teaching outside her P/J qualifications:

*Last year I was a regular classroom teacher in a split grade 3/4 class. This year my position changed a lot. I had four jobs. I was the later literacy and early literacy teacher for this school, which had originally been two different people*

*and that combined into one. I also taught French and then for the last part of the day, I taught grade 6/7/8 science, social studies, history, geography and art. It not only changed from a primary-junior, which is my qualification, to a junior-intermediate, which I have no experience with, but also taking on the literacy role for the whole school, which had previously been done by a couple of different people.*

Despite a great deal of support from her principal and mentor teacher, Sandra felt the challenge of her new role:

*I think that the learning curve was too steep in the beginning. It was out of control. I didn't know what I was going to be doing or what I should be doing. I got a lot of support. The principal gave me a lot of support. My mentor teacher supported me a lot and was helping me. . .*

Sandra looked forward to continuing in her role as early/late literacy teacher in the upcoming third year of teaching. Changes to her position meant she would be teaching literacy predominantly in place of the social studies/science coverage of the past year:

*They have a whole slide show about what a literacy coach does so that'll help. Then, teaching language, which is something that I love, and being able to do that in the 7/8 class, instead of subjects that I'm not as strong in (history and geography) that I did this year. I was learning, like re-learning all this stuff and then trying to teach it to the best of my ability to the students, while at the same time I was thinking, "Oh my goodness, I have to do these other ten things in the morning before I even get to that point in my day." I think that next year, it will be more focused on literacy as a whole, my whole day will be language and I think that that will be helpful for the staff because I will be more calm and able to focus on what I'm doing. I won't be all over the place like I was this year.*

Sandra noted, however, that program implementation and staff training would once again be influenced by a lack of continuity in the school staffing:

*We thought this year that we were going to keep most of our staff and then we had one maternity leave, two teachers left and then another teacher got a job in her hometown that she's been waiting for, for years. Again, we're going to have a brand new staff next year. I think that makes it hard for the whole school because we started so many good programs this year and now we have to start over with the whole brand new staff. There needs to be more continuity. I finally will have a little bit of continuity because I will be going into a similar position in the Fall.*

For Don, a lack of administrative support meant that he, too, often felt overwhelmed. Don explained, “*They [other staff] come to me to find out what to do and I am by no means an expert in any of this stuff. In all honesty, I do a lot by the seat of my pants.*” Despite being a novice teacher, himself, Don assumed a strong leadership role within his school. He took on a variety of tasks, all of which are described below:

- *I assessed all the children in the school so I was able to sit down and help with programming for all of the classroom teachers . . . some mentoring activities. I set up the levelled reading library, and the school newsletter.*
- *I set up the social fund and monitored all that for birthdays to develop some camaraderie amongst staff. I planned parties and activities and Christmas events for staff as well as for kids. I organized and booked. I did everything for the grade seven/eight trip to Ottawa last year. I organized activities. I did the school field day last year. I organized a bunch of local field trips and things like that, bringing larger groups of kids into [city] to the pool.*
- *I wrote all the IEPs for the teachers. I attended all the IPRC meetings with other agencies. I was pretty much the parent liaison on most behavioural matters in the school. I was probably the de facto vice principal in that way.*

Don explained that his principal was largely uninvolved in the day-to-day operations of the school. According to Don, as long as he performed his duties effectively he would have little contact with the principal. During the year end interview, Don lamented not having had a mentor,

*I would like to have a mentor, someone to bounce ideas off of. I know someone like [Name] who’s studying here, would perhaps use me as a mentor, but I still bounce ideas off of her, too. And she’ll give me feedback and stuff, but it doesn’t make her an official mentor, I guess, because she doesn’t have the experience, and neither do I.*

Both Marnie and Don were frustrated by the levels of resource support they received in the classroom. Without guidance or trained support, Marnie struggled to program for a student with learning disabilities:

*I did a lot of, "What can he do and what would I like him to do at the end?" My expectations weren't high. It was very difficult for him. He had an adult to work with, but this adult was not trained. He had no training at all. He had never worked with special [students].*

Don reported a similar scenario. According to Don, all of the educational assistants within his school were unqualified. Don explained:

*It's because the band wants to hire local people. They're slowly moving away from that. I'm going to make the point on a regular basis that you're providing services for those children who need the most assistance with people who have the least qualifications. You're not doing any services for those kids.*

Sandra expressed concern about the level of support she was able to provide to classroom teachers at her school. Designated 'elbow support,' Sandra was unable to model strategies and approaches for classroom teachers due to scheduling conflicts:

*How am I to model when they're not there? I tried to get in. My day was broken down into 20 minute blocks and I would try and get into all the classrooms at least one or two mornings a week and either help with guided reading programs or do modeled lessons. As a literacy leader in the school, I was supposed to be in there with the teachers guiding them as much as I could. A brand new staff, they did need a lot of guidance and I wasn't able to give them.*

Further, Sandra had difficulty assuming her role as leader given the dynamics of her school:

*I'm brand new and they're brand new. We had a couple of teachers who have had teaching experience at other schools and they're a little bit older and I'm not very old. I don't really want to be seen as on a different level from them because I'm not. But, I think that they kind of saw it like that. It's hard as well because our Staff is such a small group and we're all around the same age. We're all women and we hang out together outside of school because it's such a small community, so we're all really good friends.*

At times, Sandra had difficulty moving from her position as 'friend' to that of 'leader:'

*They're like, "Oh come on, this is boring, can we do something else?" You know, it's a hard dynamic I guess, because we're all friends and we're all close. I find in the primary grades they're much more receptive to strategies in these learning communities [than the teachers] in the intermediate grades.*

Don found that scheduling, or in this case, a lack of formal scheduling of resource support, placed too many demands on his time, therein making it difficult for him to assist other classroom teachers with their resource needs. Don was expected to provide resource support on an informal schedule: *"I'm designated as 'you can do this in your spare time'. We'll get you a day or two here and there. They pay me a little more."* Organizing supply teacher coverage added to Don's workload: *"I was taking a day every two weeks or something, having a supply come in, which I hated. It's more work than doing it yourself."*

The teacher participants reported a number of factors, from within and beyond the school, as contributing to negative and /or confused feelings. Sandra grew agitated waiting for a job description for her new role. In the beginning of year two of inservice teaching, Sandra was uncertain of the requirements of her position. She struggled to identify her responsibilities:

*It was hard because I didn't really know what the position entailed and every answer I got was very broad so I had a hard time figuring out what exactly it was I was supposed to be doing. Because my position was different from any other literacy teacher in the board, no one could really tell me what I was supposed to be doing.*

As well, Sandra encountered difficulties balancing the various duties with which she was charged. While supervising pupils on a school trip, Sandra missed her much-needed training for literacy coaches:

*I was going to as many meetings as I could get to. But, because the literacy program [for coaches] was a four year program and this was it's final year, I was coming in at the end of something that had been happening for quite some time. I had to be brought up to speed on the last three years and then also try and catch up and figure out where to go from here. The position changes at the end of this year, and now all the literacy teachers become literacy coaches. I was on a Toronto trip at the last meeting where we [literacy teachers] learned what a literacy coach would be doing, so I'm going to get that training in September or August hopefully.*

Sandra, Candice, Don and Marnie taught in communities where there was little support in the home for English literacy. Thus, literacy teaching and learning took place primarily in the school setting. Don was dismayed by the manner in which parents in his community expressed their discontent with teachers and with the school system in general. He identified the parents as “*a huge challenge. They all hate schools, they hate teachers.*” He described running interference between “*screaming*” parents and “*intimidated*” staff members:

*Parents coming in and complaining about stuff and yelling and screaming and swearing, and if I caught wind of that I would be out in the hallway and directing them outside the classroom or outside the school and off school property because that kind of behaviour is not tolerated. I was big enough that they wouldn't give me any flack. Some of the big native guys come in and yell and intimidate the other teachers. It's created an environment of fear.*

According to Don, the kids vandalized the school and staff parking lot regularly. Apparently, one of the teachers had his tires slashed and another had her aerial ripped off of her car. Don was discouraged by the band's reaction. He was told, “*You can sue the parents. We're not doing anything about it.*”

At the end of his second year of inservice teaching, Don resigned from his position. He had encountered health concerns during the year and decided to seek a position closer to family. Don explained, “*I probably didn't need to go off on a medical leave . . . I really enjoyed the classroom and the kids, but even there, there was some elements in the classroom that were extremely difficult to work with.*” Don felt nervous about procuring a new teaching position: “*I'm nervous about going into a real school board in September. It's like 'wow!' I mean, I know I can do it, but there's this little, 'Geez, I wonder what they do at a real school, as opposed to where I am?'*” Don explained that he expected to encounter similar

behavioural challenges in his future students but looked forward to working in a school system with policies and procedures already in place for managing disturbances:

*I'm not living in Wonderland. The behaviours will perhaps be exactly the same. There will be policies and procedures in place on how to deal with things like that. There's more formal backup as a teacher, underlying if a parent comes in yelling and screaming and brings the Chief in with him. Your principal won't head to the washroom and ignore the situation and leave you alone to deal with it as a teacher. There will be a more formal process to deal with situations like that. There's a lot of relief going into a school board as opposed to being on your own out in the reserve.*

Despite a number of frustrations with his teaching career, cautious optimism was apparent in Don's parting advice to beginning teachers: "*Never stop learning and never stop experimenting. Don't be afraid to try new things and make it fun and exciting, make it creative and allow the kids to just take off.*"

Although Marnie enjoyed her new school and her close cooperation with a colleague who taught Grade 3, she found classroom management very difficult with her new class:

*This year, my class has not yet done a drama. I don't have the confidence to work with this class for a drama. They are very difficult to control when there are active activities involved. They also have a difficult time listening and following instructions. Of the 16 students I do have, only two show positive leadership skills.*

As well, she described the academic differences she noticed between her field experiences in Canada and literacy teaching in her new position:

*The biggest difference in comparison to my practicum teaching in Canada is the language barrier. Students have much less English than in Canada (ESL) so if they feel they are challenged students will shut down and don't want to do their work. A book or a writing activity that challenges their thinking creates a chore for them, and a frustration for the teacher.*

Marnie found that language barriers between herself and her pupils made teaching more challenging:

*English is their second language. That was difficult for me. If I did a read-aloud, they didn't have an understanding. I would have to go below their reading level. That was difficult at the beginning of the year. By the end they were more at a grade four level, which was very exciting for me. But the challenge was their English was very low in their grammar skills, or their word work skills.*

At the end of her second year of inservice teaching, Marnie resigned from her position at the international school, determined to return to Canada to seek employment in her chosen career.

### *Summary*

Novice teachers reported feeling more prepared and more relaxed during year two of inservice teaching. Midway through year two, they felt better adjusted to the demands associated with their roles as literacy teachers. Only Marnie continued to emphasize classroom management as an ongoing issue. According to Marnie, the language barriers in her ESL classroom, left students frustrated and may have contributed to their acting-out. In the absence of classroom management issues, Sandra, Don and Candice were better able to focus on their own professional growth and their students' academic growth. Don celebrated writing a school newsletter. Sandra expressed pride in her students' developing oracy and confidence.

Novice teachers specifically identified a number of factors as contributing to their increasing sense of confidence within the classroom. Sandra and Jane found that the availability of excellent and varied resources made literacy programming and implementation easier and more effective. Sandra acknowledged the support she received from her principal as a factor in her developing confidence. In addition to providing release time for professional learning activities, Sandra's principal recognized her hard work and supported her ideas.

Novice teachers also cited a number of challenges that made teaching more difficult. Sandra was particularly dismayed by the high staff turnover rate within her school. Changes in staffing meant roles / expectations had to be reassigned and programs already in place for supporting student acquisition of literacy were interrupted. Sandra noted a “*lack of continuity in school as a whole.*” She commented that her own emerging understanding of pedagogy had been interrupted at the beginning of year two of inservice teaching by changes in her role assignment within the school. Self-identifying as the “*defacto vice principal,*” Don assumed a number of leadership roles, including special education coordinator, social convenor, and newsletter writer. Don lamented not having a mentor to inform his development and program implementation. Both he and Marnie struggled to program for students with special needs. Untrained resource personnel contributed to their frustrations. Sandra, Marnie and Don explained that lack of support for English language arts and literacy in the home compounded their difficulties. Teacher advocacy emerged as an issue in Don’s school. The absence of in-school policies and procedures for managing student disturbances left teachers with little recompense for dealing with behavioural problems. As well, Don commented on the sense of helplessness teachers felt when left on their own to manage yelling or distressed parents, accompanied by the band Chief.

Two novice teachers resigned from their teaching assignments at the end of year two of inservice teaching. During his year-end interview following year one of inservice teaching, Don had expressed interest in pursuing principal qualifications and remaining at his school. Don identified lack of advocacy from his principal and band council, along with health concerns as influencing his decision to seek employment in a more urban setting. Marnie

identified language barriers, classroom management issues and lack of support within her overseas IB school as influencing her decision to seek a teaching position in Canada.

### Interpretation: Years One and Two of Inservice Teaching

#### Montage

We sat there, she and I  
Spiced curried nuts and sharp cheddar biscuits between us  
Her wasp nest torso commanding our attention<sup>3</sup>...

She, little past fifty, lithe, dancer's body immortalized  
Deservedly revelling in her achievements:  
Hardships disguised,  
Entombed in layer upon layer of delicate wasp nests  
Her medium of choice pieced tenderly, lovingly, painstakingly

Own these breasts or not?  
Trouble the notion, hmmm  
The relationship between artist and art  
Separable or not?

And so we sat, plotting how best to introduce this piece  
Surely the art speaks for itself?  
Eisner and Gardner dropped in  
Drawn by the discourse.  
They began speaking of pluralisms, multiple ways of knowing,  
"Why privilege one symbol system over another?" Eisner raged.

"You know, it would be really cool," she ventured, to no one in particular,  
"If I shared my torso, while Deezi played piano... And you (she carelessly waggled  
her finger in my direction), you might like to read something... a poem, a verse, something  
you wrote about my torso."  
"Ah," Eisner sighed approvingly, "multiple symbol systems intermingled to  
Intensify meaning and invoke deeper response."

And I, I sat there incredulous, wondering how a simple conversation  
about a wasp nest torso could become so surreal.  
'It can't all be about teaching and learning,' I mused.  
'Or can it?'

By Laurie E. Leslie

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<sup>3</sup> This poem was inspired by a conversation shared between a friend and me. This particular friend is an artist. When not working on her own pieces, she works with elementary teachers and students as part of her Art in the Schools commitment. My friend had recently produced a wasp nest torso (produced much the same as one would make a plaster cast, but with torn pieces of wasp nest being used as the medium). In this sense, my friend was literally immortalized by her wasp nest torso. She sought my input into how she might best introduce/share her torso with an audience. The sublimeness of this situation captured my interest and led me to ponder ways in which my friend's dilemma might be resolved via a pluralistic approach, drawing on multimodalities, symbol systems and intelligences as modes of representation.

The interpretation of the findings for years one and two of inservice teaching is organized around the following two topics: transitions from preservice to inservice teaching and perceived effectiveness of the preservice program.

#### *Transitions from Preservice to Inservice Teaching*

The transition from preservice to inservice teaching was described as being challenging by each of the respondents. For Sandra, however, the path was far easier, less lonely and more rewarding than for the others. The teacher participants reported a number of factors and conditions as contributing to and/or hindering their professional development of skills, knowledge and confidence. These are outlined in Figure 3. The factors influencing novice teachers' emerging identities, understandings and confidence were interrelated. For example, sufficient or insufficient 'vision' of literacy teaching/learning from preservice training influenced teachers' ability to plan cohesively, which in turn, influenced how they felt about themselves and their classroom experiences. The level of support, agency and cooperation novice teachers received from their school boards/board councils, principals, colleagues, resource personnel, parents and students emerged as a significant factor in their overall feelings of confidence and fulfillment. The level of support influenced such factors as the availability of material and human resources, including prescriptive literacy programs and scheduling of literacy support persons, as well as the induction, mentorship and professional development opportunities offered to novice teachers. In turn, these factors influenced novice teachers' adoption and implementation of literacy programs, how they felt about themselves as educators, their resource selection, and the development of a clear, cohesive pedagogy.

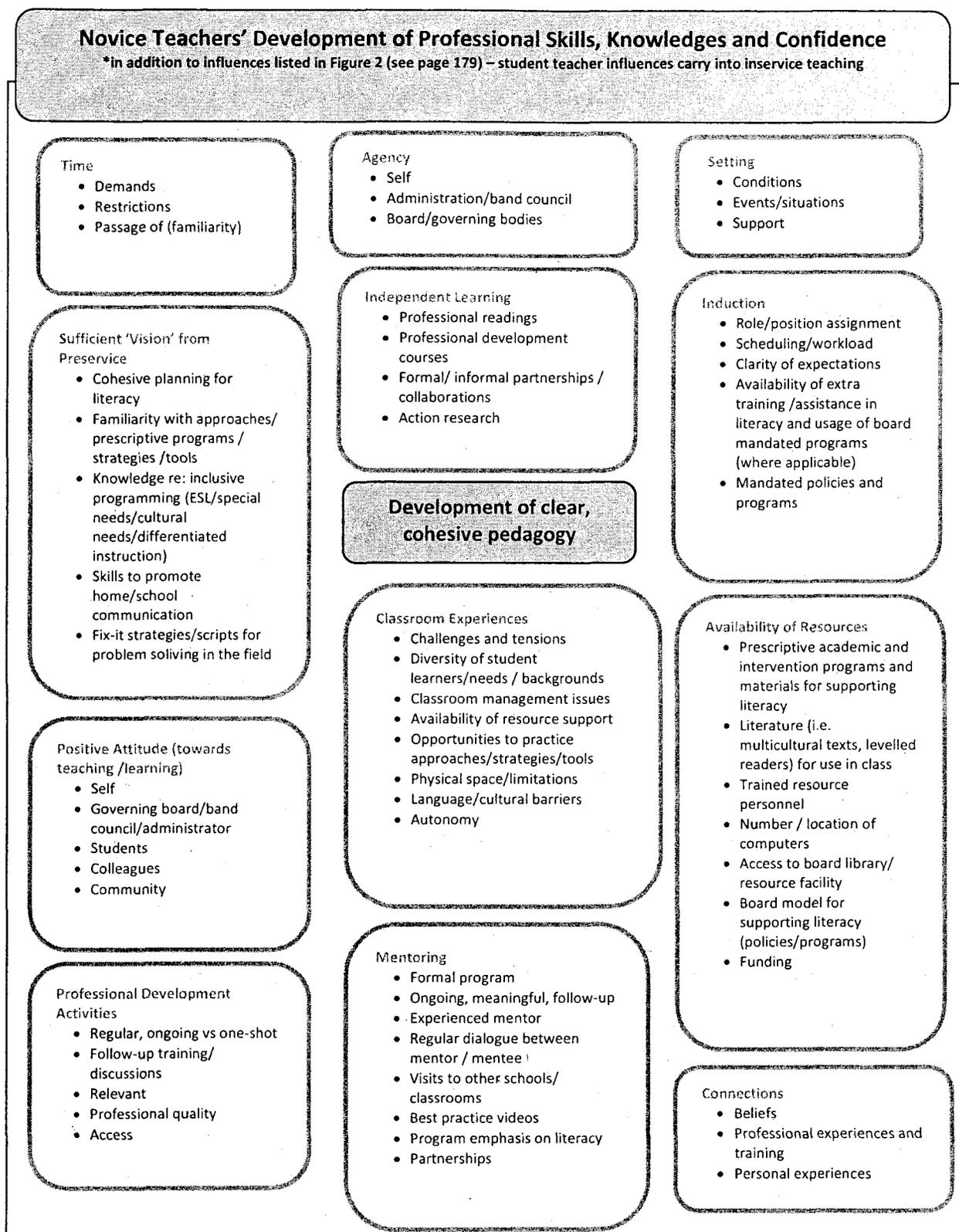


Figure 3. Factors influencing novice teachers' development of professional skills, knowledges and confidence

Each of the participants reported not having enough time to accomplish his or her goals for enacting the 'visions' of literacy introduced during preservice and subsequent inservice training. As well, difficult conditions and events in the surrounding community, particularly in Aboriginal settings, had potential to interrupt programming within the school and to intensify participants' feelings. Predictably, novice teachers' ability and/or willingness to engage in independent learning, whether supplementary to formal mentorship and training, or in its absence, also influenced approach and strategy usage, as well as emerging confidence, attitude, and development of clear, cohesive pedagogy. Respondents reported drawing upon skills and knowledges acquired prior to preservice, for example, from related personal and professional experiences. This was evidenced in Sandra's use of experiential learning (hiking) and Don's diagnostic testing of students.

Generally, novice teachers attributed feelings of success in designing and implementing effective literacy programs to a variety of factors:

- sufficient 'vision' from the preservice education program;
- accumulation of experience in the classroom;
- increased familiarity with language arts content and expectations and with their students;
- social and academic growth of their students;
- supportive community and school settings;
- availability of resources and extra professional training, including the existence of formal mentorship programs; and,
- connections to previous experiences, training and beliefs.

Similarly, a number of factors were identified as contributing to a sense of frustration:

- lack of agency and support (administrative and/or home);
- lack of continuity in staffing, position assignment, school initiatives, and program usage;
- professionally demanding and/or unclear job assignment;
- lack of and/or poorly trained resource staff;
- inappropriate scheduling of resource support;
- classroom management issues;
- discrepancies between academic demands and theoretical understandings;
- lack of policies and/or procedures for governing school operations;
- language barriers in ESL teaching and learning; and,
- health problems tied to stress, overwork and/or school or parent demands.

Each of the teacher participants commenced full-time teaching soon after graduating from the preservice program. Marnie and Jane accepted positions overseas. Three teachers, Don, Candice and Sandra, began teaching in rural and/or remote northern school boards, predominantly Aboriginal in population. Three of the first year teachers, Don, Candice and Sandra, were placed in split-grade classrooms. Only one participant, Sandra, received any formal mentorship in her first year of teaching.

From the vantage point of 'experience,' participants reported varying degrees of excellence in the literacy/language arts courses to which they had been exposed in preservice education. They valued practical applications fostered in coursework, field work and independent study; however, they rated their field experiences as most significant in shaping their understandings of literacy education. For Don, a lack of consistency across courses, instructors, and course/field experiences contributed to heightened feelings of frustration

during year one of inservice teaching. Marnie found the language barriers difficult to overcome in her ESL classroom overseas.

Sociocultural theory (Beck et al., 2007; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Grossman et al., 1999; Mallette et al., 2000) suggests that individuals' understandings and practices are influenced by the various settings in which they find themselves. Thus, the concepts, approaches, strategies and tools to which teacher participants were introduced in their preservice coursework and practica influenced the approaches they adopted in the field (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Grossman et al., 2000), just as the settings they encountered in the field influenced their implementation of approaches. Consistencies across preservice and inservice settings would better support novice teachers' adoption and use of effective and innovative approaches, strategies and tools.

Early in year one of inservice teaching, all five teacher participants reported feeling completely overwhelmed by their teaching assignments and related responsibilities. Diverse student populations, split-grade classroom placements, late grade assignment and complex role descriptions threw novice teacher participants into survival mode. As a result, time needed for solidifying emerging pedagogical understandings was expended on classroom management and a variety of other tasks. These findings support Liston, Whitcomb and Borko's (2006) claims that new teachers lack the wisdom and time-saving skills of veteran teachers; thus, "every aspect of a [new] teacher's workload is time-consuming and cumulatively it is exhausting" (p. 353).

The teacher participants reported variations in terms of the support they received from administration and other staff members during their first two years of inservice teaching. Where Sandra received support from her principal and an assigned mentor, in addition to

extra literacy training relative to her roles as classroom teacher in year one inservice and early/late literacy coach in year two inservice, the other four participants were largely left on their own to seek opportunities for mentorship. Some, like Jane and Candice, sought informal guidance from more experienced teachers. Marnie worked with other teachers to co-plan grade expectations and curriculum. One novice teacher, Don, was responsible for providing mentorship to younger novice teachers. Don brought a range of experiences from his previous career, particularly to his role as diagnostician; however, he reported 'flying by the seat of his pants' in his new role as mentor to colleagues.

At the school level, decisions regarding timetabling, support staff, extra training, and administrative policies had potential to support and/or hinder effective teaching of literacy, depending on the nature of the decisions. In some cases, novice teachers were assigned duties beyond their range/level of expertise, had to work around demanding limitations and were not given access to training and /or resources. The frustrations encountered by the respondents underscore the importance of strong administrative support and leadership. These findings lend credence to those of Liston, Whitcomb and Borko (2006), who outline several features of schools that are organized for teacher and student success and learning:

They have principals who are instructional leaders and who develop personal relationships with new teachers; they give new teachers appropriate and reasonable assignments; they provide sufficient supplies and equipment to support student learning; they have reasonable and consistent policies and infrastructure; they use teachers' time well' they establish schoolwide standards for student behaviour; they provide coordinated student support services; and they build bridges with parents. (p. 354)

Presence or absence of the features outlined by Liston et al. (2006) contributed to the ease with which the novice teacher participants, in this study, adjusted to the demands of inservice

teaching. Sandra's entrance into inservice teaching most resembled the ideal scenario described by Liston et al.

Many researchers contend that carefully designed and implemented programs for inducting and mentoring novice teachers offer tremendous potential for enhancing novice teachers' morale and professional and pedagogical development (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Beck et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fang, Fu & Lamme, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hughes et al., 2001; Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006). A number of these researchers stress the importance of university/school partnerships in fostering early years' teacher support (Beck & Kosnik, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006). This research further supports these findings.

Sandra's understandings regarding cohesive planning for literacy appear to have been influenced by a number of factors, including her extensive literacy training, formal mentorship opportunities and ease of access to resources. Sandra's preservice training in literacy was supplemented by independent learning such as the Reading Specialist Qualifications, membership in an education-based association and board-initiated training. As a component of her roles as classroom teacher and early/late literacy coach, Sandra received extra training in prescriptive programs for supporting literacy. Sandra's principal recognized her commitment to teaching and to the school. He praised Sandra's efforts and supported her development as a literacy coach.

In terms of strategy usage, Sandra was able to combine a variety of effective strategies within a range of authentic contexts. Marnie and Don, who received less formal support from their schools and administrators, also became adept at scaffolding strategies to promote literacy development; however, their usage of strategies appeared more simplistic

than Sandra's integrative approach. For example, Sandra scaffolded reading by using strategies she learned from her *Reading Recovery* training (re-reading) to heighten student comprehension of the levelled readers from the *PM Benchmarks* program. She also pre-taught vocabulary and ensured relevancy of group and individual student response tasks. Where Marnie also employed literacy strategies and scaffolded her reading, components were initiated separately and not in the simultaneous/integrative manner characteristic of Sandra's strategy usage. This finding is consistent with Grossman et al.'s (2000) findings that curriculum materials, professional development and school/board support have potential to thwart or supplement implementation of ideas and practices introduced in preservice education. Grossman et al.'s research focussed on the implementation of strategies for supporting writing. Their supposition that the curricular materials and resources to which novice teachers are exposed and to which they have access dramatically influence their learning and programming relates to the findings of this study. In developing their literacy programs, the respondents in this study were more likely to incorporate resources that were readily available (from prescriptive programs to levelled readers). This was evident in the strategies respondents used for supporting reading/ comprehension and the development of oral language skills.

Although all five of the teacher participants remained in teaching beyond the end of their first year of inservice teaching, only one novice teacher, Candice, remained in the same teaching position. Marnie and Jane, both of whom were teaching overseas, left their positions. Each felt largely unsupported by administrative policies and/or decisions. Marnie, dissatisfied with the lack of professionalism at her first overseas school moved to a second school in the same province. Her new school was an accredited IB School. Jane, tired of the

language barriers, limited access to professional development opportunities and the difficulties associated with teaching ESL on a rotary schedule left her overseas position for a northern school in Manitoba, with a predominantly Aboriginal population. A contingency of Jane's employment was that she acquire 21 hours of extra certification (math). A respondent who communicated regularly in the first two years of the study, Jane's participation dropped off during the last year of the study as a result of the demands of her new position.

The remaining two participants, Sandra and Don, stayed within the same school setting for years one and two of inservice teaching; however, their job descriptions were significantly changed by administration between the first and second year. Both Sandra and Don were placed in leadership roles characterized by steep learning curves. Each described struggling to meet the demands and to fulfill the expectations of his/her role. Sandra, in particular, reported feelings of pride in having supported student acquisition of literacy through innovative programming. This finding is consistent with the research of Smagorinsky, Cook and Moore (2004) who suggest that the tensions teachers face can actually contribute to their development of effective teaching pedagogy if these tensions play out within a supportive school environment.

Marnie found that the IB approach advocated within the international school in which she was teaching overseas during year two of inservice teaching demanded different skill and knowledge sets than those to which she had been exposed during preservice. The IB approach to education continues to gain increasing popularity in Canada as well as in international schools situated across the world.

Participation in professional development activities resulted in respondents reporting a range of successes and frustrations in their ongoing development as literacy teachers. The

quality of these activities ranged from excellent to extremely poor. Most professional development opportunities were delivered in a 'one-shot' mode of delivery, with minimal, if any, follow-up. The two teacher participants in overseas teaching assignments, Marnie and Jane, were largely dissatisfied with the professional development opportunities proffered.

To supplement her knowledge about literacy teaching/learning, Sandra enrolled in online AQ reading courses. The instructor of these courses, Fiona, had taught Sandra during her preservice year at the Faculty of Education. This fortunate circumstance contributed to consistencies across Sandra's preservice and ongoing learning experiences. Each venue afforded similar valuing of social constructivist principles; emphasis on balanced literacy; use of reflection to promote deeper understandings and personal engagement with course content; sense of community; ownership of learning; and, constructive feedback and praise. The course assignments designed by Fiona, were designed to help teachers make explicit connections between coursework and their own classrooms. The structure of the AQ Reading courses, as described by Fiona, supported a 'learning to teach over time' approach to teacher development, an approach advocated by a number of researchers, including Beck et al. (2005, 2007). Fiona explained that additional coursework in the area of literacy was most often instrumental in helping teachers change or affirm their pedagogical thinking. She noted that graduates of the reading specialist courses developed increased understandings about literacy and research in the field. As well, they became more reflective in their praxis and were empowered to take greater responsibility for their students' learning. Fiona explained that many graduates were motivated by her courses to assume leadership roles in literacy.

Sandra's development as a literacy teacher was influenced by her experiential background, undergraduate and professional degrees, extensive literacy training as literacy

coach and early and late literacy teacher, AQ Reading Specialist qualifications, administrative support, formal mentorship opportunities, inter-school visitations, membership in a professional association, and ease of access to resources. The emphasis on literacy across all formal and informal experiences, as well as the many consistencies in terms of theory and practice, supported Sandra's development of skills and confidence such that she emerged as a literacy leader within her school. These findings suggest that extensive and sustained professional development over time has potential to influence substantive pedagogical development. This is consistent with Feiman-Nemser's (2001) finding that critical professional discourse has potential to deepen subject and curriculum knowledge while honing and building a repertoire of strategies and skills. Sandra enjoyed multiple opportunities for engaging in critical professional discourse with peers, course-mates, and more experienced educators, such as Fiona.

Generally speaking, the difficulties novice teachers encounter in their first years of inservice teaching are well documented in the literature (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Intrator, 2006; Kennedy, 2006; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Loughran, Brown & Doecke, 2001). Loughran et al. (2001) explain that preservice programs, unable to fully create or sustain the same environment equated with the realities of full-time teaching, can never fully prepare student teachers for the demands of inservice teaching. They suggest that a variety of pressures during full-time inservice teaching combine to make it difficult for novice teachers to balance their emerging understandings and expectations with their actual practices. Liston, Whitcomb and Borko (2006), along with Loughran et al. (2001) maintain that transition into inservice teaching becomes even more difficult and demanding in the absence of support structures, whether these are created for or by novice teachers. This certainly was the case in this study.

Novice teachers were able to articulate very clearly the types of supports they needed, received and/or created, as well as the frustrations they encountered in the absence of support. Lack of support may have been instrumental in prompting Don to leave his school at the end of year two of inservice teaching in search of the 'more typical' teaching positions emphasized in preservice. Similarly, an abundance of support may have influenced Sandra's decision to remain within her 'challenging' school and roles.

The respondents readily identified a number of factors as contributing to and/or hindering their feelings of confidence and their emerging sense of pedagogy for teaching language arts during their first two years of inservice teaching. Ultimately, a combination of factors influenced whether or not novice teachers remained in their teaching positions or sought new opportunities.

Teaching in the field offered a new, more informed vantage point, the voice of experience, from which the respondents were able to reflect upon the perceived effectiveness of their preservice literacy training.

*Perceived Effectiveness of the Preservice Program: Looking Back*

With the passage of time, the teacher participants were increasingly able to identify strengths, as well as perceived gaps in their learning, with greater specificity. Generally, the attitudes of the teacher participants remained similar in tone to those expressed at the end of their preservice year. For example, where participants had expounded the virtues of the preservice program in the first year of the study, they continued to look on the program favourably during their first two years of inservice teaching. Similarly, where respondents had been critical of the preservice program in year one of the study, these sentiments carried into years two and three. Beck, Kosnik and Rowsell (2007) urge caution in weighing novice

teachers' complaints about the preservice program given that those novice teachers' understandings continue to develop during inservice teaching:

...we found that new teachers may be unaware of some of the key understandings they gained through their preservice program: for example, about the importance of the teacher-student relationship, the need to build community in the classroom, and the value of collaboration with other teachers. Also, some of the preservice components the new teachers dismiss initially as impractical may become useful later when they are more established and confident in the classroom. (p. 53)

The teacher participants' perceptions, across years one through three of the study, evolved to reflect their emerging understandings as they spent greater time in the field. As well, some components of the preservice program, largely undervalued during and immediately following the program (the role of reflection, for example), acquired value as the novice teachers gained experience in the field. Beck, Kosnik and Rowsell (2007) maintain that confidence and experience lead new teachers to reassess the usefulness of ideas introduced in preservice and often result in appropriation of ideas earlier dismissed.

During their first year of inservice teaching, the respondents expressed confidence in their abilities to incorporate literacy strategies into their programming. By their second year of inservice teaching, they were adept at using a variety of strategies in context with various literacy activities for supporting reading, writing and oral language development. Their usage of strategies in year two of inservice teaching showed increased complexity in comparison to strategy usage during the previous year. Many of the strategies the respondents incorporated into their daily lessons resembled strategies introduced and modeled in their preservice literacy courses and workshops. All five respondents used multiple symbol systems (i.e. drama, sketching, or hiking) in their literacy programs, though print literacy was emphasized predominantly. Multimedia, not widely modeled during preservice education, was not widely used during inservice teaching and was generally limited to viewing/listening modes. Across

participants, the use of critical literacy and multicultural literature ranged from an integral program component (in Sandra's class) to not being used at all.

Trends in the respondents' approach/strategy/tool usage are consistent with findings by Grossman et al. (2000) that teachers' use of strategies and tools introduced in preservice education was more prevalent in their second year of inservice teaching than in their first year. The researchers contend that teachers become increasingly adept at using strategies and tools, in a variety of adaptations and contexts as they reconstruct their understandings and practices (generally during year two of inservice teaching). By year two of inservice teaching, respondents had effectively incorporated a variety of social constructivist teaching / learning strategies into their programming in a variety of sophisticated contexts.

The year one inservice teachers struggled to develop cohesive literacy programs. Sandra's comments about the sheer complexity of literacy captured many of the respondents' frustrations: "*What do you pick and how do you do it?*" This finding is similar to the findings of Kosnik et al. (2007) and Kosnik and Beck (2008) who contend that program planning poses major difficulties for beginning teachers; so much material is presented in preservice education that new teachers find themselves unable to develop a clear, cohesive pedagogy. The researchers (2008) ask, "Can we fully prepare them [student teachers] for the realities of teaching? Can we give them a guaranteed way to develop their literacy program and launch it in September?" (p. 124).

Fiona, one of the three teacher educators and instructor of the AQ Reading courses described in the study; explained that many novice teachers entered her AQ Reading courses not knowing how to develop a cohesive language arts program. She described the ways in

which novice teachers encountered difficulties designing appropriate assessment tools and linking assessment to their learning activities and to curriculum expectations.

During year one of inservice teaching, all five teacher participants reported being overwhelmed by the demands of teaching. Approximately six months into their first year of inservice teaching, four teachers expressed feeling more comfortable in their new roles as language arts teachers. They credited the passage of time, increased familiarity with their teaching assignment/roles/curriculum/expectations (curricular and school) and students, along with the accumulation of experience, with contributing to their emerging sense of understanding, skill and confidence. These findings are consistent with Liston, Whitcomb and Borko's (2006) claims that survival emerges as a prominent theme during the initial months of teaching as novice teachers strive to resolve classroom management problems. In their editorial, the researchers explain that the survival stage gives way to a focus on curriculum teaching practices and eventually student learning by the middle of the first year. As well, Loughran, Brown and Doecke (2001) explain that issues and concerns relevant to teaching become more urgent and/or recognizable with the demands of full-time teaching. They suggest that issues related to classroom management consume first year teachers' attention and time. In this study, the respondents described spending a great deal of energy and time on classroom management issues, particularly in the first half of year one of inservice teaching. As they gained confidence in their classroom management styles and abilities, and became increasingly familiar with their students, schools, roles, curricular expectations and demands, their emphasis on classroom management concerns diminished. Marnie, the exception to this finding, described her work with second language learners challenging throughout the duration of the study.

By year two of inservice teaching, participants no longer reported '*flying by the seat of [their] pants*;' rather, four of the participants were using one or more prescriptive language arts programs such as *CASI*, *PM Benchmarks*, *First Steps*, *Jolly Phonics*, *Four Blocks* and/or *6+1 Writing Traits* to inform program implementation. Vacca, Vacca and Begoray (2005), Grossman et al. (2000), and Kosnik and Beck (2009) suggest that first year teachers, overwhelmed by their hectic schedules, welcome prescribed and/or pre-packaged materials but lack the time, support, confidence and prior knowledge to evaluate critically the effectiveness of such materials. Smagorinsky, Cook and Johnson (2003) caution that novice teachers are more apt to adopt prescriptive literacy programs if their own understandings and beliefs about teaching are fragmented or sketchy. The literacy programs implemented by the respondents during their second year of inservice teaching appeared to be more consistent with social constructivist beliefs than the programs they reported implementing the previous year. In the absence of specific guidelines for teaching (characteristic of overseas settings), one participant, Marnie, used the Ontario curriculum guidelines to support the design and implementation of her language arts programs. Each of the teacher respondents believed that s/he had considerable autonomy in developing her/his literacy program even where specific programs / approaches were board-mandated. Candice, however, maintained the *Jolly Phonics* program in both years.

The literacy programs and approaches described by the respondents reflected the same emphasis on traditional literacy (Dlamini, 2001; Guerra, 2004; Monkman, MacGillivray and Leyva, 2003; Noddings, 2005) that their preservice teacher educators described when they were interviewed. Emphasis was placed on reading, writing and oral language development (to a slightly lesser degree), with minimal focus being given to the use

of multimedia and other literacies. The components not included in the respondents' programming for literacy tell as much about their visions for teaching as do their emphases on reading, writing and oral language.

That Marnie, Jane and Sandra were trying to be inclusive was evident in the range of preferred learning styles and response modes underlying their decisions to incorporate drama, sketching, hiking and building into their students' reading responses. It is not clear, however, why Marnie and Jane chose not to connect students' second and first language learning through use of resources and/or explicit linking of vocabulary and concepts. Only Sandra tapped into students' everyday cultural practices during language arts. From this perspective, minimal emphasis appears to have been placed on students' cultural and/or personal literacy practices during the teaching of language arts. Delpit (2001), Freeman (2001), Guerra (2004) and Schwarzer et al. (2003) are among researchers who criticize in-school adoption of unilingual English models of literacy. They suggest that traditional literacy approaches deny access to the cultural discourses and interests practiced by students outside the classroom.

The teacher respondents taught outside their own cultural backgrounds. They felt underprepared to meet the demands associated with instructing pupils whose cultural beliefs, needs and interests were not familiar. According to the respondents, many of the demands associated with teaching outside one's cultural norms and practices, along with strategies for supporting bridging of pupils' own cultural norms and practices, were skimmed over in preservice and/or not addressed at all.

Kosnik and Beck (2009) suggest that teacher educators might play a role in encouraging novice teachers to see themselves as competent problem solvers during inservice teaching, capable of modifying programs and materials to meet student needs.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) contends that beginning teachers often find themselves in paradoxical situations. They are expected to teach effectively yet most aspects of the teaching environment are unfamiliar – students, the larger community, curriculum and administrative policies and procedures: “Like all beginning professionals, they must demonstrate skills and abilities that they do not yet have and can only gain by beginning to do what they do not yet understand” (p. 102).

During their second year of inservice teaching, four teacher participants, Don, Candice, Jane and Sandra, taught within schools highly populated by First Nations students. Sandra reported being particularly affected by an onslaught of tragic events (three sudden deaths) within her community. Don, Sandra and Candice each reported general sentiments of low self-esteem in the children within their schools. As well, many of the students were assessed well below grade level, with most students requiring extra support for reading and writing. According to Battiste (2005), the oppressive nature of prejudice and racism in Canadian society continues to negatively influence self image, as well as the personal and collective identities of First Nations peoples. Thus, elementary students, like the young students in Sandra’s class, consciously and subconsciously perceive themselves as ‘bad’ students from ‘bad’ reserves. Battiste also suggests that teachers from outside the community often label students as ‘lazy’ or incapable of learning instead of evaluating the biases and relevancy of provincial curricula to students’ lives. Sandra identified with her students’ feelings and made efforts to build their self-esteem and to foster their cultural awarenesses. Don struggled to see his students as capable learners; however, he promoted a ‘white’ curriculum, with minimal valuing of Aboriginal languages, stories, traditions and cultures.

Brindley and Laframboise (2002) stress that the vast majority of young adults entering teacher education continue to be white, middle class, monolingual females (as was the case in this study sample). The researchers explain that increased emphasis on multicultural education is insufficient to inform/alter the limited prior intercultural experiences and idealistic assumptions novice teachers hold regarding the ways in which children learn. Brindley and Laframboise suggest that teacher educators, including educators involved in literacy instruction, have a responsibility to do more to promote cultural understandings. They advocate for use of multicultural literature in preservice to address 'taboo topics' such as racism, diversity and equity, to facilitate teachers' development of a cultural consciousness and mindset and to support teachers' accommodation of differing cultural world views within their own classrooms.

Don's belief that his First Nations pupils and their families wished to avoid '*anything First Nations*,' (interview comments) and his conscious decision to avoid First Nations literature / materials / resources runs contrary to messages contained in the literature. There is consensus among researchers (Bainbridge & Oberg, 2005; Beck et al., 2007; Bradford, 2007; Courtland et al., 2006; Harris & Willis, 2003; Johnston & Mangat, 2003; Ward, 2000) that the purposefulness of multicultural literature extends to all students in that multicultural literature provides multiple viewpoints for exploring cultural representations, as well as issues related to racism and discrimination. According to Bradford (2007), curriculum that aims to homogenize and universalize students also serves to silence constructive discourse on differences and cultural identity. Beck et al. (2007) stress that learning becomes more meaningful when connected to students' lives. This includes connecting reading, writing, viewing and oral language development to the local needs, interests, situations and beliefs of

pupils living in diverse regions. With the exception of Sandra, most of the respondents did not attempt to link their literary selections to local and/or their students' needs, interests and/or situations.

Don made various derogatory comments about the First Nations students, parents, and community. Battiste (2005) and Delpit (2006) emphasize the damage caused by teachers who, like Don, are so focused on cultural differences they refuse to recognize their students as capable learners. Although Mary Clare and I tried to redirect Don's focus, to help him become more reflexive about his practices, his assumptions, and his use of resources in the classroom (for example, by encouraging use of multicultural literature, particularly the wealth of Canadian Aboriginal literature available), we did not directly criticize or explicitly call attention to his opinions. Don was a teacher in the system. No doubt, there are other educators, like Don, with similar views. We believed that silencing Don by drawing attention to the inappropriateness of his comments or forcing him to conform to a more inclusive viewpoint (if only in word) would serve to 'hide' a voice that needs to be portrayed and addressed. For me, our decision to listen to Don's voice was morally problematic. According to Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell (2005), the pain of not addressing racism causes substantial and far-reaching damage:

The reality is that racism hurts all of us. For those of us who are racialized, the sources of discomfort and suffering originate from multiple sites, the physical, the economic and the mental, to name but a few. However, the pain of not addressing racism is all the more dangerous particularly in educational spheres where the minds, subjectivities and futures of minoritized youth are influenced by the information present in the curriculum and in the interactions with their teachers. (p. 155)

In their comments about the preservice program, three of the teacher participants mentioned a need to be exposed to cultures beyond the Aboriginal focus at the study site. Clearly, the

emphasis on Aboriginal education was insufficient and/or ineffective in promoting change in the insular cultural values and beliefs that at least one student teacher, and possibly more, carried into inservice teaching.

This chapter has considered the findings and interpretations as these related to the teacher participants during their first two years of inservice teaching. Chapter Six discusses the conclusions, implications and recommendations for this study.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### In Support of Partnerships

Called the school the other day  
A math concern  
Why so much math homework?  
And... if my kid is so lost... no doubt other kids are too!  
Second student teacher this year! No, third!  
Bonus of living in a Fac. Ed. city

So much enthusiasm... young student teachers... great ideas... creative, engaging  
And so much learning – and I don't mean just the kids, here  
Learning to teach, to pace, to assess, to survive

Called the school the other day  
A math concern  
*So? Could YOU speak to my student teacher?*  
*He's all 'round frustrating!*  
*Sure, it's practice teaching, but in a bubble*  
*It isn't real, no reality*  
*Like teaching in a padded room*  
*Yesterday's math class was a nightmare...*  
*Lecture, lecture, always telling, never modeling, no practicing*  
*Thinks he's still in Intermediate / Senior division*  
*Kids were lost, so mixed up*  
*Finally, he just threw the answers up on the board*  
*There, says he, that's that!*  
*But it wasn't and it isn't.*

Called the school the other day  
A math concern  
*Miss, says I, not my place*  
*To speak to YOUR student teacher, I mean*  
*Sure, I'm an adviser, but not 'HIS'!*  
*Today, I'm just a PARENT*  
*My kid, your class.*

*Well, he's making dreadful mistakes, says she.*  
*Doesn't know what he's doing*  
*So frustrating, says she*  
*He's feeling the pressure*  
*Leaves the end of the week*  
*Has to wrap-up the math unit*  
*Submit the marks*  
*No way he can give that test this week now*  
*So frustrating*  
*He'll just have to go back, do review*  
*Guess I'll have to make the test, assess the kids*  
*'But please reteach parts of the unit first' (hovers unspoken)*  
Is it so essential that the student teacher's unit of study be wrapped up and packaged?  
What happened to collaboration? Mentorship?

Called the school the other day  
 About a math concern  
 "Miss", I hear in my thoughts, "I'm just a parent"  
 An informed parent, but a parent, nevertheless  
 Guess I shouldn't have called  
 Makes simple sense to me  
 She is his associate, his teacher  
 He's just a beginner  
 Shouldn't have to deal with the parents just yet  
 That's her job, running interference, offering continual guidance,  
 modelling, mentoring  
 Helping the novice teacher develop and practice his skills safely  
 Those kids, messing up in math, that's not mine to fix  
 Or do I play a role here?

If I can see the problem, surely she does too!  
 So frustrating  
 What does being an associate teacher entail?

Called the school the other day  
 About a math concern  
 Called as a parent  
 A parent who happens to be a novice instructor at a Faculty of Education  
 In her other life  
 Hung up the phone, a researcher  
 The role of the associate?  
 How clearly is it delineated?  
 To Faculty? Boards? Principals? Associates? Student Teachers?  
 Where does the communication break down?  
 What are the implications?  
 Is one year enough time to cement one's pedagogy?  
 No wonder that associate, that student teacher, my child and I  
 Are all so frustrated...  
 Time for change!

L.E. Leslie

The purpose of this longitudinal study was to describe factors that shape, support and hinder the preparation of elementary teachers for the demanding role of teaching literacy from preservice through the second year of inservice literacy teaching. The participants were ten preservice student teachers, their three literacy teacher educators, and five novice teachers involved in their first two years of literacy teaching. During Year Three of the study, one of the three literacy teacher educators was re-interviewed to permit further exploration of the links between teacher development and ongoing learning and the nature of Additional Qualification Reading courses.

Below, I discuss the conclusions, implications and recommendations. The chapter closes with a reflection on how I am constructing my identity as a literacy teacher educator.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The Faculty of Education at Lakehead University values literacy education. This was evident in the inclusion in the BEd program of a minimum of a 54-hour course or a 72-hour course in the PPOD option on literacy teaching and learning. As well, student teachers also had the option to take elective courses such as drama and early literacy. The PPOD option has the potential to provide student teachers with literacy coaching experience.

Unfortunately, during the year of data collection, the PPOD program was not being implemented as intended, so that not all participants acquired coaching experience.

The student teacher respondents described many ways in which the expertise of their three literacy teacher educators contributed to the overall effectiveness of the teacher preparation program. As a result of team planning, the three educators included similar content in their courses and worked closely with each other to model best practices and to establish a community of learners within their literacy courses. All three were committed to the practices supported within their boards of education and/or communicated within the Ontario Ministry of Education. These teachings were passed on to the student teachers during literacy classes. The degree to which provincial curriculum documents were addressed in the context of the educators' literacy courses varied across instructors. Two of the literacy educators, Pamela and Josie, focussed exclusively on Ontario provincial department guidelines and documents.

The literacy educators had different frameworks for their courses. Fiona held a social constructivist view of learning and attempted to make theory explicit. Pamela and Josie

aimed to prepare their students for the initial years of literacy teaching. The depth and breadth of topics, and the approaches and strategies introduced in literacy classes also varied across the three teacher educators' literacy courses; a greater number of similarities were noted in Josie's and Pamela's classes. A balanced approach to literacy, with particular emphasis on reading, writing and oral language development (to a lesser degree) was fostered across literacy courses. Minimal or no in-course coverage was given to the following areas: programming to meet diverse cultural needs, abilities and interests; familiarity with prescriptive literacy programs; and, technological, multicultural and critical literacies.

There were major strengths in the literacy educators' approaches. For example, the educators created authentic PPOD classrooms in elementary schools where they were able to immerse student teachers in literacy learning environments and class routines. All three educators structured learning opportunities and assignments to link students' understandings about the teaching and learning of literacy to their in-field experiences. As well, each educator used and modelled social constructivist strategies such as modelling of best practices and demonstration of cooperative and experiential "hands-on" learning to actively engage the student teachers in their own learning processes.

Student and novice teachers at the study site were unable to articulate a language of theory. Their discourses on literacy education were limited and reflected partial understandings. As well, novice teachers struggled during their first year of inservice teaching to develop cohesive language arts programs. Their inability to develop cohesive language programming was further compounded by the demands of inservice teaching. Novice teachers struggled to develop cohesive literacy programs while balancing the needs, interests and abilities of diverse student populations as well as various school demands.

The vision of literacy teaching, terminology, frameworks, approaches, strategies and tools introduced by the teacher educators in their literacy courses influenced the visions and pedagogical understandings that their students carried into inservice literacy teaching. This was evident in the design and implementation decisions, inclusions as well as omissions, made by the teacher participants. For example, in programming for literacy, the inservice teacher participants adopted many of the theoretical underpinnings emphasized in preservice education, including constructivist learning processes and practices associated with traditional literacy learning (reading, writing and oral language development). Only one participant, Sandra, emphasized the importance of multicultural literature. As well, the novice teacher participants, all of whom reported minimal preservice exposure to multimedia and to analysis of prescriptive literacy programs, limited their own use of multimedia to presentation modes and were widely accepting of scripted literacy programs they encountered during practicum placements and inservice teaching. The teacher participants seldom applied critical literacy in their valuations of these prescriptive programs.

What is unique to this study is that all of the respondents accepted teaching positions within various diverse settings, including remote or northern areas of the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba and even overseas. Only one participant taught in a publically-funded Ontario school board. According to the respondents, teaching literacy in remote areas, overseas, and/or within English as a Second Language [ESL] classrooms, proposed complexities not addressed in preservice education. The five novice teachers, each with beginner-level understandings of the complexities of literacy and teaching/ learning theories and practices, were initially “thrown” into what Feiman-Nemser (2001) identifies as ‘survival mode’ as they attempted to design effective literacy programs while juggling a host

of competing external influences. Many of these influences were tied to lack of familiarity with all aspects of teaching, including: (i) the school (setting, policies and routines), students, community, language and cultural norms; (ii) the teaching role and responsibilities; (iii) the curriculum guidelines (where relevant), content and expectations; and, (iv) a repertoire of strategies for supporting diverse student needs, abilities and interests. Late assignment of teaching responsibilities, split grade and complex role assignment and lack of formal mentorship/induction programs added challenges to the demands already faced by the beginning literacy teachers.

In many ways, Sandra's portrait is a story of success. This young teacher managed to develop a sense of vision for the teaching and learning of literacy despite challenging teaching assignments in her first two years of teaching literacy. Sandra taught in a remote, northern public school identified as being 'at risk' by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The community within which Sandra taught, predominantly Aboriginal in population, was plagued by hardship. In her first year of teaching, Sandra was assigned a split-grade classroom (Grades 3/4). In her second year of teaching, Sandra's board assigned her in another challenging position – as the early/late literacy teacher who also provided preparation coverage for French and Grades 6/7/8 Science, Social Studies and Art – an action which may have proven too challenging for most beginning teachers. This assignment placed Sandra in the difficult role of learning anew, distinguished from maintaining and continuing to build upon her first year's teaching experience. Sandra's rapid ascent into leadership was further accentuated when she was asked to become a mentor teacher at the end of her second year of inservice teaching.

Sandra's transition from preservice to inservice teaching was facilitated by the formal mentorship program in her school / board. She was the only teacher in the study who had available to her a formal mentoring program which was sustained over time. Sandra was further supported by ongoing opportunities to engage in professional activities related to literacy teaching and learning. As well, the school principal regularly praised Sandra's efforts and commitment to literacy teaching / learning. In her first year of inservice teaching, Sandra's principal invited her to co-present at several literacy workshops at schools in the region. As well, Sandra's principal ensured that Sandra had access to and coverage for participation in inter-school visitations and literacy inservice sessions with other literacy coaches.

Early in her first year of teaching, Sandra showed initiative, industry and creativity. Sandra demonstrated metacognitive awareness of her strengths and, indeed, the challenges of her new teaching position, by enrolling in the Reading Specialist AQ courses. Sandra was able to juxtapose both prescriptive and other more relevant resources with experiential learning. She respected her students and was able to motivate and build the self-esteem of the Aboriginal children in her first class. She also joined a professional association.

One point that distinguishes Sandra's portrait from the other respondents is that she was the only beginning teacher in the study who received any formal acknowledgement or affirmation of her role as a teacher. This occurred, for example, when students from Sandra's Grade 3 class were assessed at a level four for literacy on the Education Quality and Accountability Office [EQAO] provincial test; this was the first time in the school's history that students had achieved at the highest performance level.

Marnie and Jane shared similar experiences during their first year of inservice teaching. Both accepted teaching positions overseas, near large urban centers. Marnie accepted a position teaching Grade 5 overseas in a private international school near a large Asian city. Jane instructed rotary English in a private primary school within a large Mediterranean country. Committed to bettering their students' English literacy levels, each drew heavily upon the approaches and strategies to which she had been exposed during her preservice literacy courses. Both Marnie and Jane expressed dissatisfaction with the levels of administrative support offered in their respective school settings. As well, each lamented the lack of professional development proffered to teachers. Marnie tried to participate in professional activities but found them to be poorly developed. Jane's participation was curtailed. Although she had access to professional development activities, these were conducted in various regions of the city and necessitated travel. Unable to speak the local language, Jane was not comfortable taking public transit.

Jane was impressed by the abundance and excellence of student resource materials to which she had access. Marnie was left struggling to secure more current resources for her students. Jane felt isolated in her overseas position. Language barriers between / among Jane, some of her colleagues and her students contributed to these feelings. The constraints associated with teaching on a rotary timetable (no assigned classroom, lack of space for planning and publishing student works) added to Jane's growing discontent.

At the end of the first year of inservice teaching, both Marnie and Jane left their teaching positions in search of more supportive placements. These decisions attest to their spirit and commitment to remain in the field of teaching, as well as their initiative for self advocacy. In her second year of inservice teaching, Marnie accepted a position teaching

Grade 4 at an international IB school. This school was situated in a different province of the same Asian country in which Marnie had taught the previous year. The IB program implemented at her new school demanded different skill sets than those to which Marnie had been introduced during preservice. For example, although Marnie had experimented with theme-based learning during preservice education, she felt ill-prepared to design and implement the inquiry-based approach mandated by the IB program. Eventually, additional training facilitated Marnie's understandings and delivery of the IB program. Clearer and more prompt communication of expectations (for example, concerning 'text types') between administrative staff and new teachers would have alleviated some of the initial confusion and frustration Marnie endured.

In the absence of curriculum guidelines, Marnie co-planned with a colleague, accessing the Ontario curriculum online and incorporating its guidelines into her teaching. Marnie continued to experiment with the approaches, strategies and tools introduced during preservice, creatively combining these with the prescriptive programs (*Four Blocks* and *6+1 Writing Traits*) in which she received training through her school.

Marnie attributed a number of classroom management problems to language barriers between herself and her students. These difficulties interfered with Marnie's usage of interactive learning strategies such as drama. At the end of her second year of inservice teaching, Marnie resigned from her position overseas. Marnie felt confident that her ESL and inquiry-based learning experiences would be put to good use in a Canadian classroom.

Jane accepted a position teaching Grade one in an Aboriginal school in Northern Manitoba. As a condition of her new position, Jane was expected to take 25 hours of additional training. These demands were unreasonable for a novice teacher entering a new,

unfamiliar environment. Jane's board might have taken a more proactive approach by providing support in the form of professional development related, for example, to teaching Aboriginal children or ESL learning and teaching. The challenges of her new position were so great that Jane's voice eventually grew silent.

Candice secured her first teaching position in a small First Nations' school on a reserve in Northern Ontario. She taught JK/SK at the same school for her first two years of inservice teaching. Candice lived in her school's community during the week, returning home to a more urban setting on weekends. Candice was assigned her first position in September. Feeling ill-prepared to teach early literacy, Candice sought support from other educators, including resource personnel. She adopted the *Jolly Phonics* program early in her first year of teaching. Candice soon settled into the routines of teaching, seldom describing her own professional growth, her students' literacy development or the influences of her First Nation's community on her teaching. There was no evidence of critical reflection on her practices.

Don also taught in a small reserve school in Northern Ontario. He entered into teaching after a twenty-five year career in another discipline. Don likely received his first teaching position on the merits of his newly minted Bachelor of Education and the strength of his previous career. He was immediately catapulted into a position with overwhelming responsibilities and very few supports. Don was assigned Grade 7/8 (half time) and was designated the school Special Education Teacher (also a half-time position) in his first year of teaching. In his second year of teaching, Don taught Grades 3/4/5/6/7 and assisted with Special Education in his 'spare' time. As well, Don assumed responsibilities as school social convenor, advisor/mentor and policy and newsletter writer.

Don was situated in an Aboriginal community which he began to view from an increasingly negative perspective. For example, he believed that parents in the community did not act in their children's best interests. He also commented on children's vandalism of the school and teachers' vehicles. Don's negative stance towards the community likely impacted the self-esteem and learning of his students.

Don taught and provided support to a diverse range of students, with a variety of special needs. He drew heavily on his previous career knowledge in designing and implementing literacy programs and for supporting non-verbal students as well as children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Attention Deficit Disorders.

Don lamented the lack of support provided by his principal and Band council. At the time of the study, Don's principal did not have Ontario principal certification. According to Don, there was little or no teacher advocacy within the school. Although Don was given release time to attend regional literacy conferences run by the nearby public board of education, literacy support at the school level was minimal. This becomes increasingly apparent when consideration is given to the ways in which Sandra's board and principal supported her development as a literacy teacher. For example, Sandra's transition into inservice teaching was supported through a formal mentorship program. Don, with a beginning teacher's understandings regarding literacy teaching/learning, became a mentor to his colleagues early in his first year of inservice teaching. The Band did not advocate implementation of remedial literacy programs (prescriptive or otherwise) nor were these in place; EAs were largely unqualified; resource support was not formally time-tabled; and, few policies/initiatives governed or supported culturally sensitive teaching / learning of Aboriginal materials and subject matter.

Early in year two of inservice teaching, Don expressed his intentions for obtaining Ontario principal certification and providing leadership within his school. Where Don enjoyed being recognized as a “resource” by his school and Band, he eventually became frustrated by the lack of administrative support, including policies for acceptable student behaviours. Don departed from his position before his goals could be realized.

Cumulatively, the teacher educator and student and novice teacher portraits, as well as the preservice and inservice teaching portrayals, illustrate a need for more purposeful, sustained, connective learning throughout preservice and into inservice education.

A responsible, progressive vision of teaching recognizes literacy as ever-expanding. It prioritizes language arts and literacy via time allotted for literacy courses, and scheduling and availability of compulsory and elective literacy courses and resources. It also emphasizes a multicultural focus (beyond specialized compulsory subject-specific courses), along with a critical perspective.

The vision of teaching promoted within the Faculty of Education, as well as the ways in which this vision was communicated (programs offered / courses / structuring of practicum experiences), influenced student and novice teachers’ assumptions and practices. Consistency across theoretical / practical perspectives throughout preservice education (in-course and in-field) and into inservice education influenced novice teachers’ understandings and increased the likelihood of which best practices and theoretical approaches were implemented in novice teachers’ curriculum design and implementation.

The wide range in roles graduates of Bachelor of Education programs may be expected to fill and settings in which they might teach (as experienced by respondents in this study) further highlight the complexities Faculties of Education assume in preparing teachers

to teach literacy effectively. They also underscore a need for establishment of a professional learning continuum. Strong leadership within Faculties of Education is characterized by a dynamic, reflexive and seamless approach to teacher education, one which is grounded in the research on teacher preparation and responds to changing needs within the education system. The emphasis universities place on publication as the preferred means for attaining tenure influences the prioritization academic teacher educators give to preparation and teaching of courses, including literacy courses, and affects the time they are willing and able to allot to student teachers and to the formation and support of partnerships across educational institutions.

*Seamless Learning* (Beck and Kosnik, 2000; Darling Hammond, 2006; Ketter and Stoffel, 2008; Lukin et al., 2004), characterized by tight coherence and integration among courses and between coursework and field work is essential to heightening the overall effectiveness of preservice programs and teacher preparedness. Coherence and integration among courses and between coursework and field work is dependent upon a number of factors, including factors within Faculties of Education (for example, literacy teacher expertise and preservice program delivery models), and factors beyond the confines of Faculties of Education (practicum settings and associate teachers' feedback, for example). Ideally, seamless learning begins with the formation of strong partnerships within Faculties of Education and between Faculties of Education, school boards, band councils, and schools; and, across preservice educators, principals, associate and other inservice teachers. I write 'ideally' because partnerships not founded upon mutual goals and values amount to little more than formality.

A sustained model of learning, beginning with preservice courses and practicum experiences and fostered during inservice training, has potential to model and support effective teaching. Central to a sustained model for teacher education is the key role universities play in supporting the development of partnerships. Induction / mentorship programs and professional development opportunities, developed and supported through these partnerships, have potential to facilitate and inform teacher preparation as well as areas of need for future research into teacher preparation. Open communication across partners has potential to inform the types of skills and knowledges novice teachers need to develop to effectively teach language arts and literacy to diverse student populations.

No 'one' path exists, nor should it exist, for better preparing preservice teachers to meet the demands of inservice teaching. The existence of multiple paths is reassuring. Both the complexities of literacy and the demands associated with inservice teaching are ever-changing. Such a fluid environment necessitates development of models that are equally dynamic.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations address three strands: teacher educators, Faculties of Education, and future research.

#### *Literacy Teacher Educators*

1. Teacher educators need to communicate a more encompassing, inclusive definition of literacy in all courses, workshops and other professional development activities (preservice and inservice) for student and novice teachers. This definition of literacy needs to give consideration to the actual literacies being practiced by diverse student populations in diverse settings and to: (i) be more culturally responsive; (ii) target

- ESL and ELL learners as well as other learners with special social, behavioural and/or academic needs; and, (iii) recognize and value new and emerging multi literacies.
2. Literacy teacher educators need to incorporate increased opportunities for experiential learning dialogue and reflection on areas related to literacy teaching / learning into of their courses. Students need greater opportunities to reflect beyond the 'ideal' classroom to consider the ways in which diversity (i.e. cultural / social / academic) across students and settings might influence their implementation of approaches, strategies and tools during inservice teaching. Such discussions have potential to inform novice teachers' abilities to problem solve during inservice teaching.
  3. Literacy teacher educators need to incorporate opportunities within their literacy courses for preservice students to engage with and critically evaluate prescriptive literacy programs and materials such as *Jolly Phonics*, *6 + 1 Writing Traits*, *Four Blocks* and other programs and tools being used in today's classrooms to support and/or assess literacy teaching and learning.

#### *Faculties of Education*

4. Teaching / learning of literacy needs to be prioritized at Faculties of Education through sufficient allotment of time and range of courses for supporting teaching / learning of literacy. Courses need to be developed, structured and implemented such that student teachers develop a sufficient vision of literacy to sustain them in their early years of literacy teaching.
5. An ongoing approach to teaching / learning of literacy needs to be advocated during the preservice year and supported during inservice teaching via a professional continuum of learning. A continuum of learning has potential to support student and

novice teachers' practice of self advocacy in the face of challenging teaching assignments and/or classroom management issues.

6. Preparation for teaching literacy needs to be expanded to target the more diverse range of scenarios in which novice literacy teachers find themselves versus the 'ideal,' or 'assumed' scenario, which may or may not exist. Additional compulsory courses (multiculturalism and diversity, for example) and elective courses (i.e. teaching overseas or teaching in rural and/or remote settings) might be added to preservice and/or AQ course offerings. As well, Faculties of Education might better support the development of peer / professional networks for a more sustained approach to learning.
7. Faculties of Education need to assume a leadership role in establishing and nurturing partnerships between increasing numbers of stakeholders, including, for example: other Faculties of Education, ministries of education, band councils, school boards, a range of publically and privately funded schools (including international and IB schools), administrators, teachers, parents and community members. Preparation of student teachers and support of novice teachers for teaching literacy in a variety of settings can and needs to be better supported through the establishment of stronger partnerships.
8. Tenured and contract teacher educators need to establish cooperative planning teams within and across departments if literacy is to be prioritized within Faculties of Education. Interdepartmental planning also offers potential for reducing 'busy' work and supporting student teacher development of a stronger vision of literacy education through more cohesive programming for teacher preparation.

*Future Research*

9. What are the influences on preservice teacher educators' constructions of a vision for literacy teaching? How do these visions evolve through the early years of teaching?
10.
  - i. What priorities do literacy instructors hold for planning, development, implementation and evaluation of their courses?
  - ii. What theories do preservice teacher educators emphasize? How are these embodied in the approaches and scaffolding they implement to support student teachers' understandings of literacy teaching and learning?
  - iii. What is the nature of dialogue between / among literacy teacher educators? How are meanings negotiated and socially constructed?
11.
  - i. What is the nature of partnerships that support the professional development continuum from preservice teachers through the early years of inservice teaching? Extending partnerships to include band councils, international school sites, as well as a variety of delivery models (IB, for example), has potential to better prepare novice teachers for the more diverse and realistic range of classrooms they are entering, particularly at a time when school boards are downsizing and not hiring teachers in more 'typical' inservice settings.
  - ii. What are the needs of partners? How are partnerships maintained and supported?
12. What models (i.e. establishment of Professional Development Schools [PDS] and/or formation of Professional Program On-site Delivery [PPOD] ) are Faculties of Education currently using? What are the strengths of these programs / models and how are these being implemented to support effective teacher preparation?

13. What strategies do partners (mentoring boards / agencies) implement to support teacher development for teaching literacy?

### **Reflection**

#### *How I am Constructing my Identity as a Literacy Teacher Educator*

My research into teacher preparation for teaching literacy has, in the past, and continues to deeply influence the teacher educator I am becoming. I am constantly evaluating my knowledge, priorities, involvement in the field and the content of my courses in light of other more experienced researcher/teacher educators' course descriptions and new literature/research in fields related to teacher preparation for teaching literacy. I continuously revisit my course outlines, even if only in my head, to re-evaluate what I should be teaching prospective language arts teachers. I find myself thinking more and more about seamless learning and the ways in which I might better design in course experiences and assignments such that student teachers' practicum and actual teaching experiences are more closely aligned with what we are learning in class. I am developing a greater appreciation for school – university partnerships and seek to play a larger role in the formation of these partnerships. It isn't enough for me to help students deconstruct their practicum experiences after the fact and to discuss perceived strengths and weaknesses to which they were exposed in the field; rather, I need to reassess what and how I am teaching and build in more opportunities for the discussions/reflections that might facilitate student teacher development of sound pedagogy.

More than ever, I am considering the purposes of coursework and practicum experiences in preparing teachers to teach language arts and literacy. Every minute counts. How do I balance sharing of new information, approaches, tools and strategies against valuable time needed for reflection, particularly since we know that student teachers don't

always learn what we intend them to learn? How can I best use multicultural literature, including picture books and multimedia to model lesson planning, formation of text sets, literature circles, and use of literature to address inequities and global issues? How can I intricately weave multiple theories and practices into each lesson, and then deconstruct lessons using a professional discourse? Just as elementary teachers need to teach literacy across the curriculum and integrate subject areas for ‘smart teaching,’ so to do teacher educators need to consciously and meticulously plan how best to authentically model and replicate teaching / learning theories and practices.

Recently, I had the good fortune to chat over lunch with Mary Clare Courtland, Clive Beck and Clare Kosnik. I learned two very valuable lessons. The first concerns the importance of collegiality and its inherent ability to renew one’s enthusiasm for education and research. By far the junior researcher of the group, I was impressed by the generous spirit of collegiality with which I was greeted. A second lesson came through observation of the calm demeanour of my peer group. I came to see that my own earnestness, my desire to cover as many topics in-depth as possible and to deconstruct my lessons in meaningful ways, left little room for incidental learning.

Throughout their research and in person, Clare and Clive stress the importance of dialogue between student teachers and teacher educators. It has been my experience that some students thrive on reflective dialogue whereas others do not. This past year, I instructed three sections of J/I Language Arts and Literacy. Two sections were relatively large, 39 and 49 students respectively. Discussions were difficult to manage at times and took a great deal of class time. Some of the student teachers would become disengaged the moment these conversations began, others dominated. As a result, I lost sight of the value of unplanned

conversations. Looking back, I see that planned and unplanned conversations are essential. They provide space for: addressing biases; problematizing disparities between in course and practicum experiences when and where these exist; understanding student teachers' course expectations, needs, concerns, interests and developing visions; articulating learning; deconstructing lessons; examining connections between theory and practice; sharing practical tips; facilitating formation of networks to support student teachers beyond the preservice year; and more.

Increasingly, I am able to evaluate administrative decisions at Lakehead University, their strengths and flaws, the ways in which they influence my teaching / research, and the role I might play in contributing to positive outcomes for problem solving. For example, I see a need to reintegrate language arts and literacy courses at P/J and J/I levels. Only at I/S, where learning is more subject specific, can literacy be taught as a separate component. I also support smaller class sizes. Modelling of social constructivist teaching principles, such as editing during the writing processes, or drama, is confounded by large class sizes. Not only do students depart with limited understandings of key elements, many form inaccurate assumptions. As well, large group participation in the processes is hugely time consuming and in some cases spatially implausible.

I also see a need for sustained support of student teachers before, during and after their practicum teaching experiences. Whereas Lakehead offers comprehensive programming and support before the first practicum and between practicum experiences, some student teachers receive sporadic and/or minimal support during the practicum. The amount of support teachers receive largely depends upon the course section of Curriculum Planning and Evaluation in which they are registered and the individual assigned as their supervisor. Some

student teachers have no contact at all with their Lakehead supervisor while on practicum. Placement of the second practicum at the end of classes, with no follow-up, means that some students depart the program with questions and/or misunderstandings about teaching. Solutions to this dilemma might easily be found if teacher educators work together to consider options and examine past and/or alternative models.

I question whether or not the one-year model of teacher preparation needs to be modified and/or extended to build in extra time for in-course teaching / learning. Having instructed professional development courses and workshops in areas related to literacy (writing processes, for example), I know that what I introduce in my language arts courses is the tip of the iceberg. Does it provide enough vision to sustain teachers in their early years of teaching? Can I afford to drop other course components in order to spend greater time on reading and/or writing processes? Based on what I am able to address in-course, I see preservice literacy courses as stepping stones to ongoing learning. Yes, teaching needs to be responsive and dynamic. It is true that we can never fully comprehend all there is to know about teaching. Reflecting on these facts leads me to see the role of AQ and other professional development courses and the necessity that these be closely tied to the preservice year and to the needs of actual teachers, administrators and support staff in actual schools. Again, the significance of university-school partnerships emerges. As a teacher educator, am I not responsible for envisioning and working towards change such that student teachers might be better prepared to teach language arts / literacy in a manner that meets the needs and interests of their pupils?

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**Appendix I: Explanatory Letters /Consent Forms**

- **Survey Sample / Preservice Teachers, Year 1**
- **Literacy Instructors, Year 1**
- **Inservice Teachers, Years 2 and 3**

## TEACHER EDUCATION FOR LITERACY TEACHING Student Teacher Information Sheet

Dear Teacher Candidate:

### Background to the Project

In cooperation with a team of professors at OISE/UT and the University of Alberta, we are involved in a research project entitled, *Teacher Education for Literacy Teaching*. This study will be conducted over the next 3 years and is sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Part of our research is focused on preservice teacher education, specifically language arts. One of our research activities is to gain more information from student teachers about learning to be language arts teachers. We wish to invite you to be part of our research study.

The goals for our study are to examine factors affecting the preparation of elementary literacy teachers, such as:

- the impact of the program on student teachers' approaches to literacy teaching;
- the adequacy of the connection between the literacy courses and the practicum;
- the effect of the practice teaching school's literacy practices on student teachers;
- the effect of the school's literacy practices on a beginning teacher's language arts program.

### What is involved?

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will have the following commitments depending on your level of involvement.

#### Survey Only:

- Complete the attached consent form
- Complete the survey

#### OR

#### Survey and Interview:

- Complete the attached consent form
- Complete the survey
- Be interviewed by a member of the research team

### Quick facts about the survey:

- It will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.
- There are no right or wrong answers; what we need are your personal views.
- The questions ask about your experiences, thoughts, and feelings around language arts and your teacher education program.

### Quick facts about the interview:

- The purpose of the interview is to give us a deeper understanding of your perspective of the teacher education program in general, and more specifically, your language arts courses.
- It will take approximately 1/2 hour at a time convenient for you.
- It is an individual interview conducted by a member of the research team.
- It will be taped recorded to assist the researcher in making notes
- A sample of 12 interviewees will be selected based on two factors: your course instructor and your willingness to be part of the follow-up study in the first two years of your teachings. (As part of this study 3-4 language arts instructors will be interviewed and we would like to interview 12 student teachers taught by these instructors.) Students who meet these criteria will be randomly chosen.

**Schedule of events:**

To facilitate your participation in this study, all activities will take place during regular school hours and will be scheduled at mutually convenient times.

**Informed consent:**

Should you agree to participate in the research study, you should be aware of the following ethical considerations articulated by the Research Ethics Board, Lakehead University:

- You have the right to withdraw at any time.
- Involvement in this research project will not pose any risks to you.
- Your identity will be protected (anonymity). Your course instructor will not know about your participation. You can choose to ignore any question. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
- The data will be stored securely by the researchers for 7 years.
- We shall write a report of this study and submit it to Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada. We shall also use the data from this study to write scholarly papers on teacher education for submission to academic journals for publication and to academic conferences for presentations. We would like to use the data from this study for future writings on teacher education. Any reports or publications will use pseudonyms instead of actual names; you will not be identified in any way.

Please sign and return the attached consent form. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Mary Clare Courtland at [mccourt1@tbaytel.net](mailto:mccourt1@tbaytel.net)

Sincerely,

Mary Clare Courtland, PhD  
Professor

## TEACHER EDUCATION FOR LITERACY TEACHING Student Teacher Consent Form

I have read the accompanying explanation of the research project. My signature below indicates that I understand the following ethical considerations:

- My participation is voluntary and no evaluative judgments will be made about me if I decline to participate.
- I have the right to withdraw at any time.
- All information gathered about me will be kept confidential.
- My identity will be protected by the use of a pseudonym.
- Data will be stored securely by the researchers for 7 years.
- We shall write a report of this study and submit it to Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada. We shall also use the data from this study to write scholarly papers on teacher education for submission to academic journals for publication and to academic conferences for presentations. We would like to use the data from this study for future writings on teacher education. Any reports or publications will use pseudonyms instead of actual names; you will not be identified in any way.

I have read this form and the accompanying letter and I agree to participate in the study, *Teacher Education for Literacy Teaching*, in the following ways:

- I will complete the survey.
- I will complete the survey and I agree to be interviewed this year and I am willing to be part of the follow-up study in the first two years of my teaching.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
PLEASE PRINT

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Language Arts Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information if you would be willing to be part of the follow-up study:

Email address (current): \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (permanent if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: (807) \_\_\_\_\_ (807) \_\_\_\_\_  
CURRENT ALTERNATE

## TEACHER EDUCATION FOR LITERACY TEACHING

Dear Faculty of Education Instructor:

I am part of a team of researchers (OISE/UT, University of Alberta, and Lakehead University) who are conducting the research project, *Teacher Education for Literacy Teaching*. The study is sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Part of our research is focused on preservice teacher education, specifically the language arts. One of our research activities is to interview language arts instructors in faculties of education. We wish to invite you to be part of the research study.

The goals for the study are to examine factors affecting preparation of elementary literacy teachers:

- the education and professional background of the literacy instructors;
- the goals and practices of these instructors and the materials they use;
- the extent to which their goals and practices are reinforced by the program as a whole;
- the adequacy of the connection between the literacy courses and the practicum;
- the impact of the program on student teachers' approaches to literacy teaching;
- the effect of the practice teaching school's literacy practices on student teachers;
- the effect of the school's literacy practices on a beginning teacher's language arts program.

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview. The purpose of the interview is to give the researchers a familiarity with the context of your work, gather examples of practice, and acquire further information about your course (content or instructional strategies). The interview will be taped and will take approximately one hour at a time convenient to you. Should you agree to be part of the research, you will have the following commitments:

- Complete the attached permission form
- Participate in the interview
- Share your course outlines and related course materials

You should also be aware of the following ethical considerations articulated by the Research Ethics Board, Lakehead University:

- You have the right to withdraw at any time.
- You can choose to ignore any question.
- Involvement in this research project will not pose any risks to you.
- Your identity will be protected (anonymity). Pseudonyms will be used. You and the institution will not be identified in any way. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
- The data will be stored securely by the researchers for 7 years.
- We shall write a report of this study and submit it to Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada. We shall also use the data from this study to write scholarly papers on teacher education for submission to academic journals for publication and to academic conferences for presentations. We would like to use the data from this study for future writings on teacher education. Any reports or publications will use pseudonyms instead of actual names; you will not be identified in any way.

Thank you for your willingness to be involved. I look forward to working with you. If you have any questions, please contact me at [mccourt!@tbaytel.net](mailto:mccourt!@tbaytel.net)

Sincerely,

Mary Clare Courtland, PhD  
Professor

## TEACHER EDUCATION FOR LITERACY TEACHING Literacy Instructor Consent Form

I have read the accompanying explanation of the research project. My signature below indicates that I understand the following ethical considerations:

- My participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any time.
- All information gathered about me will be kept confidential.
- My identity will be protected by the use of a pseudonym.
- Data will be stored securely by the researchers for 7 years.
- We shall write a report of this study and submit it to Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada. We shall also use the data from this study to write scholarly papers on teacher education for submission to academic journals for publication and to academic conferences for presentations. We would like to use the data from this study for future writings on teacher education. Any reports or publications will use pseudonyms instead of actual names; you will not be identified in any way.

-----

I have read this form and the accompanying letter and I agree to participate in the study, *Teacher Education for Literacy Teaching*.

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*PLEASE PRINT*

Signature:

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## TEACHER EDUCATION FOR LITERACY TEACHING Year 1 and 2: Letter and Consent Form

Dear Graduate:

We are a team of professors who are conducting the research project, *Teacher Education for Literacy Teaching*. The study is sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Part of our research is focused on beginning teachers, specifically on the practices as language arts teachers. We wish to invite you to be part of the research study.

The overall goals for the study are to examine factors affecting the preparation of elementary literacy teachers.

- the educational and professional background of the literacy instructors
- the goals and practices of these instructors and the materials they use
- the extent to which their goals and practices are reinforced by the program as a whole
- the adequacy of the connection between the literacy courses and the practicum
- the impact of the preservice program on new teachers' approaches to literacy teaching
- the supports new teachers need when teaching language arts

We would like you to participate in Years 2 and 3 of the study. Each year, your participation would involve a researcher (who is also an experienced teacher) keeping in touch with you very briefly every week or so during the year by phone or email, and observing you in your classroom for about 1 ½ hours and interviewing you after school for 1 hour, once in November (if possible) and then again in May. The purposes of the interview and site visit are to give us a deeper understanding of your work (content and instructional strategies), gather examples of practice, and acquire further information about preservice and external influences on your language arts practices. We would also like to share with us some lesson plans, long range plans, teaching materials, and assessment tools of your choosing.

### Informed Consent

Should you agree to participate in the research project, you should be aware of the following ethical considerations articulated by the Research Ethics Board, Lakehead University:

- You have the right to withdraw at any time.
- Involvement in this research project will not pose any risks to you.
- Your identity will be protected (anonymity). Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Pseudonyms will be used. Neither you, nor your students, colleagues, school or school district will be identified in any way.
- The data will be stored securely by the researchers for 7 years.
- We shall write a report of this study and submit it to Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada. We shall also use the data from this study to write scholarly papers on teacher education for submission to academic journals for publication and to academic conferences for presentations. We would like to use the data from this study for future writings on teacher education. Any reports or publications will use pseudonyms instead of actual names; you will not be identified in any way.

Thank you for your willingness to be involved and we look forward to working together. If you have any questions, contact Clive Beck, Joyce Bainbridge, or Mary Clare Courtland, depending on the university at which you did your teacher education.

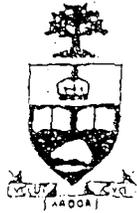
Sincerely,

Mary Clare Courtland, PhD  
Professor

Clive Beck, Professor, OISE/UT (416-928-6641, ext 2507)  
Clare Kosnik, Professor, OISE/UT and Stanford (416-923-6641, ext 2507)  
Shelley Peterson, Professor, OISE/UT (416-923-6641, ext 2375)  
Joyce Bainbridge, Professor, University of Alberta (780-492-4273, ext 273)  
Mary Clare Courtland, Professor, Lakehead University (807-343-8696{w}; 807-345-4695{h})

**Appendix II: Ethics Approval Forms**

- **Initial Approval: The Office of Research Services, University of Toronto**
- **Initial Approval: The Research Ethics Board, Lakehead University**
- **Request and Permission for Extension**



# University of Toronto

## OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

PROTOCOL REFERENCE #9962

August 13, 2003

Prof. Clive Beck  
Dept. of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education  
252 Bloor Street West  
University of Toronto

Dear Prof. Beck:

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Teacher education for literacy teaching"

**ETHICS APPROVAL**

Original Approval Date: August 13, 2003  
Expiry Date: August 12, 2004

We are writing to advise you that a member of the Education Ethics Review Committee (EERC) has granted approval to the above-named research study, for a period of **one year**, under the Committee's expedited review process. Ongoing projects must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

The following consent documents have been approved for use in this study: Cover Letter – Faculty of Education Instructors (received June 25, 2003), Cover Letter – Faculty of Education Student Teachers (received June 25, 2003), Cover Letter – Beginning Teachers Survey (received June 25, 2003) and Cover Letter – Beginning Teachers Interview (received June 25, 2003). Participants should receive a copy of their consent form.

During the course of the research, any significant deviations from the approved protocol (**that is, any deviation which would lead to an increase in risk or a decrease in benefit to participants**) and/or any unanticipated developments within the research should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Review Unit.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

Bridgette Murphy  
Assistant Ethics Review Officer

xc: Prof. M. Schneider (Chair, EERC)

# Lakehead

UNIVERSITY

Office of Research

Tel (807) 343-8283

Fax (807) 346-7749

February 17, 2005

Dr. Mary Clare Courtland  
Faculty of Education  
Lakehead University  
Thunder Bay, Ontario  
P7B 5E1

Dear Dr. Courtland:

Based on the recommendation of the Research Ethics Board, I am pleased to grant ethical approval to your research project entitled, "Teacher Education for Literacy Teaching".

The Research Ethics Board requests an annual progress report and a final report for your study in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines. This annual review will help ensure that the highest ethical and scientific standards are applied to studies being undertaken at Lakehead University.

Completed reports may be forwarded to:

Office of Research  
Lakehead University  
955 Oliver Road  
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1  
FAX: 807-346-7749

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

*Timothy Stannell, Ph.D. for  
Lori Chambers*

Dr. Lori Chambers  
Chair, Research Ethics Board

jnp  
Encl. (1)

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY  
RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD  
RESEARCHER'S AGREEMENT FORM

RESEARCHER(S):

DEPARTMENT:

TITLE:

**Research Ethics Review Criteria (please check off appropriate box)**

- Summary of purpose of research**  
Be sure to include sufficient detail, described in terms that do not require extensive field-specific knowledge (similar to the statement you would prepare for a granting agency for public dissemination).
- Research methodology**  
a) Describe required characteristics and number of subjects.  
b) Describe recruitment procedures.  
c) Explain the method of data collection and analysis. Explain exactly what will be expected of participants (length of time commitment, etc.) All questionnaires and research instruments should be included as appendices, although published instruments may be referenced with a current citation or website.
- Potential risks to participants**  
a) State clearly any potential risks - physiological or psychological - for participants or for third parties (those affected by the research but who are not active research subjects).  
b) If there is apparent risk, clearly explain all steps that are being taken to reduce such risk.
- Deception**  
If deception is part of the research program, the researcher must:  
a) State clearly why no alternative methodology, which does not involve deception, can fruitfully be used to answer the research question.  
b) Provide evidence that the participant is not put at risk by the deception (or, in some cases, the failure to fully disclose the research procedure to participants because of fear of contamination of results).
- Benefits to subjects and/or society**  
Describe in detail the potential benefits of the research.
- Informed consent**  
a) Clearly outline the measures that will be used to ensure the informed consent of all research participants.  
b) Cover letters and consent forms must be attached as appendices.  
c) When phone surveys are conducted, a statement of introduction must be included as an appendix.  
d) If subjects are incapable of providing consent or are legally under the age of consent, the researcher must state why this vulnerable group is necessary to the study and provide consent forms specific to legal guardians. S/he must outline procedures that will be used to inform such participants, to the best of their ability, about the nature of the research and to allow them, not only their guardians, choice with regard to participation. Children under 18 are not considered to be emancipated minors and parental consent is required. Consent forms are also required for children and others who, while legally incompetent, should nonetheless be informed about and consent to their own participation.  
e) The researcher must illustrate that participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty of any kind.



## MEMORANDUM

Date: April 23, 2007

To: Dr. Mary Clare Courtland

From: Dr. Richard Maundrell

Subject: REB Project # 045 04-05

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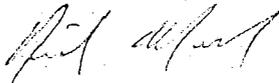
Thank you for your correspondence dated April 17, 2007 requesting clarification on several issues related to your approved ethics protocol entitled, "Teacher Education for Literacy Teaching".

With respect to the email correspondence from M. Schneider describing the difficulties in returning the signed consent form to you from Thailand, please be advised that her email correspondence can be accepted as confirmation of informed consent to participate in this study in this circumstance.

While you had indicated in the initial application that data collection would continue through May 2007, it is necessary to renew ethics approval once every 12 months in order to meet the requirements of the Tri-Councils. Please note that your renewed approval for this project is attached.

With respect to Laurie Leslie's use of the data set for her dissertation as described in your initial application, please ensure that a copy of her certificate of completion for the Introductory Tutorial for the Tri-Council Policy Statement is forwarded to the Office of Research once complete.

Please continue to advise us of any changes to this project.



Dr. Richard Maundrell  
Chair, Research Ethics Board

/len

# Lakehead

UNIVERSITY

Office of Research

April 23, 2007

Tel (807) 343-8283  
Fax (807) 346-7749

Dr. Mary Clare Courtland  
Faculty of Education  
Lakehead University  
955 Oliver Road  
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1

Dear Dr. Courtland:

**Re: REB Project #: 045 04-05**  
**Granting Agency name: SSHRC**  
**Granting Agency Project #: 410-2003-0578**

On the recommendation of the Research Ethics Board, I am pleased to grant renewal of ethical approval to your research project entitled, "Teacher Education for Literacy Teaching". This approval includes the amendments described in section 11 of the Request for Renewal form.

Ethics approval is valid until **April 23, 2008**. Please submit a Request for Renewal form to the Office of Research by March 23, 2008 if your research involving human subjects will continue for longer than one year. A Final Report must be submitted promptly upon completion of the project. Research Ethics Board forms are available at:

<http://bolt.lakeheadu.ca/~researchwww/internalforms.html>

During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms must not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

Completed reports and correspondence may be directed to:

Research Ethics Board  
c/o Office of Research  
Lakehead University  
955 Oliver Road  
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1  
Fax: (807) 346-7749

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,



**Dr. Richard Maundrell**  
Chair, Research Ethics Board

/len

cc: Office of Research  
Margot Ross, Office of Financial Services



**Appendix III: Interview Question Guides**

- **Year 1 Instructor Interview**
- **Year 1 Preservice Teacher Interview**
- **Year 2 Inservice Teacher Interview**
- **Year 3 Inservice Teacher Interview**
- **Sample Questions Forwarded to Respondents in Years 2 and 3 via Email**

## Semi-structured Interview Questions Preservice Instructors

### A. Background Information

1. Confirm background information
  - how did you become involved in preservice teacher education?
  - if tenured - is your course mandatory
  - if seconded - who or how - is your course mandatory
  - if contract - what is your status - is your course mandatory
2. How many years have you been teaching at the university?
3. Tell me about your work in preservice teacher education.
4. How many years have you been teaching language arts at the university?
5. What is your educational background? (B.A., B.Ed.....)
6. Were you a classroom teacher? If yes, how many years did you teach?
7. Were there any sessions offered at your university to help you with your preservice teaching?
8. What would you say is your area of expertise as a preservice instructor?

### B. Goals/Philosophy of Literacy Instruction

9. What philosophy(ies) guide your work with student teachers in the area of language arts teaching?
10. What is your educational background related to language arts instruction? (graduate courses in L.A., Additional Qualification courses, self-taught ...)
11. Are there any researchers who you feel are particularly similar to your position?
12. How do you address theory?
13. How did you acquire this knowledge? (courses, own reading ..)
14. Are you a member of any professional language arts groups?
15. Have you been involved in research on language arts?
16. Have your goals changed much over time? Why?

### C. Course Development and Teaching Strategies

17. Tell me about your preservice teaching in language arts. How many student teachers do you teach? How many sections?
18. Do you teach the same course to your P/J and J/I students?
19. What are your goals for your preservice language arts course?
20. Do you feel confident as a language arts instructor?
21. How would you describe your teaching style?
22. Have you found any particular teaching strategies to be very effective in helping students become language arts teachers? (best practice)
23. From your perspective how do student teachers approach your course? What do they hope to gain from the course?
24. How would you rate your students' ability to teach LA (content knowledge and attitude)?
25. How do your students in general respond to your course? Why do you think they like your course? (what feedback do you get?)
26. What problems have you encountered teaching language arts?

27. How prepared do you feel your students are to be language arts teachers?

#### **D. Assignments/Readings**

28. What are some of the texts you have students read? Have you found a text that strongly supports your teaching goals?

29. Do you have an assignment that you feel is particularly effective? Tell me about it.

#### **E. Practicum Supervision**

30. Are you involved in practice teaching supervision?

31. Do you give your students an assignment to be done during the practice teaching? If yes, what is it?

32. To what degree is there consistency between your goals for language arts instruction and what your students see/experience in their practice teaching placements?

33. To what degree have you changed in light of your practicum supervision?

#### **F. Links with School Districts**

34. Do you involve any school district personnel in the delivery of your course?

35. What is your view of the literacy initiatives in our local school districts? Are you involved in any of these initiatives?

36. To what extent are you using school-board developed materials in your language arts course?

37. Do you keep in touch with graduates of the program? What do you think are the challenges of being a beginning classroom teacher regarding language arts?

38. From your perspective, how can school districts best support beginning teachers?

39. What advice do you give your student teachers regarding their first few years as teachers?

40. Do you recommend any particular commercial language arts programs?

#### **G. Suggestions/Next Steps**

41. To what extent do the language arts instructors in your university work together to plan the course for the student teachers?

42. If you could change "something" with the language arts course in your university what would that be?

43. What should be the length of the preservice program? language arts course?

44. What advice would you give your Dean .....

45. What goals do you have for yourself? For your language arts program?

46. What advice would you give our Minister of Education, Gerrard Kennedy?

47. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the way you approach your work as a teacher educator?

**Student Teacher Interviews**  
**Year One of SSHRC Grant**

*Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview. We think it will take about 1 hour.*

**A. Background**

Program: Primary/Junior      Junior/Intermediate

J/I Teaching Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Elective/Related Studies: Fall or Winter Term, Name of Course \_\_\_\_\_

Did you complete 1, 2, 3 .... Language arts course for this degree?

1. Where did you do your previous university study?
2. Which program(s) were you in? (major) When did you graduate? (highest degree)
3. Have you done any work related to literacy in your previous work/career?
4. How does your teacher education experience so far compare with previous university experiences?
5. Do you have any previous work experience in the area of language arts teaching?  
Yes No
6. How would you describe yourself as a reader and writer? Avid or more casual
7. When you were in high school and university to what extent did you gravitate to English courses?

**B. General Impressions**

8. How do feel about the teacher education program so far?
9. What has surprised you about the program?
10. How would you describe the program to an incoming student?
11. What would you like to teach next year?
12. How prepared do you feel to be fully responsible for a class next year?

**C. Campus Program (in general)**

13. Which parts of the campus program have been the most helpful?
14. How has the workload been?
15. Have you found the program challenging? (any aspect). If yes, what specifically?

**D. Language Arts Course**

16. How do you feel in general about the language arts component of the campus/academic program?
17. Tell me about some of the classes/activities in your language arts course. What has been helpful?
18. To what extent have you been supplied with language arts resources for next year?
19. Did you use a textbook? If yes, what was the name of it and how helpful was it?
20. Tell me about the assignments you had to complete for your program. Which have been helpful? What did you like/dislike about each one?
21. To what extent was there attention to technology in your language arts course? How comfortable do you feel integrating technology into language arts?

22. How much attention was given to assessment and evaluation in your language arts course?
22. Were there any readings, researchers, or writers that you found helpful in understanding language arts? Did you resonate with any particular researcher?
23. Briefly, describe your philosophy of literacy/ approach to literacy.
24. What do you think were your instructor's goals for the program? Do you think they have been met? Have they been helpful to you as a student teacher?
25. What would you change about the course? (add, delete, or modify)
26. What impact has the course had on you and your teaching?
27. Should this course have more/less than 36 (or 39 or ...) hours of instruction?
28. What do you think you still need to know about LA instruction?

### **E. Practicum**

29. Tell me about your practice teaching placements. Grade, school .....
30. Tell me about the language arts programs you saw in your practice teaching classes.
31. To what extent were you able to teach language arts? How comfortable were you teaching language arts?
32. Did your associate teacher follow a particular program (textbook)? If yes, what was it? Did you like it?
33. What were some successes when you taught language arts? What were some challenges?
34. Tell me about a language arts lesson that you taught that worked well.
35. To what extent were you able to use some of the suggestions/activities presented in the language arts course in the campus program in your practice teaching classes?
36. When you needed resources to plan your language arts lessons where did you go or who did you contact for information, help, or suggestions?
37. Thinking about your practicum, to what extent did you see good language arts practice in your practice teaching classes?
38. To what extent did you feel pressured to adopt your associate teachers' literacy program (practices and strategies)?
39. To what extent was there consistency between your language arts instructor's course and the practice teaching classes?
40. What impact did the practicum have on your approach to literacy instruction?
41. To what extent will you use the practices/approach to literacy that you saw in practicum in your class next year?

### **F. Development as a Teacher**

42. How have you changed since September (as a result of being in the program)? Were there any pivotal experiences in the program (campus or academic) that affected you?
43. In what ways has your understanding of being a language arts teacher changed since September?
44. During the summer we will be revising/modifying the program. What should be our top priority for revising? What one aspect should we definitely keep in the program?

45. Other comments, concerns, suggestions?

## Interview Information Form

Site: University of Alberta, OISE/UT, Lakehead University

Name of student/faculty member: \_\_\_\_\_

Program location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Student or faculty email address(es):

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---

Student or faculty phone numbers:

---

---

Where does the student plan to teach next year?

---

---

When we contact the student next year what is the best way to contact him/her?

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---

Other notes (if applicable):

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New Teacher Interview #1  
Year Two of SSHRC Grant

*Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview. We think it will take about 1 hour.*

*A. Background information*

Name:

School:

Grade:

School District:

General description of the school community (e.g. high ESL):

What kind of support is there in the school for students struggling with literacy (e.g., Reading Recovery, Reading Clinic):

Last year, which program -- primary/junior, junior/intermediate -- did you attend?

1. Tell me very generally about your work as a teacher so far. How do you feel about it?

*B. General description of literacy or (language arts) program*

2. Tell me more specifically about your literacy (or language arts) program so far.

3. What challenges have you faced so far?

4. What words would you use to describe your literacy program?

5. How satisfied are you with your literacy program?

*C. Board mandated programs*

6. To what extent are you using a Board mandated literacy program? (e.g., TDSB reading, assessment and evaluation, TCDSB balanced literacy)

7. How helpful has/have the Board mandated program(s) been in developing your literacy classes?

8. Do you find the board mandated programs consistent with your approach to literacy development?

9. Have you had any assistance from a consultant/literacy coordinator?

*D. Materials used*

10. What materials are you using for your literacy program (note that your literacy program includes literacy activities in other subject areas)? Have you incorporated different materials in your program? If yes, what were they? Tell me about the following components of your program:

- a. writing
- b. reading (name of reading series if one is used)
- c. speaking
- d. listening
- e. literacy in other subject areas

11. What materials do you use in general to plan lessons?

\_\_\_ Textbook \_\_\_ Teacher-made materials (you made) \_\_\_ Teacher-made materials  
(borrowed from a colleague) \_\_\_ Materials gathered in your preservice program \_\_\_  
Materials from the Internet

### *E. Lesson planning*

12. Can I see the copy of your literacy timetable?

13. How much time do you spend on reading; writing; spelling; grammar; phonics; speaking; and listening?

14. In general how do you decide what to teach? (e.g., long range-planning, daily lessons)

15. In general how long do you spend planning your literacy lessons? (reading text, preparing materials, going to the library, making overheads)

16. How comfortable do you feel assessing/evaluating your students in literacy?

17. What materials do you use for assessment and evaluation in literacy?

18. If you teach grade 3 or 6, how much do you focus on preparing the students to write EQAO? (In Alberta, corresponding question about provincial testing.)

19. How many special needs children do you have in your class? Tell me how you have been able to modify the literacy program for them. Do you feel you are meeting their needs?

### *G. Influences/Support*

20. Did you attend any professional development sessions on literacy during the summer? Did you attend any induction sessions in August?

21. Do you have an assigned mentor? If so, how helpful has this been?

22. How much support have you received from your principal, other teachers in your division (primary, junior, or intermediate) in developing your literacy program?

23. Tell me about your work with the teachers in your division. How similar is your literacy program to that of other teachers in your division?

24. How would you describe your philosophy of literacy learning?

### *H. Links with Preservice*

25. How similar is your literacy program to the programs you saw in your practice teaching classes?

26. Last year, you developed ideas about an approach to literacy teaching. To what extent have you been able to have this type of literacy program?

27. What materials are you using that you acquired during your preservice year?

28. To what extent have you modeled your literacy program on the program advocated in your preservice program? On what you saw or did in your practicum schools?

29. What topics/materials do you wish had been covered in your preservice program?

30. What advice would you give your literacy instructor at the faculty of ed.?

31. What do you feel you needed to know in September?

32. Recall the assignments you did in the preservice program. Let's go through each one to talk about how it helped you as a beginning teacher (or did not help you).

33. Reflecting on last year, which part of the program -- academic or practicum -- do you feel influenced you substantially as a literacy teacher?

*I. Reflections*

34. Which area of literacy teaching do you find most challenging?
35. What have been the highpoints of your literacy program so far?
36. What have been difficulties with your literacy program so far?
37. What goals do you have for your literacy program in the future?
38. Did you have any specific goals for this year? If yes, what were they? Do you feel you are reaching them? What kind of PD support have you had to help you achieve these goals?
39. What advice would you give a beginning teacher regarding teaching literacy?

*J. Other comments*

40. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences teaching literacy, about teacher preparation in this area, or about support for new teachers?

# Interview Guide

Second Year Teacher Interviews  
Year Three of SSHRC Grant

*Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview. We think it will take about 1 hour.*

## *A. Background Information*

Name:

School:

Grade (s) or Job Description:

School District:

# of years in this grade or position:

General Description of the school community:

What kind of support is there in the school for students struggling with language arts (i.e. Reading Recovery, Reading Clinic):

## *B. Language Arts / Literacy Program*

1. Please describe your language arts / literacy program this year.
  - Time for language arts (in all)
  - Time for each component such as guided reading, read aloud, sustained silent reading, etc.
  - Attention to media / multiliteracies (how are media integrated into the literacy program)
  - Critical literacy
  - Titles of books used in read aloud
  - Goals for the year
2. How do you plan your language arts / literacy program?
  - Lessons
  - Units
  - Sources used for planning (i.e. professional texts, ministry guidelines, planning teams)

(NB – Ask for a copy of the timetable and a sample lesson or unit plan)
3. What curriculum resource materials are you using to plan / implement your program?
  - Ministry guidelines and / or resources
  - Board curriculum guidelines and / or resources
  - Commercial text books or student materials

4. How do you group students for instruction?
5. How do you address the needs of ESL and / or children with special needs?
6. Assessment and evaluation are major initiatives in every school board. Tell me about your assessment / evaluation strategies for language arts?
7. If you teach grade 3 or 6, how much do you focus on preparing the students to write the EQAO?
8. What strategies do you incorporate into your literacy teaching? (i.e. modeling, think aloud, literature circles, etc.)?
9. What opportunities for response to literature are you using in the literacy program? (i.e. drama, art, etc.)

### *C. Influences / Supports*

10. What are the major influences in planning your language arts program and how you teach literacy?
11. What is the nature of support that you have received in your role as a literacy teacher?
  - Principal
  - Consultant, literacy coordinator
  - Colleagues
  - Mentoring program
  - Professional development

### *D. Reflections*

12. Which areas of literacy teaching do you find most challenging?
13. What have been the high points of your language arts program this year?
14. How has your program / teaching changed from your first year of teaching?
15. Now that you are in your second year of teaching, please reflect on your preservice program.
  - Influence of preservice program on literacy teaching (strategies, approaches, materials)
  - Influence of field experiences

- Gaps which should be addressed in literacy courses (i.e. topics, strategies, etc.)
- Consistency between preservice literacy courses and your literacy teaching

16. If you were to have a teacher candidate from the Faculty in your classroom this year for a field experience placement, how would you work with the individual to promote his / her understanding of literacy teaching / learning?
17. How has your role as a literacy teacher changed in the second year of teaching?

Year 2

Oct e-mail  
Session # 1

laurie leslie

From: laurie leslie [lauriegord@shaw.ca]  
Sent: Monday, October 31, 2005 10:58 AM  
To: jessteasdale@yahoo.ca  
Subject: Literacy Study

Hello everyone,

I would like to begin by thanking you for your patience and for your interest in joining and/or continuing with the study. Finding participants has not been an easy task. We continue to look for additional beginning p/j teachers from LU to participate in the study. If you have friends from the program who are teaching language arts / literacy anywhere in the K-6 range and might be interested in joining us, would you please forward e-mail addresses to me and I will contact them immediately.

From this point on, I will contact you to learn more about your teaching of language arts - your scheduling, the approaches and strategies you use, helpful resources, frustrations, etc. Please do not hesitate to ask questions. I understand that you are busy and appreciate any time you can give to our correspondences. If it is easier for you to forward information by mail, please feel free. You may reach me at:

Faculty of Education  
Lakehead University  
955 Oliver Road  
Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada  
P7B 5E1

Attention: Laurie Leslie

A. Personal

It would be helpful if you would supply a personal profile of yourself (name, contact info., school, grade(s) teaching or other role, work and other job experience related to teaching, and/or other details you deem pertinent)

B. Schedule

Please supply us with some key details about your language arts schedule (for those of you to whom this relates). For example, how many minutes per day are allotted to language arts and when (morning / afternoon)?

If your role is as a support person, please describe the role, the time you spend on language arts / the support format (i.e. individual, small group, large group, in classroom, out of classroom, etc.)

Do you have a schedule for reading / writing / spelling / vocabulary and other topics related to teaching language arts? If so, what is the breakdown? Is the schedule flexible? Is it used in actuality or just on paper? Is reading / writing further broken down into whole class / small group / individual or other configurations such as independent reading, or read aloud novel, or levelled readers?

C. Approaches

Which approaches (modelled and/or not modelled at LU, Fac. Ed.) do you use in your teaching of language arts. Approaches might include balanced literacy, critical literacy, reader response, reader/writers' workshop, 6 Trait Writing Analysis, and on and on. Perhaps your school uses First Steps programs or Board-produced resources such as Peel Writing Scales for supporting the teaching of Language Arts. Any details you can supply would be very helpful.

D. Your stories (optional)

If you have time, it would be wonderful to hear a personal narrative of a success story, or interesting idea, or exciting use of curriculum, or risk taken in teaching LA or something tried that did not go as planned, or a frustration, or question that has come to mind about teaching Language Arts (2-3 paras, 1 page max. please)

E. Feedback (optional)

Please also let me know if the manner in which I am asking these questions is acceptable or too time consuming or ???

We would like this to be a pleasant experience for you, not an add-on you dread doing.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience (within two weeks would be terrific!). Thank you once again for making the study possible. You should receive the next e-mail mid to late November unless I contact you earlier to ask specific questions about your response.

Have a great week,  
Laurie

Questions # 2

To Shannon [unclear]

laurie leslie

To: puppytrouble@hotmail.com  
Subject: Literacy Questions - January 2006

Hi Shannon,

The first two questions are questions from the last set forwarded to you. I have down-scaled them and hope you can find time to answer them as they give me some basic understanding of your programming and approaches. Questions 3 and 4 are new.

1. I wonder if you would mind supplying me with some information about your scheduling for language arts.

How many minutes per day are allotted to LA? Morning or afternoon?

2. Do you have a schedule for reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary, etc.? If so, what is the breakdown? Is it flexible? Are there certain Board or school mandated programs you must use (First Steps for example)? Are reading / writing times broken into chunks of time for independent work / interactive work / guided work? Do you use a read aloud novel?

3. To what extent do you use the practices / models / ideas introduced in your LA class at LU and/or learned, modelled or practiced during your practicums? It would really help if you could be specific (i.e. name the strategies or approaches that you use)?

4. What do you wish you had been exposed to or learned during your language arts education at LU and/or on your practicum? What are the challenges you feel only somewhat prepared to meet?

Thanks again for your time, Shannon.

If you could answer the questions within three weeks I would be most appreciative.

Have a great week,  
Laurie

## October Questions, Year III

Realizing you continue to be extremely busy, I am grateful for any information you can provide on the following. My goal is to learn from your experiences. If you do not respond, my learning is limited. As such, please feel free to pick and choose. I just want to hear something from you!! Many thanks,

Laurie

1. Describe your language arts schedule. How do you divide your language time (i.e. spelling, reading, writing...)? What types of activities do your students engage in during "reading" time and "writing" time?
2. Do you teach formal lessons for reading and writing? If yes, please list any of the formal programs you use (i.e. 6 + 1 writing traits analysis, etc.) in your planning. Describe lessons to which your students might be exposed. Alternatively, share one recent lesson.
3. Do you use cooperative learning strategies in language arts? If yes, describe some of the strategies you use.
4. Share an example of a lesson you used in L.Arts where students learned by "doing".
5. Do you use drama in your L.A. class? Explain. Provide a recent example if you do use drama.
6. Has your philosophy about teaching language arts and literacy changed as you become a more experienced teacher? Explain.
7. What differences do you notice in the ways your students approach literacy learning (preferences, frustrations, home background, etc.)?
8. What strategies or activities do you now use in your L.A. classes that you did not use last year? What has led you to include these? Where did you first observe or learn these strategies / activities?

Again, thanks for your time. Whatever you can give back will be greatly appreciated. The questions will soon be coming to an end as the study draws to a close in the new year.

## April Questions – Literacy Study – Year 3

Thanks for your patience. Hope the warmer weather is bringing a renewed sense of energy to you. Always seems that school winds up so fast after March Break. April, May and June are so often a whirl of activity. If you could find time to answer a few questions, Mary Clare and I would be most appreciative.

1. Describe your literacy program at this point in the year. What challenges do you continue to face in planning, implementing and assessing literacy? How much freedom do you have in your planning (i.e. is there a format you must follow, a program you must use)? Are Board-mandated programs (if using) consistent with your own beliefs and approaches to literacy teaching? How satisfied are you with your literacy program at this point in the year?
2. How similar is your literacy program to the programs you saw in your practice teaching?
3. Think of your staff as a “community of practice” where you work together to promote children’s learning.
  - a. How does your staff collaborate to generate teaching ideas, strategies and resources and/or resolve issues? Provide examples.
  - b. When your staff is together, in the staff room or at meetings, how do they talk about : education in general, teaching ideas / issues, their students?
  - c. How do you see yourself within this “community of practice”?
  - d. How has participation within this community of practice influenced your understanding(s) of what it means to be a teacher?  
(In what ways do your school / school board / administrative staff / professional colleagues contribute to your development as a literacy teacher or mentor? Do you receive assistance (and or provide assistance) from a consultant / literacy coordinator? Is this helpful? What suggestions might you offer for improvement?)

Our literacy study wraps up this summer. It is our hope that we might find out even more information between now and then from your descriptions of your own journey as a literacy teacher. Each journey is different and provides valuable insights.

Again, many thanks for your time,  
Laurie

**Appendix IV: Participant Profile Summaries**

- **Teacher Educator Profiles**
- **Inservice Teacher Participant Profiles**

## TEACHER EDUCATOR PROFILES

	<b>Fiona</b>	<b>Pamela</b>	<b>Josie</b>
<b>Education and Experiences Acquired Prior to Becoming a Teacher Educator</b>	<p>Master of Education Degree Retired educator Regional consultant Early literacy curriculum developer with Ontario Ministry of Education Travelled to small, remote northern reserves to assist schools with literacy programming</p>	<p>Master of Education Degree Retired educator Teacher; vice principal; principal; assistant to Superintendent of Curriculum Development in northern board</p>	<p>Master of Clinical Psychology Degree Retired educator Teacher; resource teacher; consultant; vice principal; principal; Secondary school English coordinator for northern board</p>
<b>Scholarship within the Faculty of Education</b>	<p>Part time teacher educator for 10 years Informed Faculty of Education decision to provide subject context for the curriculum planning and evaluation course Connected to teachers in the field; invited experienced educators to model guided reading and use of running records</p>	<p>Part time teacher educator for 5 years Helped organize PPOD model of program delivery Connected to teachers in the field; made arrangements for PPOD students in her courses to attend literacy workshops offered to teachers in local board; shared colleagues' unit materials and report cards</p>	<p>Part time teacher educator for 5 years Connected to teachers in the field; invited experienced educators as guest speakers; collaborated with Grade 5 teacher on e-pal project between teacher candidates and elementary students; incorporated authentic samples of children's writing into assessment</p>
<b>Practical and Theoretical Underpinnings and Emphases in Literacy Courses</b>	<p>Instructed Literacy and Language Arts as one course</p> <p>Depth over breadth</p> <p>Social constructivist framework (explicit); Learning community; Emphasis on reading, writing and oral language / processual nature of language learning; Stressed importance of linking theory to practice</p> <p>Emphasis on Ontario Ministry of Education values, beliefs, and curriculum and support documents</p>	<p>Instructed Literacy and Language Arts as two courses</p> <p>Breadth over depth</p> <p>Social constructivist underpinnings; Cited balanced literacy as her framework; Emphasis on reading, writing and oral language; Stressed importance of linking theory and practice</p> <p>Emphasis on Ontario Ministry of Education values, beliefs, and curriculum and support documents</p>	<p>Instructed Literacy and Language Arts as two courses</p> <p>Depth over breadth</p> <p>Social constructivist underpinnings; Emphasis on balanced literacy, reading (in particular), writing and oral language / processual nature of language learning; Emphasis on practical knowledge</p> <p>Emphasis on Ontario Ministry of Education values, beliefs, and curriculum and support documents</p>

**INSERVICE TEACHER PARTICIPANT PROFILES**

	<b>Sandra</b>	<b>Candice</b>	<b>Don</b>	<b>Jane</b>	<b>Marnie</b>
<b>Program Information</b>	One Year Program PPOD	One Year Program PPOD	One Year Program Not in PPOD	Concurrent Program Not in PPOD	One Year Program Not in PPOD
<b>Relevant Background Information</b>	Graduate of Outdoor Recreation Program Camp; counsellor; entered study in Year One	Worked in human resources previously; entered study in Year One	Worked as psychologist for 20 years; Completed original survey; entered study in Year Two	Previously taught ESL in China; completed original survey; entered study in Year Two	Not part of original group surveyed; entered study in Year Two
<b>Information on Teaching Positions (Years 2 and 3 of study)</b>	Grade 3/4; remote Northern Ontario school; predominantly Aboriginal population  Same school; Early/late literacy teacher and prep coverage for French/Grade 6, 7, 8 Science, Social Science and Art	Same school, same position for Years 2 and 3 of study: JK and SK in small First Nations school on Reserve in Northern Ontario	Grade 7/8 half time and special education teacher ; First Nations school on Northern Ontario Reserve  Same school; Grade 3/4/5/6/7 and special education in spare time; resigned end of Year 3 seeking position in Southern Ontario	ESL English rotary teacher in overseas Mediterranean city; resigned Year 2 (language barriers/rotary)  Grade 1; Northern Manitoba school; predominantly Aboriginal population; to take 25 hrs. Upgrade courses as condition of employment	Grade 5 ESL; private International School in overseas Asian city; resigned Year 2 (lack of professionalism)  Grade 4 ESL; new private IB School in different overseas Asian city; resigned end of Year 3 to seek Canadian EFL teaching position in Southern Ontario
<b>Specific Gaps in Learning Identified</b>	Exposure to prescriptive L.A. programs; exposure to /practice with tests related to literacy assessment; cohesive programming for L.A.	Cohesive programming for L.A.	Strategies for meeting special needs; strategies for bridging school/cultural/ community needs, beliefs and values	Exposure to wider range of multicultural contexts and remedial strategies; strategies for meeting behavioural and academic needs of at risk students	Strategies for modifying curriculum to meet needs of ESL students

	<b>Sandra</b>	<b>Candice</b>	<b>Don</b>	<b>Jane</b>	<b>Marnie</b>
<b>Induction and Mentoring within schools</b>	Formal mentorship program in board for all first year teachers; intensive one week literacy training prior to first year inservice; assigned mentor; received feedback from Fiona (PPOD teacher educator and AQ course instructor)	No formal mentorship program in place in band-operated school; sought informal support from other more experienced teachers	No formal mentorship program in place in band-operated school; provided mentorship to other beginning teachers; provided 15 min. Inservice sessions on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Attention Deficit Disorders, lesson planning; kept in touch with colleagues/peers from LU via internet	No formal mentorship program in place in first school; sought informal support from other more experienced teachers; training emphasis in school on IB programming  No information available on second school	No formal mentorship program in place; sought informal support from other teachers; training emphasis in second school on IB programming
<b>In-school Support for Literacy</b>	100 minute literacy block; literacy specialist for daily in-class support; using levelled readers (PM Benchmarks), Reading Recovery, CASI testing, First Steps; identified students (3 x weekly) withdrawn for extra support; abundance of multicultural resources (books, games); supportive administrator and board;	Educational assistants in school (some not certified); resource teacher available for sporadic support; using Jolly Phonics prescriptive L.A. program at JK/SK level	Educational assistants in school (some not certified); Don provided special education support to novice teaching staff; autonomy to develop school-wide literacy plan; availability of levelled readers	Literacy not formally emphasized in first school's mandate; lots of English resources available in school (good budget)  No information available on second school	No formal literacy plan in place in either school; In second school, teachers expected to cover range of genres; teachers met to set curriculum focus; borrowed extensively from Ontario Curriculum documents; used Four Blocks and 6 + 1 Writing Trait Analysis as well as levelled readers

	<b>Sandra</b>	<b>Candice</b>	<b>Don</b>	<b>Jane</b>	<b>Marnie</b>
<b>Professional Development Activities</b>	Extensive ongoing PD in literacy offered within board; inter-school visitations; conferences; co-teaching opportunities	After-school seminars available (i.e. healthy living); attended conferences in nearby board (twice yearly)	Attended conferences in nearby board (twice yearly)	First school: PD difficult to attend due to language barriers (travelling by public transit)  No information available on second school	Absence of professionalism/poor quality in PD at first school  Second school: intensive one week training course on IB program with follow-up in January; one-shot inservice training in literacy-related programs such as 6 + 1 Trait Writing Analysis and Four Blocks
<b>Extra Courses/ certification pursued by participant</b>	Obtained Specialist (Parts I, II, III) in Reading via AQ online reading courses; joined educational association		Obtained Basic Intermediate Qualifications Certification online	Attended weekend workshop on drama at LU	

	Sandra	Candice	Don	Jane	Marnie
<b>Reported Challenges</b>	School designated 'at risk' by Ontario Government (access to extra funding): low student self esteem and high death rate in community; time pressures; Year 2 inservice role not clearly defined; lamented missed opportunities for developing emerging pedagogy as a classroom teacher (due to new role in Year 2 inservice); too many roles/tasks to balance; teaching outside P/J qualification; asked to assume new role of mentor for Year 3 of inservice teaching ("a bit early")	Low student skill levels in community; teaching Aboriginal students full-time demanded higher level of knowledge / skills than offered in preservice; late grade assignment; time pressures	Low student skill levels in community; vandalism; perceived lack of parental support; perceived lack of administrative and band council support; teaching Aboriginal students full-time demanded higher level of knowledge / skills than offered in preservice; balancing assigned duties without formal timetabling of special education role	Rotary timetable and lack of physical space for storing resources and displaying student works; language barriers; administrative pressure to ignore instructional challenges and individual needs; teaching ESL students full-time demanded different knowledge / skills than offered in preservice	Poor student behaviours; lack of support in the home for English language learning; programming for diverse student skill levels (reading); lack of resources in school for teaching English L.A.; teaching ESL students in an IB Program format demanded different knowledge / skills (inquiry-based learning) than emphasized in preservice