COLLABORATING FOR CONVERGENCE:
INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTIONS FOR CHILDREN’S
READING OF EXPOSITORY TEXT

by

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There are mounting concerns to ensure that children are prepared for the literacy demands of the 21st century. Reading inability at 9 years of age portends a lifetime of illiteracy for the majority of struggling readers. Given the greater weight placed on expository text from the junior grades onwards, children with reading disabilities become increasingly constrained by their reading deficits, putting them at risk of falling ever further behind their normally achieving peers. This ethnographic study, extending over an 8 month period and finishing on the last day of the school year, targets older poor readers at the junior level. Less is known about their reading deficits, relative to younger struggling readers. Therefore, the first of three principal objectives aims to extend understanding of the processes whereby older poor readers interact with expository text by providing a qualitative finer-grained assessment of their particular difficulties than presently exists. The second objective is focused on developing and implementing a cohesive program of research-based interventions that targets critical requirements of successful interactions with expository text, including the ability to summarize, locate information, and attend to text structure. The third objective involves establishing and describing a collaborative, intensive research partnership with two classroom teachers at the junior level to implement and evaluate research-grounded interventions for their students with reading difficulties, working within the context of the regular classroom. The dual researcher role, as collaborator with the teachers and instigator of the intervention program, shaped a reconfigured model of special education, responsive to a diverse range of student needs and abilities, and situated within a content-rich, challenging curriculum. Parallel lessons afforded the opportunity to tier instruction with
increasing intensity for the children with the highest needs. Results showed the critical importance of aggressively promoting self-efficacy, self-regulation, and metacognitive awareness for older struggling readers. As these children’s strategic repertoire increased, so, too, did their comprehension and comprehension-monitoring. Differentiated instruction that was tiered, flexible, and responsive supported social inclusion and social collaboration. Social context and authentic content became interwoven and instrumental in engaging the children, maintaining their motivation and sustaining their commitment to read to learn.
DEDICATION

For my mother, Sylvia Lea Palmer,
whose belief in me was unwavering,
whose encouragement was never-ending, and
whose love remains eternal.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROLOGUE</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antecedents</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Chance Encounter</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO A COLLABORATIVE READING INTERVENTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Three Interwoven Objectives</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconfiguration of Research and Practice</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Frameworks</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Theory</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Theory</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological Theory</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Bridging</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Backdrop: The Field of Special Education</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Canadian Context</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Dilemma-ridden Field</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Preview</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH CONTEXT OF THE STUDY</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Poor Readers</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Effects</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-level Reading Difficulties</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension Process</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Deficit vs. Developmental Lag</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository Text</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Summary</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Search</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Structure</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Collaborative Process</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Impact of Current Special Education Initiatives</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-University Partnerships</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership and a Professional Development School Project</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Large-scale Collaborative Initiative, the Southern Maine Partnership</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF PARALLEL LESSONS FOR STRUGGLING READERS
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------- 193

TABLE 2: PRETEST RESULTS FOR THE SMALL GROUP ........................................ 258

TABLE 3: POSTTEST RESULTS FOR THE SMALL GROUP............................... 258

TABLE 4: PRETEST RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE CLASS............................... 259

TABLE 5: POSTTEST RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE CLASS............................... 259
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: TIMELINE................................................................. 89

FIGURE 2: DATA SOURCES...................................................... 102

FIGURE 3: SYNOPSIS OF THE MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE
CHILDREN WHO REGULARLY PARTICIPATED IN THE PARALLEL
LESSONS................................................................. 261
PROLOGUE

Antecedents

If one were to ask experienced elementary teachers on the first day of school about the relative surety of their teaching assignment for the year, wry and sardonic grins might result. Put simply, experienced teachers know better. They could be asked to change grade within their division, to move to another division, to be transferred to another school, or any combination thereof. And so began my foray into data collection and into what I had initially conceived as approximating four months that became an epic eight month venture.

Prior to the commencement of the school year, 2005-2006, having received ethical approval, I invited an experienced classroom teacher to collaborate with me on my proposed study. We discussed the study at length and explored the ramifications in terms of time and instructional commitments. She was enthusiastic and eager to work with me and began to think aloud about her own practice and about enlarging her own instructional repertoire. We worked together to set up her classroom and to reorganize it to allow for a greater focus on reading-related activities with a designated reading area, surrounded on three sides by shelving to accommodate books and additional resources, such as photographs and maps, related to expository text. We discussed an appropriate timeframe to send out the Letters of Information (LOI) and Letters of Consent (LOC) to the students’ parents and considered the possibility of my meeting the parents during the evening when parent-teacher conferences were held so any possible questions that parents had could be addressed. Both of us were eager for the school year to begin as we began to discuss the organization of science and social studies units and to consider
which of the two subject areas should be the principal focus. We arranged to meet during
the second week of school to finalize details for distribution of the LOI and LOC.

On the Friday before Labour Day, I had a message from my prospective teacher
to say that there was a possibility that her teaching assignment for the forthcoming year
could be changing. Rather than having a Grade 3/4, she could have a Grade 2/3 class. The
reassignments were not confined to her class, but would extend to almost all of the
teachers in the primary and junior divisions of the school. Because of the scale of the
changes to the teachers’ assignments, the principal had to submit a proposal to the school
board and await their decision before proceeding. By midweek of the second week of
school, the board granted approval and the reorganization was slated to take place on the
Monday of the third week of school. Letters were sent home with the children to inform
parents of the reorganization.

Although I did have an option to work with the teacher of the newly-formed
Grade 5/6 class at this school, I did not think that would be viable. The teacher was on a
Long Term Occasional (LTO) contract for the year and it was his first full-time teaching
position. He had been supply teaching since he had graduated and received his Bachelor
of Education degree. This teacher was a former student of mine. As an adjunct associate
professor at a Faculty of Education, he had been in my PROF 190 course, Theory and
Professional Practice, two years earlier, and I also had been his practicum supervisor. To
have a new teacher embark on a complex collaborative study with his former instructor
during the first year he taught his own class could prove far too compromising for all
concerned.
As I embarked on the study in August, I began keeping an extensive and
rigourous reflective journal and continued doing so as events unfolded and the study
progressed over the course of 10 months. What follows is an excerpt from my journal.

For consistency and convention, subsequent excerpts will also be italicized.

*I was absolutely stunned at the rapidity with which my carefully laid plans
managed to self-destruct. Meticulous planning, careful organization, meeting and
conferencing with the teacher, initial conversations about curricula directions,
reviewing the textbooks for science and social studies, rearranging the classroom
to accommodate a reading centre with easy access to related texts and resources,
and, biggest mistake of all, assuming that everything was in place—all for naught.

I obviously have no choice but to start over; the problem is that I don’t know
where to start. The fit seemed just right—she understood the thrust of the study so
well and was so keen to be involved, even asking to look at some journal articles
that were referenced in the ethics summary that I had given to her to review. I feel
as if I have now lost at least two months.

*(Journal entry, September 14th)*

Part of my teaching assignment for this academic year was PROF 190. This
course combines an in-class, on-campus component and a field component. While on
campus, the class was comprised of several “school groups,” each school group
representing a cohort of 3-5 teacher candidates who would be placed at the same
Associate School for each of their three supervised practica. Acting as faculty liaison
supervising candidates during their teaching rounds meant that I visited many classrooms
in several schools. As I reviewed the names of all of the associate teachers who had most
recently hosted one of my teacher candidates, no one seemed a likely partner for the study. Junior classrooms were in short supply. The target class was to be a Grade 4, Grade 5, or a split Grade 4/5 and there were few highly experienced teachers at those grade levels in any of the schools where my candidates were placed that year.

*Sheer panic!! Without a willing teacher of a Grade 4, 5, or 4/5, I am nowhere. I cannot possibly start over reconceptualizing the study and redrafting it. All that work seems for naught. I have to have a teacher who will embrace this and be willing to have her/his routine disrupted by my presence, willing to stay the course, persuaded by the potential benefit, and sufficiently flexible to run with it. I think that it would be very difficult to get this off the ground if it were a teacher whom I did not know—even more time would be lost just getting one’s bearings. It seems as if so many teachers have changed schools that I have lost track of them. My associate schools have changed, and teachers in my schools have been shuffled about. If they have a new grade this year, they are certainly not going to want to take me on! I would feel like an albatross whose presence might be accommodated, at best, and resented, at worst. Every day that goes by feels like an incremental loss of time that I’ll never regain. There is just so much to lose here........*

*(Journal entry, September 21st)*

**A Chance Encounter**

I had the opportunity to attend the Faculty of Education Alumni Dinner on Friday, September 23, 2005, an annual event that coincides with Homecoming Weekend. As I was walking up the stairs from the predinner reception to the dining room, a disembodied
voice behind me said, “Hello.” I turned to see a teacher from a local elementary school whom I had initially met 4 years earlier when, as part of my teaching responsibilities at the Faculty of Education, I first taught the PROF 190 course. Her school was one of my “family” of schools for the year when I was the faculty liaison there. In each of the three teaching rounds during that school year, she took one of my candidates and was their associate teacher. She knew that I had embarked on my Ph.D. and inquired how my degree was progressing. I related my tale of woe and explained how I had lost the teacher with whom I had been planning to collaborate. Natalie volunteered herself and her class; however, she taught early primary and I clarified that I needed a junior classroom. She asked what the focus of my study was and I identified the key components: struggling readers, interventions to support interactions with expository text, and collaboration. (This was one of those intense, succinct, and very focused conversations as we were still going up only one flight of stairs.)

As we reached the top of the staircase and moved towards the dining room, she suggested that the Grade 5 teacher at her school might be a possible candidate. His class had a reputation that preceded it as the most challenging and demanding of any in the school with a high proportion of exceptional learners, many with formal identifications, and many with significant literacy deficits. We agreed that she would speak with him and sound him out to see if he might be interested and willing to collaborate. I did know this teacher as, like Natalie, 4 years earlier he, too, had been an associate teacher for two of my candidates. However I was only at that school as the faculty liaison for 1 year and had not seen him subsequently.
A chance encounter, coincidence, providence, serendipity—all of the above and more. Was it a fluke? fate? There were over 100 people at the dinner and, given the layout of the room and arrangement of the tables, it is more than likely that I never would have seen her. A couple of minutes sooner or later going up the stairs and odds are that we would not have noticed one another, given the crush of people queuing. In a matter of minutes, literally, everything turned about. I feel as if this is the stuff of films where a momentary event becomes life altering. May sound like overarching hyperbole, but I had visions of months elapsing before I could turn it around and get the study off the ground. Once the school year begins and routines are established and everyone gets “into it,” beginning and incorporating an entirely new venture can become increasingly problematic. Still can’t believe it!!!! Perhaps I should temper my optimism, but at least I now am daring to be cautiously hopeful.

(Journal entry, September 23rd)

Although I made every effort to be careful, thoughtful, and meticulous as I worked through my ideas, framed my study, wrote my proposal and negotiated the ethical review process, I had not anticipated the challenges posed by logistical details and administrative channels.

If I have learned anything in the last month, it is to expect that absolutely everything will take far, far longer than expected. I cannot believe how many hold ups there have been and the number of seemingly little things that take so long to address or resolve. How does one begin to contain all of the little pieces that seem to veer off in opposing directions? Some examples: it took a week to tee up with
Reed! He had after school coaching commitments daily and was not available at lunchtime either, due to additional responsibilities. Recess was ill-advised as an initial meeting time because it was often filled with the unanticipated like a parent dropping by, requests from another teacher for the digital camera that seemed to have wanderlust, yard duty, phone calls and so on and so forth. I did try but a parent and digital camera hunt won out. I needed to meet with him face-to-face, give him a copy of the ethics package, explain the study with its time frame and anticipated time commitments, outline the procedure with regard to Letter of Information and Letter of Consent, etc., etc., etc. I had to receive ethics approval from the local school board which I requested immediately after university approval was received. Several weeks elapsed, however, before I received board authorization. This included almost two weeks for the confirmation letter from the school board granting ethical approval to make it from the board office to my office, no doubt languishing in some outbox along the way.

The good news in all of this was that once we finally managed to meet Reed was indeed willing to take me and my study on with, of course, the endorsement of the principal. Enormous relief! He mentioned that he was already committed to having three teacher candidates over the course of the school year, two from my university and one from a university in northern New York, but neither of us saw that as an impediment in terms of what I was projecting to do. So, armed with the class list, I readied the LOIs (see Appendix A, Letter of Information) and LOCs (see Appendix B, Letter of Consent) and took them out to the school so they could be sent home with the children. Now I wait for the
responses. I left Reed’s LOI and LOC with him to review and complete (see Appendix E and Appendix F).

(Journal entry, November 3rd)

The next chapter takes the reader into the landscapes of learning that characterize this study. The context for the study will be established, focusing on the increasing demands placed on readers as they move from primary grades, K-3, to the junior grades, 4-6, and from learning-to-read to reading-to-learn. The study adopts a situated perspective and is embedded within a Grade 5 classroom.

My initial plan anticipated teaching a set of parallel lessons targeting the children with the greatest challenges in comprehension and comprehension-monitoring. I would withdraw those children from the classroom while the regular classroom teacher taught the same lesson to the remainder of the class. In keeping with the stereotype of the researcher going into a classroom setting, following a prescriptive research agenda and exiting, I saw myself as perhaps involved for a 12 week period. Instead, the study spanned eight months. Despite repeated protests from my supervisor to “tie it off already,” I was unable to do so. Ethical and professional responsibility to the children in the intervention component, to the students in the class, and to the classroom teachers precluded an earlier ending. An authentic, enriched curriculum generated interest and sparked momentum in the whole class lessons, seen by the engagement of the children. Understanding the complexity of the needs of older struggling readers and the requisite intensity of the intervention component required more time. Longer time in the class meant that the classroom teachers and myself, individually and collectively, were co-participants in what became a powerful teaching and powerful learning enterprise.
I initially saw the collaboration between the classroom teacher and myself as principally focused on aligning instruction, curriculum, and students’ needs. This notion prevailed; but it was reshaped, refined, and reframed as our collaborative enterprise unfolded. Classroom content and context required concerted attention if instructional pedagogies were to be adapted, altered, or enhanced.

Our shared commitment to student learning was the driving force for the collaboration. What emerged was a collaboration built on implicit understandings about teaching and learning, about engaging students, about developing an authentic and enriched curriculum and maintaining high expectations for student outcomes throughout.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO A COLLABORATIVE READING INTERVENTION

Much is owed to Maxine Greene (1978) for her eloquent development of the construct, the “landscapes of learning.” This has become a potent metaphor that goes some way towards capturing the multidimensional, complex, and richly textured encounters that comprise the educative experience, as a learner or as a teacher-learner. For Greene, “landscapes” are grounded in our personal histories and our collective experiences, which shape our perspectives, perceptions, discourse, and the ways in which we construct our realities. “To be in touch with our landscapes is to be conscious of our evolving experiences, to be aware of the ways in which we encounter our world” (p. 2). And it is these encounters which both centre learning and effect learning.

Anticipating constructivist and social constructivist frameworks, Greene (1978) charges learners with sense-making, “a conscious search for some kind of coherence,” anchored in the actualities of experience and capable of provoking “significant reflection” (p. 3). She sees this consciousness, or “wide-awareness” as “a process of effecting new connections in experience, of thematizing, problematizing, and imposing diverse patterns on the inchoateness of things” (p. 3). Learners are thus required to be active participants who are also metacognitively alert to “what they are doing in such engagements, aware of their own efforts to order and to know” (p. 3). Teachers or teacher-learners are also charged with being aware of their efforts for meaning and clarity while enabling those whom they teach “to learn how to learn” (p. 3).

Although Greene’s (1978) landscapes are grounded in personal histories, she links them inextricably to our evolving experiences and encounters with the world, moving
them into a social reality, embedding them in a notion of a learning community that both encompasses the classroom and transcends it, bringing with it a “new attentiveness to things in their linkages and interfaces, to the totalities and concreteness of the world” (p. 82). Against this richly textured, complex, and intricate landscape, this study is enacted.

**Context**

*To all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.*

Matthew 13:12

*(The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version)*

Initial success with early reading “cascades into a sea of advantages…[where] these children acquire new language and vocabulary, new conceptual knowledge, new comprehension challenges, and new modes of thought to which they would not otherwise be exposed” (Adams & Bruck, 1993, p. 127). Conversely, lack of success with early reading cascades into a sea of disadvantages where poorer readers struggle, or are unable, to acquire the necessary language, vocabulary, and conceptual understandings to extract sufficient meaning from text to lead to new ways of thinking. As children progress from primary to junior grades, there is increasing emphasis on reading for knowledge and for information, what Chall (1979, 1983) neatly describes as the transition from learning-to-read to reading-to-learn. From Grade 4 onwards, greater demands are placed on readers as they encounter more unfamiliar and “bookish” words (Chall, 1979, p. 43). At this stage, the central task is mastery of ideas; whereas in the preceding stages, the focal task is mastery of print. However, success while reading-to-learn is contingent on what Lyon
and Moats (1997) describe as componential skills that mediate reading rate and reading comprehension.

To read with fluency and comprehension requires “a prodigious amount of perceptual learning. In significant measure, just as this learning is specific to reading, it can only be gained through reading” (Adams & Bruck, 1993, p. 126). Children with reading difficulties very rapidly become caught in a double bind. As the demands intensify, they are increasingly constrained by their reading deficits, thereby putting them at risk of falling ever further behind their normally achieving peers. Three principal objectives drive this study. The first aims to extend understanding of the processes whereby older poor readers interact with expository text by providing a qualitatively finer-grained assessment of their particular difficulties than presently exists. The second is focused on developing a cohesive program of research-based interventions that targets critical requirements of successful interactions with content-area text, including the ability to summarize, to locate information, and to attend to text structure and will address the significant challenges confronting struggling readers—and their teachers. The third involves establishing a collaborative and intensive research partnership with two classroom teachers to implement and evaluate research-grounded interventions for their students with reading difficulties.

Rationale

If a firm foundation for reading growth is set in the primary grades, then further growth is almost completely dependent on the breadth and depth of reading experiences and practice (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Without this foundation, the effects are cumulative and spiral downward (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Torgesen, Rashotte,
neatly captures how the rich-get-richer and the poor-get-poorer: those who are good
readers reap the benefits; those who are poor readers receive fewer opportunities for
exposure to authentic text (see Adams, 1990; Allington, 1983; Torgesen et al., 2001) or
are confronted by text that is relatively more difficult than that given to good readers
(Allington, 1984). Baker and Allington (2003) suggest there must be substantial
opportunities for struggling readers to engage in real reading and writing activities,
supported by instruction that is both sufficient and appropriate. In what is perhaps the
most elegant and succinct synthesis of the cumulative effects of reading deficits,
Cunningham and Stanovich see the

combination of deficient decoding skills, lack of practice, and difficult materials
[resulting] in unrewarding early reading experiences that lead to less involvement
in reading-related activities. Lack of exposure and practice on the part of the less-
skilled reader delays the development of automaticity and speed at the word
recognition level. Slow, capacity-draining word recognition processes require
cognitive resources that should be allocated to comprehension. Thus, reading for
meaning is hindered; unrewarding reading experiences multiply; and practice is
avoided or merely tolerated without real cognitive involvement. (p. 8)

The cognitive consequences of reading are clearly reciprocal and exponential and extend
well beyond the immediate task of pulling meaning from a specific passage (Cunningham
& Stanovich).

The considerable demands placed on struggling readers must be anchored within
the classroom dynamic. The contextual, social, and distributed aspects of learning infuse
every classroom setting. Putnam and Borko (2002, 1997), following Greeno’s (1997; Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996) work on the “situative perspective,” underscore the importance of authentic classroom activities, the need to promote a classroom community of learners, and the importance of recognizing that cognition is distributed, thereby moving beyond a narrower focus on individual competence.

Success in cognitive functions such as reasoning, remembering, and perceiving is understood as an achievement of a system, with contributions of the individuals who participate, along with tools and artefacts. This means that thinking is situated in a particular context of intentions, social partners, and tools. (Greeno et al., 1996, p. 20).

Marx, Blumenfeld, Krajcik, and Soloway (1998) set researchers and teacher educators the challenge of reconsidering their approaches to help teachers think about and rethink their teaching. Instead of concentrating on prescriptive sets of behaviour or methods of instruction, teacher change and teacher learning should be advanced as social collaborations. To do so would capitalize on individual expertise and capacities where teachers could consider innovations, situate enactment within their classrooms, and work to develop practices congruent with theory (see Blumenfeld, Krajcik, Marx, & Soloway, 1994; Krajcik, Blumenfeld, Marx, & Soloway, 1994).

**Purpose**

There is an “emerging sense of urgency about improving reading instruction and literacy outcomes” (Torgesen, 2002a, p. 8). As Lyon (2002) notes, the U.S. *National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NAEP) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998) reported 38% of students in the fourth grade were unable to read at the basic level.
Basic level was described as an ability to read and comprehend a simple paragraph from a grade-appropriate book. The *NAEP 2000 Reading: A report card for the nation and states* (2001) reported no gains, citing 37% of fourth-grade students as unable to accomplish grade-level work (Torgesen, 2002a). Between 2000 and 2005, results for fourth grade students’ reading achievement-level performance continued to show no gains. In 2007, there was a modest gain, with results reporting 33% of fourth-grade students unable to read at the basic level (NAEP, 2008). Shaywitz (2003) sets 9 years of age as a marker: reading inability at this age portends a lifetime of illiteracy for the majority of struggling readers.

Within the field of reading and reading disabilities, NAEP data is considered a gold standard measure because it is a national, large-scale assessment with a 40 year history (see Jones & Olkin, 2004). On a smaller scale, but significant, are the Ontario Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) provincial results for Grades 3 and 6. From 2004-2008, there were modest gains in reading. However, results for 2007-2008 reported 33.5% of Gr. 6 students and 38.5% of Gr. 3 students were below the provincial standard (Education Quality and Accountability Office, 2008-2009). As reported above, the NAEP data for 2007-2008 found 33% of fourth-grade students reading below the basic level. Comparable to the NAEP data, EQAO results similarly reflect urgency about improving reading instruction and literacy outcomes, given the numbers reported to be below the provincial standard. A recent report prepared by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, *Key Factors to Support Literacy Success in School-Aged Populations*, (O’Sullivan, Canning, Siegel, & Oliveri, 2009) with support from The Canadian Education Statistics Council and The Council of Ministers of
Education, Canada, states that approximately 25% of secondary school students do not graduate from secondary school and 52% of the population over 16 years of age reads at or above the level considered essential for living and working in a modern society (p. 5). The report cautions that “these figures threaten Canada’s economic capacity to ensure a literate and educated workforce to compete with other countries that have higher rates of graduation from secondary school” (p. 5).

In a 9-year longitudinal assessment that spanned Grades 1-9 (the Connecticut Longitudinal Study, CLS, Shaywitz et al., 1995), children who were identified as reading disabled in Grade 3, on average, did not develop adequate reading skills, “implying a problem that persists into adolescence” (Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996, p. 14) and beyond into adulthood (see Bruck, 1990, 1992). Thus “intervention is essential, presumably at an earlier age in order to impact the persistence of poor reading” (Francis et al., p. 14). For many children, however, intervention at an earlier age is not occurring, and the persistence of poor reading clearly places these children at-risk, given the mounting demands of more content-area text and increasing emphasis on reading for knowledge and for information as they move into the junior grades (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1979, 1983). There is also substantial evidence (e.g. Bruck, 1990, 1992; Francis et al.; Lyon, 1995; Shaywitz, 2003) that reading disabilities not identified or remediated will lead to persistent learning challenges and significant underachievement into secondary school and adulthood (Lovett et al., 2000).

This study addresses the urgency of reading instruction and intervention with three principal objectives:
1. To extend understanding of the processes whereby older poor readers interact with expository text by providing a qualitatively finer-grained assessment of their difficulties.

2. To develop and implement a cohesive program of interventions that targets critical requirements of successful interactions with expository text, including the ability to locate information, the ability to attend to text structure, and the ability to summarize.

3. To establish and describe a collaborative and intensive research partnership with a classroom teacher to design, implement, and evaluate research-grounded interventions for his class.

Although they are described discretely, there is synergy between and among these objectives. Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996) recommend that a “vigorous program of research on teaching should build on and connect previously distinct bodies of teaching-related research, as well as recent research on learning, cognition, and the nature of human performance and intelligence” (p. 97). This study follows that recommendation.

Reading is a complex and multidimensional activity. This is broadly reflected in the multiple realities in which it is embedded. These include “educational, social, historical, cultural, and biological realities” (Snow et al., 1998, p. 33). More specifically, turning to the literature on instructional approaches to reading, repeated calls are made for balanced programs that combine meaning and code approaches (e.g., Adams, 2004; Foorman & Torgesen, 2001; Pearson & Raphael, 2003; Stanovich, 1998). Despite these calls, there is concern that the children who are at greatest risk are receiving the least

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1 The original intent was to involve one teacher but, as described in Chapter Three, two classroom teachers were assigned to teach Grade 5 Social Studies.
balanced reading program with fewer opportunities for exposure to authentic text (Adams, 1990; Allington, 1983; Torgesen et al., 2001). Ironically, those with the greatest need often receive large measures of instruction in isolated, lower-level skills with fewer opportunities to engage in higher-level thinking about meaningful text (Adams, 1990; Allington, 1991).

My earlier qualitative study (Martin, 1994) of an expert reader and a poor reader at the primary level highlighted the constellation of cognitive, motivational, attributional, and affective dimensions of the comprehension process. It also revealed that, for the poor reader, it was not sufficient to teach him better reading strategies; he also needed to develop a more positive sense of himself as a reader. Three major questions arose from this earlier work that merited further inquiry: the relationship between metacognition and self-regulation, how to build interconnections between self-efficacy and classroom social participation, and the extent to which self-appraisals that required intensive one-on-one instruction can be effectively scaffolded within a classroom setting. These questions are embedded within the three principal objectives, which inform one another.

The Three Interwoven Objectives

1. To extend understanding of the processes whereby older poor readers interact with expository text by providing a qualitative finer-grained assessment of their difficulties.

Where my previous work involved a younger poor reader who was withdrawn from the classroom, this study targets older, struggling readers with the intent of developing, through a collaborative research partnership, a model for instructional interventions within a classroom context. Stanovich and Siegel (1994) found that there
was remarkable similarity between the reading-related cognitive profiles of the learning disabled and the non-identified reading disabled. This finding has significant implications for this study because it counters arguments for differential treatment based on classification. As well, given the current tendency not to identify students with learning disabilities, it indicates the efficacy of targeting all learners with reading difficulties, regardless of identification. Rather than differential treatment based on classification, increasingly attention is directed towards differentiated instruction (see Ontario Ministry of Education, *Education for All, 2005*). The students who are “curriculum casualties” (Mathes & Torgesen, 2000, p. 8), for whom interventions may have been too little and too late, are clearly at risk as curriculum demands and the likelihood of unsuccessful school experiences exponentially increase.

For all of these students, it is critical to have a clearer understanding of how they approach reading expository text, what they understand from their efforts to comprehend it, and the extent to which they are able to monitor their comprehension while reading to learn within the classroom. Without this knowledge, we will be less than effective in designing and implementing interventions in the context of the regular classroom, where these students spend their days at school. Less is known about the necessary conditions to assist older poor readers who experience several years of reading failure in comparison to the prevention of reading failure in the early grades (Torgesen, 2002b).

Providing fine-grained analyses, absent in the literature, of the reading deficits of older, struggling readers as they engage with informational text can assist in developing a coherent program of instructional interventions that will support them. Important also is the need to pursue whether it is reductionist to assess poor readers as lacking the
attributes found in good readers without probing deeper and actively looking for qualitative similarities as well as differences.

2. To develop and implement a cohesive program of interventions targeting critical requirements of successful interactions with content-area text, including the ability to locate information, to attend to text structure, and to summarize.

In contrast to narrative text, particular features of expository text include less repetition of ideas, more content-specific vocabulary, more complex ideas, and more difficult concept loads (Block, 2004). Individually and collectively these can make comprehension a struggle. Entering the junior grades, children have had relatively little exposure to expository text (Armbruster et al., 1991; Duke, 2004; Duke, Bennett-Armistead, & Roberts, 2002). Confronted with the challenges of informational text and in the absence of a schema for this type of text, older poor readers, if not all students, require guidance and direction to identify and extract relevant information (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001).

Dowhower (1999) recommends that teachers develop a strategic stance towards comprehension that actively promotes the teaching of cognitive strategies. Yet, as she points out, often both novice and experienced teachers find it challenging to adopt a strategic approach to comprehension. Reasons include confusion between strategy teaching and particular instructional techniques that teachers might use and the absence of meaningful exposure to strategic interventions in either in-service workshops or preservice courses (Dowhower, p. 673). Further, it can be easier for students—and teachers—to engage with narrative text, in keeping with Rosenblatt’s (1978) classic
description of an aesthetic reading experience as a transaction between text and reader where the reader has a “lived-through experience with the text” (Cooper, 1985, p. iv).

Therefore explicit instruction needs to target critical requirements of informational text that encompass text structure, text search, and text summary. These text-based skills require targeted instruction, systematic and guided practice, and corrective feedback, as well as instruction about the purpose and utility of strategy use to support metacognitive development (e.g., Dreher & Sammons, 1994; Nelson, Smith, & Dodd, 1992; Paris & Paris, 2001; Symons, MacLatchy-Gaudet, Stone, & Reynolds, 2001). Gersten et al. (2001) note that many comprehension strategies can be capacity demanding and can seem daunting, hence the importance of ensuring that children understand their purpose. In Duffy et al.’s seminal study (1987), classroom teachers taught their poor readers the reasoning underlying strategy use when reading, as well as the strategies themselves. They concluded,

The best explainers among the treatment teachers did much more than provide the “front-loaded” modeling and demonstration typically associated with direct instruction research. Instead, the best explainers generated spontaneous explanations throughout the lesson, elaborating in response to students’ restructured understandings of the teacher’s model or demonstration. (Duffy, p. 364)

This type of responsive elaboration points to the qualitatively “subtle aspects of instruction [that] may be of particular importance” (Duffy et al., p. 364). These subtle understandings reflect a level of expertise built on a deep understanding of reading
processes. The reciprocal nature of any instructional intervention merits careful consideration.

3. To establish and describe a collaborative and intensive research partnership with two classroom teachers to design, implement and evaluate research-grounded interventions for their classes.

The ongoing move towards inclusion of exceptional learners in the regular classroom, resulting in increasingly heterogeneous classrooms, makes it particularly important to study interventions for poor readers (Hutchinson, 2010). In addition, there is less emphasis on formal identification, which has been compounded by changes in the funding formula in Ontario for special education (Bennett, Dworet, & Weber, 2008). Thus more is expected of classroom teachers by way of adaptations to meet the learning needs of each of their students (Lupart, 2000). Classroom teachers can be caught in the ongoing and demanding cycle of teaching with limited opportunities to access research findings, what Housego (1994) identifies as the equivalent of a structural fault line between teacher educators and teachers in the field. This study illustrates one possibility for collaboration that may overcome these challenges.

Webb and Palincsar (1996) describe the essence of collaboration as “convergence—the construction of shared meanings for conversations, concepts, and experiences” (p. 848). Therefore, if collaboration is to be meaningful and productive, it must be supported through meaningful partnerships that allow practitioners and university researchers to develop models of change together (Goodlad, 1993), what Randi and Corno (2000) describe as collaborative innovation. Indeed, my own work (Martin, 2001; Martin & Hutchinson, 2000; Martin, Hutchinson, & Whitehead, 1999) has clearly
demonstrated how difficult it is to support collaboration and confront its challenges. Although convergence may remain elusive, there is no question that it is a worthwhile goal. The collaborative process requires that more ownership be given to field practitioners by requesting direction from them, respecting their contributions, and giving them due consideration, where co-constructing meaning honours the "importance of multiple perspectives and the fragility of practice" (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 14).

**Reconfiguration of Research and Practice**

Calderhead (1993) proposes a reconfiguration of insular and simplistic conceptions of research and practice “in terms of a reciprocal questioning and exploration” (pp. 15, 17). Denton, Vaughn, and Fletcher (2003) describe the task of translating educational research into sustained implementation as an illusive goal, given the persistent gap between research and routine school practices. Randi and Corno (2000) suggest that collaborative innovation in teacher development is overdue. This study affords opportunity for reconfiguration, translating research into practice, and innovation through a collaborative partnership with a classroom teacher with a shared goal of improving classroom literacy instruction and delivery. Providing fine-grained analyses, absent in the literature, of the reading deficits of older, struggling readers as they engage with informational text can assist in developing a coherent program of instructional interventions that will support them. Important also is the need to pursue whether it is reductionist to assess poor readers as lacking the attributes found in good readers without probing deeper and actively looking for qualitative similarities as well as differences.

If the intense needs of older poor readers are to be met with some level of success, then the interplay between and among the multiple requirements demanded by expository
text, the organization and sequencing of instruction, and the counterbalance between explicit instruction and scaffolding must be better understood. This study contributes to that understanding.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Bruner’s (1985, 1990) conceptualization of two fundamental modes of thought, the narrative and the paradigmatic, lays the groundwork for the theoretical frameworks that shape this study. Following Rorty (1979), Bruner describes one mode as centred on the more inclusive and broader question of the meaning of experience and the other on the narrower epistemological question of how truth can be known. Although each helps to order experience, construct reality, filter the perceptual world, and organize images in memory, they are irreducible to one another. Where narrative is essentially temporal, paradigmatic is timeless. Narrative explications tend to the particular and are context sensitive, while paradigmatic explications tend to universality and are context free. Each is a form of thinking, a view of the world, “and to ask which depicts the real world is to ask a question that even modern metaphysicians believe to be undecidable” (1985, p. 113).

In *The Culture of Education* (1996), Bruner both developed and refined these notions, making the case that there must be room for two perspectives on the nature of knowing, considering how complex and inherently reflexive an undertaking it is. Further, although the perspectives may appear incommensurate, they share a complementary relationship by virtue of a “perspectival view of meaning making” that reflects interpretations of meaning which represent “not only the idiosyncratic histories of individuals, but also the culture’s canonical ways of constructing reality” (Bruner, p. 14).
Bruner cautions against education narrowing its scope of interpretive inquiry. To do so would reduce the power of a culture to adapt to change, which, in turn, would constrain flexibility and maintain the status quo. Embracing the scope of interpretive inquiry, this ethnographic study incorporates the narrative and the paradigmatic, moving between an intimate, descriptive accounting of the lived experience of being a participant in the classroom and a researcher working to differentiate instruction and develop a coherent set of interventions to support struggling readers’ interactions with expository text.

Sociocultural theory, cognitive theory, and phenomenology are the overarching frameworks that inform this study. Both informing and informed by each of these is the area of teachers’ knowledge. Munby, Russell, and Martin (2001) describe the bifurcation in the “knowledge base” for teaching as including findings and maxims from classroom research and the context dependent knowledge that is unique to a particular classroom, often expressed and exchanged by teachers in narrative mode as anecdotes and stories. They suggest that narrative thinking may come more naturally to teachers than paradigmatic while researchers often align themselves or “confine themselves” (Schön, 1983, p. 43) with theoretical understandings at the expense of practice. “Moving freely and comfortably between paradigmatic and narrative modes of thought—between the high ground of theory and the swampy lowland of practice—is neither familiar nor easy” (Munby et al., p. 878).

**Sociocultural Theory**

Sociocultural theory, grounded in the work of Vygotsky (1978,) as well as Bruner (e.g., 1986, 1990, 1996), provides the fulcrum for a situative perspective, whereby learning is seen as a process of enculturation into a community, reflected in a number of
participatory processes, including discourse, practice, and thinking (Mason, 2007; see also Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Greeno et al., 1996). Mason suggests that knowing, from a sociocultural perspective means belonging, participating, and communicating. Therefore learners are inevitably participants in activities that are distributed among the individuals, tools, and artefacts of a community. Prawat (1999) presents Vygotsky’s later work as providing a mediational account of meaning-making which is also social, embodied and transactional. The concept of mediation is central to Vygotsky’s description of social formation and opens the way for the development of a non-deterministic account in which mediators serve as the means by which the individual acts upon and is acted upon by social, cultural and historical factors in the course of ongoing human activity. (Daniels, 2008, p. 4)

Instructional approaches arising from these forms of mediated meaning-making include scaffolding, the recognition of the importance of collaboration and its connection to assessment and instruction, and reciprocal teaching. To operate in the zone of proximal development requires collaboration between the teacher (or supportive other) and the student. Recognition of the importance of cooperative learning initiatives and classrooms that embody communities of learners (Duckworth, 2001) are further examples of Vygotskian applications. Rogoff’s (1990) work on cognitive apprenticeship and Lave and Wenger’s (1991) on situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation contribute substantively to the corpus built on sociocultural premises.
Cognitive Theory

Whereas the metaphor for sociocultural theory was participation, the metaphor for cognitive theory is acquisition where knowing means possessing (Mason, 2007). Cognitive theory addresses the processes of acquiring knowledge in its various forms—declarative, procedural, and conditional and the ability to distinguish between and among them, as well as knowing how and when to access them efficiently and efficaciously.

Therefore strategic awareness is key and a strategic repertoire essential (Baker & Brown, 1984; Pressley et al., 1992; Pressley, 1998). This, in turn, is linked to metacognitive awareness and comprehension-monitoring (Baker & Brown, 1991; Baker, 2002; Brown, 1978; Flavell, 1976). Also linked is the construct of self-regulation, which Zimmerman (2008) describes as the “self-directive processes and self-beliefs that enable learners to transform their mental abilities, such as verbal aptitude, into an academic performance skill, such as writing” (p. 166).

Where reactive events happen to students as a result of impersonal forces, self-regulated learning (SRL) is a proactive process, one that students can use to gain academic skills like goal-setting, selecting and deploying strategies, and self-monitoring progress and effectiveness (Zimmerman, 2008, pp. 166-167). Connecting SRL and motivation, Zimmerman describes the core issue as whether a learner demonstrates personal initiative, perseverance, and adaptive skill which, in turn, arise from advantageous motivational beliefs and feelings and metacognitive strategies (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2007). Considering the converse, a lack of initiative, perseverance, and adaptive skill, coupled with disadvantageous motivational beliefs and feelings and an
absence of metacognitive strategies would seriously compromise a student’s academic performance.

_Phenomenological Theory_

From phenomenological theory comes an emphasis on the immediacy and intensity of our lived relational experiences (van Manen, 1997), what Moustakas (1994) describes as experience centred in the context of a particular situation (p. 14) and Lave (1993) explains as the “intersubjective relation among coparticipants in social interaction” (p. 17). The figure-ground metaphor is often invoked to tease out the interrelationships and interconnections among participants and the phenomena of which they are a part. Where meaning is figure, context is ground. The phenomenological perspective starts with the premise that “situations are constructed as people organize themselves to attend to and give meaning to figural concerns against the ground of ongoing social interaction” (Lave, p. 19). The in-situ experience is thus temporal and informed by the social-interactional constructions that are created accordingly. These immediate situations can, however, include historical artefacts, practices, and routines which, in turn, provide resources that can be collected and used in future interactions (Suchman, 1987). From this perspective, lived experiences are neither ahistorical nor self-contained, countering criticisms sometimes levied towards phenomenological approaches.

Phenomenology also provides a cautionary note to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions. van Manen (1997) suggests that it is not that we know too little about phenomena that are the subject of investigation, but rather that we know too much. Our presuppositions, assumptions, and existing bodies of scientific knowledge serve to
predispose us to interpret a phenomenon before fully “mining its meaning” (van Manen, p. 38). Similarly Greene (1978) calls for a critical awareness where “critical” can lead to emancipatory thinking that “involves the capacity to assess situations in such a way that lacks can be defined, openings identified, and possibilities revealed” (p. 223). Assessing Greene’s contribution, Davis and Sumara (1998) suggest that her phenomenological approach has been “oriented toward cutting through the prejudices that enframe our thinking—acting…to enable us to recognize the world—that is, to perceive/think/act differently” (p. 250). They identify a recurrent theme in her work: “In matters of schooling, our thinking about thinking is never innocent” (Davis & Sumara, p. 250). Therefore as educational researchers and as teachers, we must be “compelled to interrogate our own beliefs on the matter, along with the ways we are complicit in supporting practices that we know or that we suspect to be troublesome” (Davis & Sumara, p. 250).

Sociocultural theory, cognitive theory, and phenomenological theory dovetail in this study. Sociocultural theory provides the overall context and a way of understanding belongingness, participatory processes, and communication between and among all of the learners, including students, classroom teachers, and myself as collaborator and instigator of the research. Cognitive theory provides an avenue to understand knowledge acquisition, learning, and thinking. Constructs like metacognition, self-regulation, and comprehension-monitoring contribute to understanding what good readers do well and poor readers find difficult and to understanding how reading performance can be enhanced or improved. Phenomenological theory centres the experience of being and thinking in the particulars of a classroom context. The immediacy of the lived
experiences of all of the participants situates this ethnography and provokes critical awareness.

Theoretical Bridging

Increasingly, there are calls for researchers to move beyond exclusive adherence to a particular theoretical orientation. Brantlinger, Jiminez, Klingner, Pugach, and Richardson (2005) call for theory triangulation. Segall (2002) advocates for “infusion” as a means of combining alternate, sometimes competing, theoretical perspectives or orientations. More specifically, Greeno and van de Sande (2007), in a special issue of Educational Psychologist, “Bridging the Cognitive and Sociocultural Approaches in Research on Conceptual Change,” describe cognition and learning, including conceptual understanding and conceptual growth, as functions realized through activity systems and communities of practice. Therefore knowledge and cognition are seen as distributed between the individuals interacting within a system and the various material and information systems that they use as resources. The notion of bridging refers to connecting

sociocultural concepts and methods that explain dynamic aspects of interaction with cognitive concepts such as propositional networks, schemata, strategies, and (additionally) perspectival understandings that explain informational aspects of what people say and do in their activity. The structure of this bridge involves concepts and hypotheses about generating structures of information in interaction. (Greeno & van de Sande, 2007, p. 10)

Anderson, Greeno, Reder, and Simon (2000) make the case for research that moves towards unifying diverse perspectives. To do so does not preclude what they
describe as productive competition, including challenges to claims and critical evaluation of evidence presented. Ultimately, this competitive process could lead to a goal whereby dichotomies such as individual versus social, thinking versus acting, and cognitive versus situative will cease to be terms of contention and, instead, figure in coherent explanatory accounts of behavior and in useful design principles for resources and activities of productive learning. (p. 13)

The authors conclude on a relatively optimistic note. They suggest that using research findings from all of the productive perspectives to inform policy-makers about school instruction could mean “that our children will not be the victims of well-intentioned but ill-informed educational practices” (p. 13).

The Backdrop: The Field of Special Education

The backdrop against which this study plays out is the field of special education which has undergone several dramatic paradigm shifts since the 1980s. Perhaps most notably, the essential understanding of what is “special” about special education has been reframed. Historically special education was set apart from, or contrasted to, “regular education” and could refer to either setting or place; i.e., segregated classes or special schools for distinct populations like the provincial demonstration schools in Ontario. Additionally special education could relate to provision of service where educational intervention and support were designed to address special educational needs, wherever that intervention took place. Therefore, *ipso facto*, special education meant separation from the mainstream of regular education. Tomlinson (1982) provides a trenchant assessment of how the ostensibly benevolent cloak of special education has been used at cross purposes:
The way in which children are categorized out of mainstream education and into special education is generally regarded as enlightened and advanced, and an instance of the obligation placed upon civilized society to care for its weaker members. Special education is permeated by an ideology of benevolent humanitarianism, which provides [the] moral framework within which professionals work. (p. 5)

Thus exclusion was operationalized and legitimized through notions of benevolence, presented in the name of liberal ideology. This involved no challenge, however, to exclusive practice or to the status quo. Embedded within efforts to enact this ideology were beliefs derived from the tradition of the British almoner about aiding the less able and caring for the less fortunate.

In part to identify the less fortunate and less able population, categorical models were used to classify those with particular special educational needs. These classifications were based on medical models which assumed quantitative and qualitative differences between normal and abnormal. Operationalized, these models were realized within institutions for the mentally retarded, the major category of disability, and within schools where educators looked for signs and symptoms (Winzer, 2007) linked to various etiologies, including diseases, genetic abnormalities, birth defects, etc. which, in turn, required appropriate treatment. “Children were classified within medical knowledge, labeled with a particular disability designation, viewed as deviant, and propelled toward certain institutions, special classes, and pedagogical practices” (Winzer, p. 28). Thus disabilities were pathologized and, in tandem with and bolstered by the medical model, a deficit model prevailed.
Skrtic (2004) suggests that industrialization and compulsory school attendance converged to produce a significant number of students who were not easily teachable within traditional classrooms. As a result, the problem of school failure was reconfigured as two interconnected issues; namely, inefficient organizations and defective students. This, in turn, led to two separate but reinforcing discourses, both set apart from the general education discourse. Drawing on the developing fields of educational administration and special education, Skrtic contends that the former lent its stamp to organizational efficiency while the latter became “a means to remove and contain the most recalcitrant students in the interest of maintaining order in the rationalized school plant” (p. 96).

Kliebard (2004) frames these movements within the context of massive social change and concerns over the stability of social institutions such as the family and the church. Social efficiency therefore became the means to effect social stability and social utility became the criterion against which school studies were measured and assessed. Kliebard goes on to describe the efficiency-minded “educational engineers” whose impact on curriculum was pervasive and can still be felt. Curriculum’s role was to prepare the young to assume adult roles where they would be fully contributing members of society. John Franklin Bobbitt was notable for his role in applying principles of scientific management to education. Recruited to the University of Chicago in 1909 by Charles H. Judd, a psychologist brought from Yale to head the Department of Education, Judd saw Bobbitt as a kindred spirit. Bobbitt (1912, p. 169) took the factory metaphor and extended it to the question of how curriculum should be constructed.

Work up the raw material into that finished product for which it is best adapted.
Applied to education this means educate the individual according to his capabilities. This requires that materials of the curriculum be sufficiently various to meet the needs of every class of individual in the community and that the course of training and study be sufficiently flexible that the individual can be given just the things that he needs. (cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 84)

Ironically, this had some benefits for the special needs population who were excepted from the mainstream body of students.

Winzer (2007) describes a large increase in enrolments in special classes and in the types of classes between 1910-1930, including children who were blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard-of hearing, physically disabled, mentally retarded, speech impaired, academically maladjusted, or tubercular. To meet the needs of these children, specially trained teachers were required who could provide, in Bobbitt’s (1912) words, “just the things that he [the child] needs” (p. 169). These teachers recognized the limitations of an inflexible curriculum that was inaccessible to their students and initiated practical instruction in trades and agriculture for the boys and in domestic skills for the girls, while modifying academic requirements. Despite the oft-stated rationale given for special classes, “to enable the pupils to mingle in due course with normal children” (Percival, 1945/1947, cited in Winzer, p. 29), this rarely occurred. Well into the twentieth century, the special or segregated class remained unchallenged as the setting of choice for students with special needs and was accompanied by its own set of guidelines for program planning and service provision.

*The Canadian Context*

With the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982, the Canadian Charter of Human
Rights and Freedoms has been and continues to be seminal to the field of special education. It guaranteed (section 15.1) “equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination” for minorities, specifically naming those with mental or physical disability (Hutchinson, 2010). Further it specified responsibilities of federal and provincial governments to ensure these rights are realized and upheld. Consequently, inclusion and inclusive practice became inextricably tied to issues of equity and the equitable treatment of students required inclusive settings, regardless of (dis)ability (Hutchinson; Lupart, 2000). This has placed Canada in the vanguard of the paradigm shift to inclusive principles and practice.

Kuhn (1970) describes how, when paradigm shifts occur, “a scientist’s world is qualitatively transformed [and] quantitatively enriched by fundamental novelties of either fact or theory” (p. 7). He cautions that paradigm change is not necessarily an easy process. Comparing the process of paradigm change to an individual’s perceptual (conceptual) change, he reminds us that novelty materializes with difficulty, often manifested by resistance, against a background provided by expectation (Kuhn, p. 64). With regard to the paradigm shifts in the field of special education, one must remember that resistance and expectation can make for uneasy bedfellows as the field continues to be confused about what actions need to be taken to move both policy and practice forward (Ainscow & Miles, 2008).

Reframing what is “special” about special education has led to what Florian (2007) describes as “reimagining special education [which] involves rejecting the questionable construct of normal as biologically determined, usual and good in favour of a more nuanced understanding of difference” (p. 15). Thus the conceptualization of
disability has been recalibrated to emphasize ability. This challenge to the medical model which pathologized difference has led to a reformulation of the notion of difference. It is not difference per se but what we make of difference that is most important (Minow, 1990). Central to accommodating individual needs and abilities is a qualitative understanding of differences among learners. The intent is to enable access to education designed for all, not for some at the expense of others. In other words, treating students fairly does not mean treating them the same. As we have moved from models of exclusion to models of inclusion, non-categorical approaches to inclusive education have emerged. These approaches demand an emphasis on adaptive teaching and assessment where lessons are planned, the classroom is organized, and a climate created with a dedicated aim of including exceptional students within the context of the regular classroom (Hutchinson, 2010). There is no unanimity, however, and countervailing perspectives that promote categorical approaches continue to be promoted as well (see Edmunds & Edmunds, 2008).

A Dilemma-ridden Field

To appreciate fully the complexity of the field requires understanding that it is dilemma-ridden. Drawing on Brookfield’s (1995) assessment that every day of our teaching lives is lived on the horns of complex ethical dilemmas, Hutchinson (2010) contends that these dilemmas are intensified by the Canadian commitment to an inclusive society and inclusive classrooms. This commitment is clearly and emphatically articulated in the seminal Ontario document, Education for All, Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6 (2005), “It is imperative that inclusion means not only the
practice of placing students with special needs in the regular classroom but ensuring that teachers assist every student to prepare for the highest degree of independence possible” (p. 2). That said, understanding what constitutes “special needs” can be confounding and paradoxical. Embedded are dilemmas of access and equity which give rise to questions like: What are the criteria for determining the “highest degree of independence possible”? What is or is not equitable in terms of additional support? On what grounds are decisions made about the type of assistance required? What are the determinants for access to services beyond the regular classroom? What perceptions are attached and do these contribute to stigmatizing and stereotyping and thus compromise access and equity?

Additionally there are the competing dilemmas of difference and commonality. The dilemma of difference is contingent on assumptions about being “other than,” about deviance, marginalization, and assumptions, often tacit, of fixed ability, with educational practices based on the belief that ability is normally distributed throughout a population (Artiles, 1998; Brown & McIntyre, 1993; Florian, 2007). Minow (1990) conceptualizes a vicious cycle where laws and policies created to protect those who are most vulnerable can, ironically, stigmatize and marginalize. Playing off against the dilemma of difference is that of commonality which makes the claim, anchored in the democratic ideal, that all learners are the same in essential human characteristics and in their rights to participate in the educational process (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Dyson, 2001). Yet if we emphasize what learners have in common, we can overlook what distinguishes them. If we emphasize their differences, then we can overlook their commonalities. Ford (2005) cautions that the “difference discourse” can be problematic and limiting.
There are no easy resolutions to these dilemmas. Dyson (2001) contends that resolutions that attempt to hold contradictory tendencies together pitch themselves betwixt and between and become subject to centrifugal forces from both poles. “They will always fall foul both of the substantive differences that they ignore and of the aspects of commonality that they fail fully to acknowledge” (Dyson, p. 26). He suggests that so-called definitive resolutions rarely prevail and instead sets forth a recommendation for social inclusion. Building on Giddens (1998), he sees social inclusion as building a cohesive society by ensuring that no social groups are alienated from the mainstream while equipping potentially marginalized groups with the capacity to become active citizens and fully contributing members of society. Pushing further, Dyson distinguishes between an inclusion agenda that focuses on presence and participation and a social inclusion agenda that would focus far more on educational outcomes and, “particularly, on the re-engagements of marginalized groups with learning, whether or not that engagement takes place in the context of the ‘common’ classroom, school and curriculum” (p. 27). This emphasis on outcomes embedded within schooling that provides opportunities for meaningful engagement with learning, provided in contexts aligned with individual needs and abilities moves beyond exclusive allegiance to common setting.

Ainscow and Miles (2008) propose an approach which they describe as an inclusive turn that would focus on barriers to participation and learning experienced by students in educational systems. Barriers can include lack of resources or expertise, inappropriate curricula or teaching methods, attitudes that limit student participation and achievement such as self-fulfilling prophecy. They suggest that it is more likely for this
inclusive turn to be realized within a culture of collaboration where problem-solving is supported. The key, however, is teachers whose beliefs, attitudes, and actions create, what Sarason (2002) describes as, “contexts of productive learning.” The task, therefore, “must be to develop education systems within which teachers feel supported as well as challenged in relation to their responsibility to keep exploring more effective ways of facilitating the learning of all students” (Ainscow & Miles, p. 21).

Taking an inclusive turn, this study acknowledges the dilemmas that characterize the field and works towards adopting and promoting a socially inclusive agenda that, as Florian (2007) says so well, reimagines special education.

**A Preview**

In the following chapter, my role as participant and researcher in this ethnography is introduced and the literature that informs the study is presented. The third chapter acquaints the reader with the methodology of the study, including the lived experience as it unfolded. Chapter Four takes the reader inside the collaborative enterprise with two classroom teachers. Chapter Five introduces the children with vignettes of the six who were in the small, pull-out group and received intense instruction in parallel lessons. Chapter Six provides a highly detailed picture of each of the eight parallel lessons and vividly represents the instructional design. The next chapter, Chapter Seven, serves as a bookend and reports the results from interview data with each of the children in the small, pull-out group. These interviews were conducted on the last day of school. This chapter also includes survey data from the whole class on their learning experience in social studies over the course of seven months, December through June. The Discussion and Epilogue follow.
CHAPTER TWO
RESEARCH CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter will take the reader into the literature that informs this study. Two bodies of literature that are rarely connected are juxtaposed; namely the literature on reading, including reading processes and reading disability, and the literature on teacher collaboration. In this study, I assumed two roles, as instigator and collaborator. As the researcher, I instigated an instructional program that targeted children in a regular classroom with the most significant reading difficulties, using content-area text. Instruction was differentiated through a series of parallel lessons where those children were withdrawn. Instruction was further differentiated in the classroom through intense instruction of content-rich lessons. This instruction relied on the collaborative partnership that I established with two classroom teachers. The study was contingent on that partnership.

Broadly, this chapter is organized into two major sections: reading and teacher collaboration. The first section on reading is divided into two parts. The first part is conceptual and descriptive and explores what it means to be an older, poor reader. A coherent, conceptual understanding of reading disability as a “multivariate problem” (Fletcher et al., 1994, p. 19) is essential to frame interventions designed to assist older struggling readers as they engage with expository text. The second part reviews selected, representative studies that underscore some of the challenges and instructional requirements for older poor readers. Interventions have generally focused on strategy instruction, with varying degrees of success. Maintenance, generalization, and transfer
appear to be the most intractable and robust challenges. The focus is on critical skills necessary to interact with informational text, namely, the ability to summarize, the ability to locate information, and the ability to attend to text structure in order to self-monitor. The complexity of these requirements reveals the need for highly crafted instructional approaches. The second section of this chapter frames the collaborative process by considering the impact of current special education initiatives, examining some of the challenges of school-university partnerships, and explicating coteaching.

Older Poor Readers

Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read will be crucial. Continual instruction beyond the early grades is needed.

(Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999, p. 3)

There are mounting concerns and ever-increasing calls to ensure that children are prepared for the literacy demands of the 21st century. If a firm foundation for reading growth is set in the primary grades, then further growth is almost completely dependent on the breadth and depth of reading experiences and practice (Snow et al., 1998; Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005). Without this foundation, the effects are cumulative and spiral downward (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Torgesen, Rashotte, et al., 2001). Less is
known about older poor readers compared to younger. Absent is a detailed profile of older poor readers’ interactions with informational text. Developing a finer grained assessment of these students would provide a more holistic picture of the significant challenges confronting these students and their teachers and help to guide instruction and develop interventions to remediate.

Well established in the literature are contrasts drawn between good and poor readers. In so doing, a broadstroke picture of poor readers can be developed; namely, what good readers are able to do, poor readers are less able or unable to do (e.g., Adams, 1990; Block & Pressley, 2001; Brown, 1980; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983; Paris & Meyers, 1981; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991; Pressley et al., 1997). A great deal of the work in the area of strategy instruction demonstrates the application of this model where interventions for poor readers are based on cognitive task analysis that identifies processes that successful readers use (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Nelson et al., 1992; Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997).

The difficulties that most children have extracting information from expository and narrative text have long been recognized. For example, Garner and Gillingham’s (1987) study on students’ knowledge of text structure focused on good readers in Grades 5 and 7 and found that they were not well equipped to manage tasks related to structural properties of expository text. By extension, poor readers would have greater difficulty with such “fragile concepts” as cohesion, topical relatedness, and superordination. Wong’s (1982) important study on strategic behaviours in selecting retrieval cues from narrative text included gifted, normal achieving, and learning-disabled children in Grades 5, 6, and 7. She found that the children with learning disabilities lacked self-monitoring
strategies and were neither thorough nor exhaustive in the task situation. Although they demonstrated some organizational strategies in selecting retrieval cues, they were less efficient and less adaptive than the gifted children. Interestingly, the normal-achieving children were as nonsystematic as the learning disabled children in searching for cues.

A different approach was taken by Klingner, Vaughn, and Schumm (1998), who investigated the effectiveness of a cooperative learning model designed to foster strategic reading of social studies text within heterogeneous fourth-grade classrooms. Combining reciprocal teaching and transactional strategy intervention, they developed Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) that could be used within highly complex, diverse classrooms. This exploratory study realized greater gains in reading comprehension for students in the experimental group. These students also demonstrated the same content knowledge acquisition as students in the traditional teacher-led instruction. In the intervention condition, lower achievers provided less elaborated answers, as expected. However, within their cooperative group, these students participated actively, responding almost as frequently as higher achievers. Peer assistance also was frequently apparent. These findings applied only to the “get the gist” (finding the main idea) strategy. For the previewing strategy, students rarely helped one another. Previewing was, however, the strategy that students used least effectively.

Klingner et al. (1998) conclude that, overall, their approach to comprehension strategy instruction in content areas is feasible. They had three recommendations: more scaffolding and direct instruction in teaching students how to ask higher-level questions and how to discuss key issues to promote higher-level discussions within cooperative groups, more careful attention paid to students’ prior knowledge before they engage in
groupwork (see Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991, on the complex relationship between prior knowledge and text comprehension), and greater emphasis on teaching metacognitive aspects of strategies, particularly their efficacy and utility, as well as self-monitoring procedures.

Matthew Effects

Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) describe the cognitive consequences of reading as reciprocal and exponential and extending well beyond the immediate task of pulling meaning from a specific passage. The reciprocal influences are reflected in Stanovich’s (1986) seminal description of the “Matthew effects” where the rich-get-richer and the poor-get-poorer: those who are good readers reap the benefits; those who are poor readers receive fewer opportunities for exposure to authentic text (see Adams, 1990; Allington, 1983; Torgesen, Rashotte, et al., 2001) or are confronted by text that is relatively more difficult than that given to good readers (Allington, 1984).

The multiple challenges faced by poor readers point to the extent to which learning to read is “an unnatural act” that requires instruction; “and even when given explicit, devoted, daily instruction, the average child learns to read very slowly, and with great difficulty” (Gough & Hillinger, 1980, pp. 179, 180-181). If children are going to acquire this unnatural process, then they require instructional environments that support all of the components of the learning-to-read endeavour (Wolf, 2008). Therefore, contrary to Whole Language proponents (e.g. Goodman, 1986, 1996; Goodman & Goodman, 1979; Smith, 1986), the acquisition of written language does not parallel the acquisition of oral language. Perfetti (1991) makes the distinction emphatically and clearly:
Learning to read is not like acquiring one’s native language, no matter how much someone wishes it were so. Natural language is acquired quickly with a large biological contribution….It is universal among human communities. By contrast literacy is a cultural invention. It is far from universal. And the biological contribution to the process has already been accounted for, once it is acknowledged that it depends on language rather than parallels it. (p. 75)

Thus we return full circle to the Matthew effects and the types of reading experiences—and instructional experiences—that children have.

Word-level Reading Difficulties

Torgesen (2002a) identifies two types of word-level reading difficulties that characterize typical poor readers in Grade 4 who are asked to read grade-level text. The first addresses these students’ over-reliance on guessing unfamiliar words and attempting to use context cues. Consequently, their reading has a high rate of word-level errors. There are usually severe impairments in skills of phonemic analysis and a consequent inability to use phonics that, in turn, leads to guessing and the use of context cues as default strategies. The second difficulty refers to the numbers of words encountered that are not part of these students’ sight vocabulary. As a result, reading rate and fluency are impaired in comparison to peers who are normally-achieving readers (Torgesen et al., 2001; Torgesen, Rashotte, et al., 2001). Sight vocabulary has been linked to orthographic patterning and the ability to register visually or consolidate orthographic patterns (Adams & Bruck, 1993).

The relationship between phonological and orthographic knowledge is complex (Cunningham, Perry, & Stanovich, 2001; Ehri, 1998), but deficits in one “must inevitably
and profoundly obstruct the operation and development of the system as a whole” (Adams & Bruck, p. 129). Current research leans towards phonological processes as the core deficit, which impedes the acquisition of word recognition skills, which then impedes the acquisition of fluency (Wolf & Bowers, 1999).¹

Comprehension Process

Turning to comprehension, good readers perceive each word individually, tentatively interpret it, and only fully assimilate it once the clause or sentence is read in its entirety (Adams, 1990; Adams, 1991; Adams & Bruck, 1993). The syntactic boundaries, marked by punctuation, cue these assimilative, interpretive pauses, allowing the reader to actively construct meaning (Adams, 1990). However, the reader also needs to store the sentence, clause, or phrase in relatively intact form for meaning-getting and meaning-making to occur with some success. Therefore, comprehension in its fullest sense is “necessarily thought intensive. It requires analytic, evaluative, and reflective access to local and long-term memory. Yet, active attention is limited. To the extent that readers must struggle with the words, they necessarily lose track of meaning” (Adams & Bruck, p. 120).

Adams (1990) contributes significantly to understanding the complexity of comprehension processes. She describes comprehension as a three-tiered, hierarchically layered process that consists of retrieving the meaning of every word encountered, interrupting word-by-word progress to review chains of words, and finally merging

¹ There is converging evidence that the primary weakness of children with reading disabilities is their inability to process the phonological features of words, manifested in non-reading measures such as tests of phonological awareness (PA), rapid automatic naming (RAN), and verbal short-term memory (Torgesen, 2002b). However, the field is divided as to whether phonology and naming speed are separate core deficits or whether phonology is superordinate (see Kirby, Parrila, & Pfeiffer, 2003; Metsala, Stanovich, & Brown, 1998; Morris et al., 1998; Schatschneider, et al., 2002; Stanovich & Siegel, 1994; Stanovich, Siegel, & Gottardo, 1997; Vellutino et al., 1996; Wagner et al., 1997; Wolf & Bowers, 1999; Wolf et al., 2002).
understanding of the just-interpreted word chains with an overall interpretation of the
text, which reflects an on-going updating and revision of meaning. For poor readers
encountering challenging expository text with unfamiliar vocabulary, more complex
syntactic structures, and more difficult conceptual requirements, the comprehension
process is essentially forestalled from the outset.

*Developmental Deficit vs. Developmental Lag*

Driving the conceptualization of “poor reader” is the model of developmental
deficit as opposed to developmental lag. Where “deficit” is posited on the assumption
that children do not develop proficient reading because of an absent skill that never
develops sufficiently, “lag” implies that children with differing reading abilities vary only
in the rate at which cognitive skills develop; therefore the skill will, in time, emerge
(Francis et al., 1996). Francis et al. (1996) applied individual growth curves analysis (see
Francis et al., 1994; Lyon & Moats, 1997, for a discussion of the power of a growth curve
analysis model that can address the inevitable heterogeneity of any sample of children) to
nine yearly longitudinal assessments of a sample of 403 children who were grouped as
average level readers, IQ discrepant poor readers, and nondiscrepant poor readers. They
concluded that a deficit model best characterized the development of children with
reading disabilities. This study lends strong support for the position that classically
reading disabled (IQ discrepant) and the “garden variety” (nondiscrepant, low-achieving)
poor readers have comparable and substantial deficits in word reading ability over time
and comparable long-term outcomes in word reading ability (Torgesen, 2002b).

The notion of developmental deficit has profound implications for reading
instruction, intervention, and related research. In a developmental lag model, the
assumption is that the child will “catch up” in time, making identification and intervention unnecessary (Francis et al., 1996). In a deficit model, identification and intervention are central foci. The assumption here is that children with reading disabilities will only fall further behind without instructional assistance. But, even with targeted assistance, these children may never be able to close the gap between their reading performance and that of their more reading-able peers (Allington, 1984; Wolf, 2007).

Torgesen, Rashotte, et al. (2001) describe reading fluency for grade level text during the junior and intermediate grades as a “rapidly moving target,” given the increasing addition of a “richer, broader selection of words” (p. 294). For the reading disabled children, they would have to add new words to their sight-word vocabularies at a faster than normal rate to close the gap. To do so, they would require either more reading practice than usual or adding words to their sight vocabulary more easily than average readers; neither option would be likely (Biemiller, 1999; Torgesen, Rashotte, et al.). This adds some degree of urgency to intervention research and to developing and effecting targeted interventions and remediation. Less is known about the necessary conditions to assist an older poor reader who experiences several years of reading failure in comparison to the prevention of reading failure in the early grades (Torgesen, 2002b).

The deficit model is also instrumental in conceptualizing reading disabilities along a continuum rather than as discrepancies between reading ability and intelligence. Historically, Rutter and Yule’s (1975) seminal study of reading disabilities provided the impetus to use discrepancy definitions to define learning disabilities.1 (Fletcher et al.,

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1 Given that the majority of children with learning disabilities have reading disabilities, sometimes the terms are used synonymously in the reading literature. More generally, children identified with reading disabilities according to discrepancy definitions have been differentiated from “garden-variety” (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) poor readers who are low achievers.
1994). Stanovich (1988, 1989, 1991), however, sees the practice of diagnosing dyslexia by measuring discrepancies from IQ scores as “misconceived from the beginning” (1991, p. 10). He argues that basing systems of educational classification in the area of reading disabilities “on special claims of unique potential [is] neither conceptually nor psychometrically justifiable” (1991, p. 10). Instead, he argues for a phonological-core variable-difference model (see also Siegel, 1992; Stanovich & Siegel, 1994; Stanovich, Siegel, & Gottardo, 1997) that assumes multidimensional continuity for reading ability and its associated cognitive subskills. In other words, the differences between the dyslexic and the garden-variety poor reader are differences in degree, rather than differences in kind, whereby “virtually all poor readers have a phonological deficit; additional processing deficits emerge as one drifts in the multidimensional space from ‘pure’ dyslexics toward garden-variety poor readers” (p. 14).¹ Recent research (Morris et al., 1998; Schatschneider et al., 2002; Wolf & Bowers, 1999; Wolf et al., 2002) has pursued a multidimensional view of reading disability in line with Stanovich’s model and in attempts to identify subtypes of reading disability. Wolf and Bowers’ (1999) double-deficit hypothesis, for example, would represent children at one end of the continuum with impairments in both phonological processes and processing speed.

Understanding that there is a continuum of reading disabilities reflects current perspectives that do not necessarily equate students with reading disabilities and students formally identified as language learning disabled. Therefore this review is not limited to

¹ Instead of discrepancy measures between IQ and reading ability, Stanovich (1991) recommends measuring the discrepancy between reading ability and listening comprehension, well supported by other reading researchers (e.g. Carver, 1981, Gough & Tunmer, 1986), as having more educational relevance and face validity. If children’s listening comprehension exceeds their reading comprehension because of inefficient word recognition processes that create a “bottleneck” that impedes comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Perfetti, 1985), then educational intervention would be in order.
studies focused on students with formal identifications. Instead, it extends more broadly to studies that reveal the particular challenges of expository text that can prove more difficult for the reading disabled and demonstrate the need for particularly explicit instructional interventions.

**Expository Text**

Where the main thrust of narrative texts is to tell a story, the main thrust of expository text is to communicate information that the reader will learn (Weaver & Kintsch, 1991). Rosenblatt’s (1978) classic distinction between aesthetic and efferent reading describes the different purposes that readers bring to their reading and the different stances that they take. Where aesthetic reading focuses on reading for enjoyment, efferent reading is reading for information. Rosenblatt describes the reading experience as a transaction between text and reader. How readers respond depends on their purpose. Therefore it can be easier for students to engage with narrative because the story can generate emotive responses, can activate prior knowledge, and can enable the reader to have what Rosenblatt describes as a “lived through experience with the text” (Cooper, 1985, p. xiv).

Poor readers, those with and without learning disabilities, find expository text structure particularly difficult (Williams, Hall, & Lauer, 2004). Helpful in deconstructing the difficulties is the Gersten et al. (2001) description of three principal comprehension challenges attached to informational text: (1) expository text involves reading lengthy passages without prompts from a conversational partner, either in the form of dialogue within the text or through oral language experiences; (2) the logical-causal arguments that typify expository text structure are more abstract than are narrative events; and (3) the
text structure is more involved and varied than narrative. Given these challenges, older poor readers, if not all students, require guidance and direction to identify and extract relevant information. However, Armbruster et al. (1991) suggest that instruction does not usually promote the development of conceptual understanding and meaningful learning from expository text.

In Durkin’s (1978-79) classic observational study of reading and social studies comprehension instruction in Grades 3-6, she found almost no comprehension instruction. Instead comprehension assessment was commonplace, with the teacher as interrogator, asking numerous questions primarily focused on whether the children’s answers were correct or incorrect. In the absence of comprehension instruction, teachers were not providing any other kinds of reading instruction. Large amounts of instructional time were spent on giving, completing, and assessing assignments. And none of the social studies teachers saw the improvement of children’s comprehension abilities as their responsibility. “Instead, all were concerned about covering content and with having children master facts” (Durkin, p. 521).

Durkin’s description of “teacher as interrogator” is supported in Alvermann and Hayes’ (1989) intervention study of classroom discussion of content area assigned readings and Armbruster et al.’s (1991) analysis of 12 fourth-grade science and social studies lessons where a textbook was the focus of instruction. Alvermann and Hayes focused on developing students’ critical reading skills by improving classroom discussion practices. Five teachers from Grade 8 to Grade 12 participated in this collaborative intervention. Despite teachers’ willingness to participate, attempts to modify the verbal exchange patterns of teachers and students were largely unsuccessful. The “classic triad”
of teacher initiates, student responds, teacher evaluates (Duffy, 1983) predominated. Teachers limited students to brief responses, tended to ask only who, what, why questions, and did not encourage elaborated responses. When some teachers allowed more text-based discussion, the proportion of students’ responses beyond the literal level increased. However, this effect was not maintained beyond the midpoint of the study.

Armbruster et al.’s (1991) participants were nine Grade 4 teachers: two were first-year teachers; the remaining seven had a mean of 14 years teaching experience. Findings included no instances of explicit instruction in how to read and learn from text. Teachers did provide assistance with pronunciation during read-alouds, but there was no teaching of text-based skills like finding main ideas, summarizing, skimming, predicting, evaluating, note-taking, or outlining; nor was there any encouragement to practice any of these skills.1 “Teacher as interrogator” was well supported: for science the average number of questions asked per minute of instruction was 1.2; for social studies, it was 1.5. Usually teachers asked questions after students had read a single paragraph of text or less. Few questions demanded inferences; those that were text-based focused on explicitly stated information, and many called on students’ knowledge and experience beyond the target text.

Although the sample size was small, findings replicated earlier studies (e.g. Durkin, 1978-79; Gall, 1984). Armbruster et al. (1991) conclude that the implications are both obvious and profound: students will not be able to develop conceptual understanding from informational text without significant changes to the learning environment that include more content-area reading, more direct instruction in how to read this text, and

1 Well established in the literature are the difficulties that students with learning disabilities have with these skills in comparison with normally achieving students (see Reid, Hresko, & Swanson, 1996; Wong, 1996).
questioning methods that promote higher-order thinking. For poor readers, the implications are similarly obvious and profound: their opportunities to read more are often restricted by their reading disabilities; without direct instruction, it is unlikely that they will know *how* to approach expository text; and they need exposure to and practice with questions that require more conceptual analysis and synthesis.

Building on the comprehension challenges attached to informational text and the accompanying challenges of comprehension instruction, key features of expository text, including text summary, text search, and text structure, are presented and key studies highlighted.

*Text Summary*

Summarization requires a reader to identify main ideas, to generalize and synthesize these, and to minimize less relevant ideas (Trabasso & Bouchard, 2002). It is a complex and multifaceted process and one that many children find difficult. It requires finding topic sentences, deleting redundancies and trivia, recognizing superordination, and inventing topic sentences (Trabasso & Bouchard). Key ideas have to be captured and succinctly translated into one’s own words. Herber’s¹ (1970) classic work advocated for a “new strategy in teaching reading through content areas, a strategy that uses what we know about the direct teaching of reading but adapts that knowledge to fit the structure of and responsibilities for the total curriculum in each content area” (p. 11). He recommended using

¹ Herber’s (1970) textbook, *Teaching Reading in the Content Areas*, is considered a classic as it was the first one devoted exclusively to content area reading instruction. He theorized that the skills taught in reading instruction were applicable to content areas but required adaptation to meet the demands of particular subjects. The work of Herber and colleagues at the Reading Research Center at Syracuse University, where he was director, drew on cognitive learning theory and laid a foundation for instructional strategies that would support text-based learning; such as graphic organizers, anticipation guides, question-generation strategies, etc. (Vacca, 2002)
regular curriculum materials—basic and supplementary texts—as vehicles for reading instruction in each content area with teachers showing students how to become successful readers of the required materials. There is no wasted time, no separate emphasis, no risk to the curriculum. The strategy does require modification in teaching behavior, changes in the role of both teacher and learner; but the modifications and changes are realistic and practical. (Herber, p. 11)

Interestingly, there are few studies that use regular curriculum materials where those materials have not been restructured to meet particular task demands. An exception is Nelson et al.’s (1992) quasi-experimental study that used direct instruction to teach a summary skills strategy to students with learning disabilities using unmodified science text. During a summer remedial program with five culturally diverse students in Grades 4 to 8, students were introduced to a two-component, nine-step summary skills strategy. The components included: (1) identifying and organizing the main idea and important information and (2) clarifying and revising the summary. Training consisted of an introductory session that explained the purpose and utility of the strategy and the specific textual cues that helped to identify the main idea, such as font size, underlined words, graphics, introductory or summary sentences, and repetition of words and sentences. Instructional sessions followed a sequence of review, modeling, guided practice, and independent practice where the teacher initially read the passage (four paragraphs) aloud while the students followed along in their texts. Each session included practice in writing and revising a summary.

In a follow-up 4 weeks post-training, the students’ summary skills were maintained based on their verbal restatement of the nine steps of the strategy. However,
generalization did not occur. Students were unable to independently write a passage summary without using their summary skills guide. A longer training period was suggested to promote generalization. The structure of the training sessions and the provision of an explicit step-by-step guide do provide a model that could be used within a regular classroom setting. Additionally, this study’s incorporation of both reading and writing experiences more closely resembles usual classroom tasks. The researchers also suggested the possibility that outcomes were augmented by the science textbook’s relatively consistent organizational structure.

**Text Search**

There is often an expectation on the part of teachers that students will be able to seek out relevant information from text (Armbruster & Gudbrandsen, 1986; Durkin, 1978-79). Yet children’s poor performance on these tasks calls this assumption into question (Symons et al., 2001). Dreher (1992a, 1992b), like Guthrie and Mosenthal (1987), distinguishes between text search and traditional reading tasks, with text search focused on locating specific information and usual comprehension reading tasks centred on recall and retention. Given the multiple demands for search tasks in school and beyond into the workplace, many students appear to be ill prepared. For example, Dreher and Guthrie (1992) found that normally-achieving and high-achieving high school students could locate successfully the definition of a single term in an unfamiliar textbook. When given a more complex task where they had to locate and integrate three pieces of information, only half of the sample could do so.

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1 Dreher (1992a, 1992b) notes that research on workplace reading (e.g. Mikulecky, 1982) shows that reading to locate information occurs more frequently in work settings than does reading for any other purpose. Where reading in school involves learning to read and reading to learn, reading beyond school involves reading *to do* (Mosenthal and Kirsch, 1989).
To counter the lack of research on children’s search performance in reference materials or textbooks, Dreher and Sammons’ (1994) experimental study looked at fifth graders’ ability to find information in an unfamiliar, but grade-level, social studies textbook. The children were asked to preview the textbook, to perform three text-search tasks, and to answer questions about the table of contents, index, and glossary. Results showed most of the students able to identify textbook features and describe their purpose, but only half were somewhat strategic previewing the organization of the text. The other half examined only the body of the text, did not look at the text’s information access features, and did not appear to know what previewing entailed. The children in the treatment group received guiding questions, after they had read the search task but before attempting it, that were designed to strengthen the search process. The questions were built from Guthrie and Mosenthal’s (1987) cognitive process model for text search. The model takes a problem-solving approach to characterize efficient searches as requiring the following: goal formation, category selection for inspection, information extraction, integration, and recycling, with the more recent addition of abstraction (Guthrie, Weber, & Kimmerly, 1993).¹

Surprising was the children’s limited success in performing the search tasks, including those who had received the guiding questions. Dreher and Sammons (1994) suggest that the results are not anomalous when compared to related work in Canada (Kobasigawa, 1983) and Great Britain (Cole & Gardner, 1979; Wray & Lewis, 1992). Notably, the teachers whose students participated in the study were taken aback by the

findings, “They should be able to do that. We’ve covered it” (Dreher & Sammons, p. 311). The researchers attribute this to instruction producing, at best, *inert knowledge* (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1985), knowledge that is inadequate for automatic application when necessary.

This study has significant implications for older, poor readers. Although less able readers were not included, Dreher and Sammons (1994) propose that these students’ search performance would be lower than that of the children in their study because the poorer readers would have the additional burden of searching a grade-level textbook. (Reading comprehension performance was a statistically significant covariate with the success of the search.) They recommend instruction targeted at the inefficient approaches of the less successful students, such as going through the text page by page, not using the index or using it improperly, or being unable to extract information from the index or the appropriate page once it was located. They also suggest that instruction should incorporate systematic and guided practice using classroom textbooks. Without this practice, it would be highly unlikely that transfer would or could occur. They conclude that search-strategy instruction should be integrated with the demands of content-area subjects and related projects, rather than teaching search skills discretely in isolated units.

direct process instruction that included specifying the purpose of text search and modeling the strategies, followed by guided practice and corrective feedback. In an experimental three-study design, their sample included children in Grades 3, 4, and 5. Following instruction and practice, the students had a three-question search task to perform.

The children in the instructional conditions outperformed those in the control on all measures: identification of indexed terms, careful skimming of the text, and monitoring how well extracted information met the search goal. Explicit instruction in information-seeking strategies was found to increase children’s effectiveness in text-location tasks and suggested that elementary children do not spontaneously use efficient approaches to seek text-based information. Three findings are noteworthy: (1) in the second (of the three) studies, the children in the instructional condition were able to generalize their text-search strategies to an unfamiliar textbook; (2) a brief overview of the features of informational text did not result in improved search success; and (3) children who were taught a combination of category selection, extraction and monitoring outperformed, in accuracy and time, children who were taught category selection and extraction and category selection and monitoring. Students in each of these three instructional groups were considerably more successful in their searches than control participants who relied on the table of contents and a highly inefficient page-flipping approach rather than using the index.

Although all of the children in this set of studies were not experiencing significant academic difficulties, the findings, as with Dreher and Sammons (1994), have implications for poorer readers. Again the need for explicit, targeted instruction is
apparent. So, too, is the importance of practice and of corrective feedback. The children needed explicit instruction, as well, to self-monitor. There appears to be a developmental dimension to text search, as older children outperformed younger. Certainly this could also be attributed to a practice effect. No follow-up was conducted; whether the outcomes were maintained is unaddressed. Nonetheless, this set of studies provides a model, including instructional prompts, which could be applied within a regular classroom setting.

Gersten et al. (2001) note that many comprehension strategies can be capacity demanding and can seem daunting, hence the importance of ensuring that children understand the purpose of strategy use. Similarly, Symons et al. (2001) suggest that the utility of text-search strategies may be more readily apparent if students were able to see benefits in terms of efficiency and more satisfactory outcomes. However, as Duffy et al. (1987) note, results may not be immediately forthcoming: “Teachers can explain complex cognitive tasks. Such explanations may not result in immediate learning by low-ability students; however, they do apparently result in a gradual restructuring of student understandings over time” (p. 364). In the Duffy et al. study, classroom teachers taught their poor readers the reasoning underlying strategy use when reading, as well as the strategies themselves. They concluded,
explanations throughout the lesson, elaborating in response to students’
restructured understandings of the teacher’s model or demonstration. (p. 364)

This type of responsive elaboration points to the qualitatively “subtle aspects of
instruction [that] may be of particular importance” (Duffy et al., p. 364). The reciprocal
nature of any instructional intervention merits careful consideration.

Text Structure

The area of text structure has received a great deal of concerted attention from
researchers, in part because the structure of expository text is notably different from
narrative and impacts directly on comprehension. Armbruster’s (1984) seminal
description of the difference between “considerate” and “inconsiderate” text continues to
resonate. Considerate text is coherent with a clear overall structure where ideas are
systematically arranged and bound tightly together. Inconsiderate text lacks these
features. Texts cohere on two dimensions: global and local (Armbruster, 1984; Weaver &

The most common structures that represent global coherence are simple listing of
items or ideas, comparison/contrast, temporal sequence, cause/effect, and
problem/solution (Armbruster, 1984). An alternate global classification system for
expository text (Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980; Meyer & Freedle, 1984) includes
covariance (cause-effect), attribution (description), sequence (collection), comparison
(adversative), and response (problem/solution). Englert and Hiebert (1984) found that
description and comparison/contrast were the most difficult text structures for children in
Grades 3 and 6, across all reading ability levels. These are also the most frequently used
in content-area textbooks (Englert & Hiebert). Additionally, there appears to be a
developmental feature to text structure knowledge, with younger and less skilled students having more difficulty (Englert & Hiebert). Further, students with learning disabilities had more difficulties than other students in identifying relevant details that could assist them in following a particular text structure and did not reread preceding text to connect main ideas and supporting information (Englert & Thomas, 1987). As Englert (2009) recently commented, the resiliency of these findings is notable. She continued,

The difficulties that we observed in the 1980s continued to characterize the performance of older readers and writers in the 21st century. Students displayed a persistent inability to use text structure to construct and represent the conceptual relationships that typified a set of expository ideas. Clearly, students needed instructional assistance if they were to develop effective learning-to-learn strategies for reading and writing expository text. (Englert, p. 105)

Local coherence acts like a “linguistic mortar to connect ideas in the text together” (Tierney & Mosenthal, 1980, cited in Armbruster, 1984, p. 208). This mortar is made up of various linguistic forms that assist in carrying meaning across syntactic boundaries. These cohesive ties include conjunctions, sequence markers like “after” or “then,” and pronoun reference. For adults and children, more cohesive text can be read more easily and more quickly and remembered more completely (Armbruster; Pearson, 1974-75).

Certainly the obvious user-friendly text features of layout, signaling, visual appeal, graphic enhancement, and clear presentation of key words, topics, and subtopics can assist text processing. However, Garner’s (1992) caution about the *seductive detail effect* should be remembered. Many textbooks incorporate inducements to read what is
generally uninteresting. “These inducements are details that could be characterized as novel, active, concrete, and personally involving (but often irrelevant to the important pieces of information)” (Garner, p. 54). Students then recall only the vivid details but not the more important topics, which are often abstract and general. This effect can be particularly detrimental to the poorer reader with limited knowledge of the structural properties of content-area text. These children will acquire trivial detail at the expense of important generalizations on a wide range of topics.

Learning from text requires the learner to construct a coherent mental representation of the text that is then anchored in the learner’s background knowledge (Kintsch, 1998). Kintsch argues that poor readers with limited reading experiences would be unable to form a coherent textbase tied to their prior knowledge. Depending on the degree of text coherence, the reader may be left to make bridging inferences between gaps in the text or bridge gaps between the text and the readers’ knowledge. Again, the poor reader would be disadvantaged. Perfetti’s (1985) synthesis remains apt, “When texts are not specific in reference, interpretation is guided by the reader’s experience. And when the text is specific, the quantity and quality of comprehension is restricted by the reader’s experience” (p. 75). Therefore more elaborated general concept knowledge (schemata) and specific concept knowledge (vocabulary) are essential for comprehension, since “the reader cannot understand a text without having control over most of the concepts in the text” (Perfetti, p. 243). Again we see the importance of explicit instruction, in this case before any direct reader-text interactions occur, as well as the need for teachers to assess their students’ prior knowledge.
Two lines of research on text structure have had significant and continuing impact. Taylor’s (1980, 1982) research on hierarchical text summarization has clarified how knowledge of text structure is intrinsically tied to comprehension. And Wong and Wilson’s (1984; see also Wong, 1982) seminal work on metacognition and text structure with children who are learning disabled has demonstrated how comprehension-monitoring strategies can enhance students’ sensitivity to text structure.

Taylor’s (1980) experimental study on children’s memory for expository text after reading showed that students’ use of text structure can help them to organize recalls. Using a sample of sixth-grade good readers, sixth-grade poor readers, fourth-grade good readers whose reading levels were matched to the older poor readers, and adults, Taylor suggested that there are developmental differences in children’s ability to recall informational text. Immediately after reading, the older good readers were able to recall more than the poor readers, and the poor readers were able to recall more than the younger good readers. However, after a two-day delay, there were no differences in the recall scores between the younger readers and the older poor readers. Two other findings are notable: (1) none of the groups of children was particularly skilled at following the organization of the text in their delayed recalls; in other words, their recalls did not follow a pattern of identifying superordinate ideas followed by subordinate; and (2) surprisingly, the adults (graduate students) did not have differential recall of superordinate as opposed to subordinate concepts either. This could be attributed, in part, to Garner’s (1992) seductive detail effect.

In Taylor’s (1982) study with fifth grade good readers and poor readers, the treatment group was taught and then practiced preparing and studying a hierarchical
summary from an unfamiliar grade level textbook. The conventional group received traditional instruction that followed a question and answer sequence, also using the unfamiliar grade level textbook. Children who received direct instruction in hierarchical summaries outperformed those in the conventional group on recall. Children who generated stronger summaries recalled more than those whose summaries were weaker. But the poor readers in the experimental group did as well on their recalls as the competent readers receiving traditional instruction. However, when a transfer task was introduced, the results were disappointing. In a replication, students in the training condition were relatively unsuccessful in generating summaries and performed less well on short-answer post-training test questions than the conventional group. If students are not sufficiently skilled in hierarchical summarization, then they may be devoting all of their effort to the mechanics of generating a summary rather than using the summary to learn the material. The need for extensive practice and some degree of overlearning is indicated, as well as the need for text that is not overly difficult and is carefully matched to learners’ instructional level.

Kintsch and van Dijk’s (1978) widely accepted model of text processing is based on the notion that text is built on macrostructures (global meaning) and microstructures (local meaning). To get at the macrostructure or gist of the text, the reader must perform a series of mental operations at the microstructure level that includes deletions, inferences, and generalizations. Sensitivity to text structure requires understanding the relationship between superordinate and subordinate ideas and recognizing how ideas are organized. Children have particular difficulty constructing the gist (see Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Williams, 1993, 2003) and forming a macrostructure when reading expository text.
Taylor & Beach, 1984). Taylor’s research demonstrates the utility of teaching children to be text-sensitive. It also highlights that maintenance may be problematic for older poor readers; transfer may be an issue for good and poor readers alike; and achieving a level of automaticity requires sufficient opportunities and considerable practice (see Alexander, Graham, & Harris, 1998, on strategic and skillful behaviour and Samuels, 1976, on the importance of repeated reading to develop fluency and automaticity).

Wong and Wilson’s (1984) seminal training study explored children’s sensitivity to the organization and disorganization of expository passages. Participants were children with learning disabilities in Grades 5, 6, and 7 and children who were average or above average readers in Grades 5 and 6. Compared to their peers, the children with learning disabilities could not identify the disorganized passage nor could they express the differences between the two passages. They were highly unsuccessful at sorting deliberately disorganized sentences despite explicit probes. Training involved explicit teaching and modeling of a five-step procedure in paragraph reorganization, followed by guided practice with corrective feedback. Training criterion was unaided, errorless passage reorganization. All of the students in the training condition were successful.

Wong and Wilson (1984) concluded that the ease of training suggested that the children with learning disabilities had some rudimentary knowledge about paragraph structure. Training, therefore, had the effect of clarifying, focusing, and consolidating their ideas about organization. These children could then successfully apply their more defined knowledge. Wong and Wilson strongly cautioned that the results should not be interpreted as indicating nascent metacognition of passage organization simply because the children easily learned to perform a reorganization task. Instead, what they learned
was the representation of a coherent paragraph, simply a prerequisite skill. For metacognition to occur, these students would require sufficient exposure to and multiple opportunities for “fixing up” disorganized text. Additionally, they would need to be able to consciously evaluate the relative ease attached to studying and remembering well-organized text. This study is notable in demonstrating the interactions between task variables and strategy variables and in differentiating between metacognition and prerequisite knowledge. It should also serve as a reminder that successful task performance should not be too readily equated with metacognitive ability.

**Implications**

The complexity of the reading process can be seen in the confluence of deficits that impact on the performance of older poor readers. The requirements for interacting meaningfully with expository text are significant and challenging. Essential are an understanding of text summary, text search, and text structure, as well as the ability to perform these tasks strategically and skillfully. However, this requires instructional approaches that reflect well-crafted design, explicit strategy instruction, elaboration with corrective feedback, and sufficient time for multiple opportunities for practice and the development of metacognition through self-monitoring. Notwithstanding, maintenance and transfer are robust challenges. Given the extreme difficulty that poor readers have at the word recognition level, this area has received modest attention from researchers compared to other aspects of informational text.¹

¹ See Bos and Anders (1990) intervention study on vocabulary learning and reading comprehension with learning disabled junior-high students. Findings countered the practice of teaching vocabulary isolated from content-area text, a position supported by many researchers (e.g. Beck & McKeown, 1991). The interactive interventions that emphasized contextual information, the semantic relationships among the vocabulary, student “think-alouds,” and activation of prior knowledge were more effective than the context-free definition instruction.
If the intense needs of older poor readers are to be met with some level of success, then further research is needed to understand the interplay between and among the multiple requirements demanded by expository text, the instructional prerequisites, the need to maintain and sustain learner engagement, and the counterbalance between explicit instruction and scaffolding. Early in this chapter, Moore et al.’s (1999) enjoinder was cited, which outlined the superordinate need for advanced levels of literacy in the 21st century and for continual literacy instruction beyond the early grades. Biancarosa and Snow (2006) remind us of our collective responsibility to the literacy achievement of youth and warn,

If we do not rise to meet this challenge today, we risk our cadre of struggling readers and writers facing a future of sharply diminishing opportunities. The ultimate beneficiaries will be not only those young people currently struggling against literacy obstacles, but also the young people of the future whose obstacles will be all the greater if we do not act now. (p. 31)

The Collaborative Process

*Professional learning is at its best when teachers have a voice in its design, when it is long term and school based, when it is focused on analyses of teaching and student learning, and most important, when the focus is on establishing learning-sustained communities.*

(Pearson, 2004, p. 241)

All teachers are well acquainted with the complexity of classroom life. McIntyre (2005), using Doyle (1980), neatly captures many of those features. These include: multidimensionality, simultaneity, immediacy, unpredictability, publicness which
involves the unyielding scrutiny of every student in the class, not to mention the steady stream of support personnel and visits by administration and parents, and, lastly, history, which rests on previous events as well as fielding future repercussions.

To these can be added the increasingly heavy demands resulting from more limited special education resources and increasingly diverse classes.\(^1\) This diversity is represented by a higher incidence of students in regular classrooms with a range of exceptionalities, many of whom have very high needs.\(^2\) Despite provincial increases to special education funding, demand exceeds available monies. Therefore many children are not formally identified as exceptional learners and dedicated additional support may not be forthcoming, leaving the classroom teacher to make whatever accommodations may be necessary.\(^3\) A curriculum that is denser and more intense with a greater number of expectations in every subject area has further exacerbated classroom teachers’ workload.

*The Impact of Current Special Education Initiatives*

In 2005, a Working Table on Special Education was established by the Ontario Minister of Education to reform how students with special needs are supported by the

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\(^1\) By 2003, Ontario ranked among the highest of any province or state in North America in terms of the reported incidence of students with acute or severe special needs (Bennett & Wynne, 2006, p. 7).

\(^2\) The reported incidence of high-needs students doubled between 2001-2004, going from 1.4% (22,785 students) to 2.8% (54,137 students) of all students. Although enrolment declined overall during this period, claims for the Intensive Support Amount funding doubled (Bennett & Wynne, 2006, p. 7).

\(^3\) In 2003-2004, school boards reported 12.94% of all students (275,566) were receiving special education programs and services. This included 8.79% (187,375) who were formally identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) and 4.15% (88,191) who were not formally identified (Bennett & Wynne, 2006, p. 7). In 2006-2007, school boards reported 13.92% (292,968) of the total student population were receiving special education programs and services. Of these, approximately 79% were placed in regular classrooms for more than half of the instructional day (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, *Reach Every Student*, Slide Deck No. 2 IEP 101, slide 8).
school system. The Working Table was comprised of educators, administrators, parents, special education support staff, and students. The report that emerged, *The Special Education Transformation Report* (Bennett & Wynne, 2006), acknowledged ongoing philosophical differences among many of the stakeholder groups. These centred on the inclusion of students with special education needs in the regular classroom. Two contrary schools of thought prevailed: one focused on moving the system as quickly as possible to a pure inclusion model, although still allowing for transitional congregated placements and withdrawals; the other advocated a range of placements for students with special education needs into the foreseeable future. The Report reconciled these positions by acknowledging that the regular classroom should continue to be the placement of first choice but a range of placement options may be necessary for practical reasons. Key recommendations included:

- Improving learning for all students receiving special education programs and services through greater coordination of Ministry initiatives to promote student achievement, developing resources related to effective instructional practices or program indicators based on specific learning profiles and areas of need, and directing attention to transition points and more effective transition practices;

- Revising identification policies to streamline the process, reduce administrative burden, promote effective parent participation, and ensure a focus on student needs and outcomes;

- Identifying measurable outcomes related to the delivery of an integrated service to students with special educational needs;

- Enhancing collaborative relationships between educators and parents;
Improving the balance between the focus on learning and the need for appropriate processes, documentation, and accountability.

Following the recommendations of the Working Table, the Ontario Ministry of Education conducted a collaborative review (2006-2007) of the Individual Education Plan to reform the process and make the document more meaningful as a tool for planning, communication, and accountability. Like the Working Table, many stakeholders were part of the review, including district school board and provincial school personnel, members of the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch and Field Services Branch, parents, and peer reviewers. As a result, new guidelines have been developed and a new template created. The intent is to more closely align learning expectations with appropriate assessment and evaluation methods and teaching strategies. Each expectation must now be linked to performance tasks and have a measurable outcome attached. Clearer statements of student strengths and needs will have to be provided and tangible connections drawn among the Individual Education Plan (IEP), the curriculum, and the provincial report card. Although IEPs are not mandatory for non-identified students with exceptionalities, the Ministry is strongly recommending that IEPs be developed to outline the special education programs and services that will be provided.

Cumulatively, these changes have the potential to make the IEP a more meaningful document very closely tailored to the particular needs and abilities of each exceptional learner. What remains unclear is how much of the responsibility for developing this newly revised IEP will fall to the elementary classroom teacher, how much input will be required from the teacher, and how frequently successive revisions to the IEP will be expected over the course of the school year. What is abundantly clear,
however, is that new expectations will be added to the classroom teacher’s role and additional demands will result.

School-University Partnerships

These current Ministry initiatives are important to contextualize some of the challenges of developing and sustaining school-university partnerships. Johnston (1997) describes a number of concepts and ideas that have been used to describe differences between schools and universities. These have been variously expressed as tensions, dilemmas, dualisms, dialectics, and dichotomies. She reviews several approaches that have been advanced to address these differences. Some, like Henderson and Hawthorne (1995), suggest that collaborative groups need to move from university dominance to shared power, from technical teaching to co-constructivist teaching, and from reductionist achievement measures to long-term qualitative evaluations. Elbow (1986), taking another approach, advocates embracing contrary positions that would lead to new, more expansive frames of reference. Zeichner (1991) sees difference as a means to social reform and dialogue as the vehicle to represent all interests. Lampert (1991) views difference as inevitable with the result that the tensions that have always existed will move from the institutional level to the individual level, despite the efforts of those who work to blur the boundaries.

Johnston (1997) provides a tripartite organizing framework when considering tensions in collaboration. She identifies three sets of tensions: relationship tensions, structural tensions, and developmental tensions. Presenting them as a continuum, relationship tensions span challenge and support, individuality and community, and confrontation and agreement. Structural tensions are represented by process and product,
openness that supports innovation and structure that supports continuity, time to reflect and time to act, and openness and focus. Developmental tensions centre on being and becoming, risk taking and comfort, and difference that promotes learning and sameness that promotes comfort (Johnston, p. 15). This schema is helpful in pointing to the many contradictions inherent in the collaborative process and in understanding why collaboration can be difficult to enact and even more difficult to maintain.

Partnership and a professional development school project. With the advent of professional development schools, collaboration received more attention (see Darling-Hammond, 1994; Johnston, Brosnan, Cramer, & Dove, 2000). Projects like Johnston’s (1997) 6-year longitudinal study of a project between Ohio State University and 45 teachers in eight elementary and middle schools in two school districts provide descriptive accounts of some of the issues and problems in collaboration. This project also included two case studies from two partner Professional Development Schools (PDS). Johnston describes tensions arising that included differences between group and individual understandings and between her academic and theoretical interests and the more practical foci of her school-based colleagues. She is uneasy about the power generally ascribed to university theories over teachers’ concerns, and wonders if she has imposed her views and exerted “undue influence over the shape of ‘our’ book” (Johnston, p. 115). She remains vigilant by keeping herself “troubled about the influence of my ideas and the interests of my teacher colleagues, [trying] to remain fearful that my interests will overshadow the teachers’ ideas, ideas that were maybe less well articulated because they did not have explicit theories on which to depend” (Johnston, p. 115). This is a cautionary note that reflects the notion often advanced in the literature questioning
teachers’ ability to articulate theoretical understandings and to speak to the tacit knowledge which they possess in abundance.

Johnston’s (1997) study contributes to understanding the inherent complexity of collaborative relationships. She questions how to go about best capturing what she describes as “the silences in collaboration” (Johnston, p. 119) and expresses concern about possible reactions and accompanying dissonance.

Caution: asking questions about one’s basic beliefs may disrupt the rest of your life. Warning: questions about teaching beliefs may also be connected to beliefs about life more generally; reflect on these questions at the risk of disrupting dearly held beliefs and lifestyles. (p. 120)

Considering the moral claims inherent in collaborative work, Johnston speculates that this may be a factor in the seeming disinterest of many of her university colleagues in collaborative undertakings. Paying attention to these claims requires time, dedicated attention, and ongoing and mutual support. She suggests that these moral requirements and relationships may explain why, within the highly competitive university milieu, collaborative efforts with the field are often given short shrift. Individual entrepreneurship tends to trump supporting collaborative endeavours.

A large-scale collaborative initiative, the Southern Maine Partnership. A larger scale collaborative initiative than Johnston’s (1997) is represented by the Southern Maine Partnership, ongoing for over 15 years. It is comprised of 34 public school districts and 3 institutions of higher education. A singular feature of this partnership is its evolving vision. Over time, focus has shifted from an emphasis on the link between institutions to an emphasis on outcomes, specifically promoting “the development of educators and
educational settings that fulfill the promise of public education; that is, providing a
guarantee of equitable choices and futures for all students” (Miller, 2001, p. 105). The
Partnership identifies four core tasks: (1) to establish firm bases in two distinct cultures,
school and university; (2) to cross institutional boundaries to respond to needs in the
field; (3) to ensure inclusive decision making; and (4) to create new venues for educator
development.

Miller (2001) acknowledges ongoing tensions like agenda-setting and decision-
making but credits success to maintaining the practice perspective of university faculty
and school-based leaders. She states that the perspective of superintendents and deans is
“too role-bound to ensure a broad-based platform, their sights being more focused on
policy than practice” (Miller, p. 113). Therefore, agendas are set in multiple sites by
principals, curriculum leaders, and teachers, out of sight of superintendents and deans.
The Partnership has promoted initiatives like a New Teacher Induction Program and
“Dine and Discuss” evenings where like-minded educators gather for focused discussion
on common problems of practice or common interests. A demonstrated commitment to
teacher engagement is reflected in frontline involvement by classroom teachers in the
form of a newsletter, in Partnership, that is published twice yearly and is designed and
written by school-based educators on a theme that speaks to current issues in the region’s
schools.

Despite the overwhelming success of the Southern Maine Partnership, Miller is
not complacent about the challenges of collaboration. She recognizes that school-
university partnerships are highly precarious arrangements because they bridge two
cultures and, as a result, remain marginal to each one. She suggests that this marginality
protects against over-identification with one institution above another and also ensures that multiple voices will be heard and valued. And, above all, the grassroots orientation must be preserved and local concerns, issues, talents, and capabilities must remain paramount.

A small-scale collaborative initiative. In contrast to the larger-scale initiatives described above, my own work (Martin, 2001; Martin & Hutchinson, 2000), albeit on a smaller scale, also underscores the complexities and challenges of collaborative undertakings. A series of loosely coupled evaluation studies was conducted during a controversial restructuring of a preservice teacher education program (see Upitis, 1999; 2000). Focus group interviews were conducted with field practitioners and administrators over a 3-year period: during the development of the reformed program, one year later when the program was piloted, and the following year when full implementation took place. As a study of collaboration between field practitioners and teacher educators, it suggested a need to think about the limits to collaboration, arising from differing interpretations of professional responsibility. Although partnership was desired, it was harder to achieve than the Faculty had anticipated. The pragmatics of implementation placed significant demands on teachers, which required more attention paid to communication, coordination, and recognition. Overall, the field felt overburdened and undervalued.

This set of consultative and evaluative studies also revealed differing perspectives about the purpose of the practicum that exposed contrary assumptions. As teacher educators, we expected teacher candidates to be in the school to learn in order to teach. Teachers in the field expected candidates to be in the school to teach in order to learn.
The limits to collaboration were exposed as the field assumed that we would send them candidates who were prepared for teaching, and we assumed that the field understood that we would send them candidates who were prepared for learning. Teachers in the field are necessarily committed to their students first and secondly to teacher candidates. Teacher educators’ first commitment is to their candidates’ learning rather than to the children in the classroom. These different stances reflected the differing views towards professional responsibilities held by field practitioners and teacher educators.

School-university partnerships are complex undertakings. Johnston’s (1997) work points to power differentials, teachers’ difficulties articulating knowledge and beliefs, and university structures that tend not to reward collaborative work with the field. Miller’s (2001) larger-scale and longer-running initiative highlights the importance of maintaining grass-roots orientation. She recognizes the precarious nature of such partnerships and the inevitable marginality that exists. The challenges of bridging two cultures were also represented in my own small-scale qualitative study (Martin, 2001; Martin & Hutchinson, 2000) that situated the tempered praise and outspoken protest that we heard as we underwent restructuring.

Consultation and Collaboration

Historically, consultation preceded collaboration as a model of integrated service delivery, but has since assumed more collaborative characteristics (Coben, Thomas, Sattler, & Morsink, 1997). Conoley (1986) described consultation as a cooperative problem-solving relationship between two individuals with somewhat different expertise. Collaboration has been described as an endpoint on a continuum, with conflict at the other end and cooperation and coexistence in between (Thomas, 1972). Lanier (1980)
emphasized the interplay of talents and knowledge that works in concert at appropriate
times to produce a result which neither person could have accomplished alone; in other
words, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Coben et al. (1997) highlighted
mutuality and shared responsibility. Jordan (1994) sees collaboration as the interactions
of teachers and other professionals who are learning from one another and working in
teams where their respective contributions are valued. Earlier literature on collaboration
tended to focus on general requirements for collaboration but lacked practical
suggestions. Absent was careful consideration of the complex manoeuvring needed to
develop collaborative relationships and clear definitions of concepts like parity and
mutuality (Johnston, 1997, p. 26).

Within the literature, there are those who approach collaboration as a structural
and organizational reform (e.g., Lieberman, 1988; Slavin, 1995). Gable (1996, 1997), for
example, describes a TEAMS (Teacher Educational Assistance for Middle School
Students) model for middle school students that is based on a class-within-a-class
approach. The intent is to support “stay-put” programming for at-risk students and those
with mild disabilities. Following Little (1989), Gable (1996) recommends exercising
control over the “heterogeneity of variance” among students to protect the elasticity of a
team approach to group and individualized instruction (p. 236). Using clusters where
classrooms of participating content-area teachers are located in close proximity to one
another, at-risk students can be strategically placed within heterogeneous groups within
and across team-taught classes.

Overall, the literature on collaboration tends to focus on collaborative structures
or on collaborative relationships and mutuality. These are not mutually exclusive,
however. Reinhiller (1996) identifies several common themes present in most definitions of collaboration. These include: shared decision making and responsibility, common goals, and accountability.

Collaboration and Coteaching

Semantics plays a role in understanding the collaborative process and collaborative relationships. Pugach and Johnson (1995) caution that collaboration should not be considered as a synonym for consultation, team meetings, or coteaching. Hudson and Glomb (1997) suggest that collaboration should be seen as a way of approaching a variety of adult-adult activities, including consultation, teaming, and coteaching. Cook and Friend (1991) explain collaboration as a style that involves direct interaction between two or more co-equal parties who are voluntarily participating in shared decision-making and are working towards a common goal. There continue to be no universally accepted definitions, however, despite efforts to clarify terms (Coben, et al., 1997).

Coteaching, although not synonymous with collaboration, can be considered as a subset, often used in the special education literature, to describe the relationship between a classroom teacher and a special education teacher. In what is considered a seminal article, Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989) described what they called “cooperative teaching” as a pragmatic merger between general and special educators to provide direct educational programming to all students in a class by having the special education teacher physically present within the regular education classroom. They recommended complementary instruction, team teaching, and supportive learning activities to put cooperative teaching into practice. Cook and Friend (1995) later truncated cooperative teaching to coteaching and further clarified the concept, describing it as “two or more
professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space” (p. 2). Reinhiller (1996) similarly defines coteaching as “an activity in which special educators and general educators work together in one physical space in a variety of instructional activities in order to provide optimal instruction to the greatest number of students” (p. 36).

Coteaching options. Many coteaching options have been advanced, including one teaching, one assisting; station teaching; alternative teaching; parallel teaching, and team teaching (Cook & Friend, 1995). Vaughn, Schumm, and Arguelles (1997) conducted observations in more than 70 classrooms where coteaching was taking place and identified several coteaching arrangements, what they call “the ABCDEs of coteaching.” They describe:

A: One group with one lead teacher “teaching on purpose,” where each teacher has a defined role but the roles are flexible. The same teacher does not always take on the lead teacher role.

B: Two groups: Two teachers who teach the same content. The class is divided into two heterogeneous groups and each teacher works with one group. The two groups may be pulled together to wrap-up the lesson and summarize key points.

C: Two groups: One teacher re-teaches, one teacher teaches alternative information. Teachers assign students to one of two groups based on their knowledge and skills. These grouping arrangements are flexible and not ability-based but knowledge-based. The recommendation is that the teachers alternate between groups, allowing both to have occasion to work with the full range of students and curriculum content.
D: *Multiple groups: Two teachers monitor/teach; content may vary.* This involves using cooperative learning groups or learning centres. Groups of students either rotate through each centre or are assigned to work in a particular area based on their needs. Teachers’ roles include monitoring student progress, delivering mini-lessons to small groups or individual students, and/or working with one group throughout the period while the other teacher circulates. This approach lends itself to more intensive support for particular students.

E: *One group: Two teachers teaching the same content.* This requires both teachers working cooperatively to teach the same lesson at the same time to the whole class. For example, a general education teacher was presenting a science lesson on anatomy and the special education teacher interjected with extensions of key ideas and additional examples. The special education teacher also suggested strategies to help the students remember the material and organize the information more effectively. The authors contend that this is the most difficult to implement and therefore would be most challenging for teachers who would be initially learning to coteach.

*Descriptive analysis of coteaching.* Reinhiller (1996), in her review of 10 studies on coteaching activities, found that the participating teachers reported generally positive experiences and identified how their teaching skills had improved. The classroom teachers described how they learned to tailor the curriculum to better meet the needs of children with special needs. For the special education teachers, they noted opportunities to improve skills in timing, pacing, and managing cooperative groups, skills that they had not practiced in small group pull-out sessions. They also praised the reciprocal
relationship that developed and described how they felt more enthusiastic and energetic because they had another person with whom they could discuss ideas and who could provide suggestions about alternative approaches. By working in the same setting, the teachers thought that they shared a qualitative and instantaneous understanding of student needs, which also provided a sense of co-ownership. Observed benefits to students included serving underachieving students who may not have met the criteria for special education services; additional opportunities for interaction with other students and with the coteachers, as well as exposure to a greater variety of teaching styles and strategies. To facilitate coteaching, the importance of planning time was repeatedly mentioned. However, once arrangements were in place and adapted to specific content and student needs, less time was needed. When relationships were voluntary and not mandated, they were more successful. Friend and Cook (1992) note that caution had to be exercised to avoid the paraprofessional trap, where the special education teacher becomes a classroom helper, rather than a co-participant in the instructional activities within the classroom.

A number of barriers and challenges were also identified. Ethical and professional issues about maintaining professional integrity were noted. Inherent in special education is the notion of specialized instruction to meet a student’s particular needs. If that instruction is delivered in a colleague’s classroom, in all likelihood it will become group, rather than individual, instruction. Negotiating changes in roles while fulfilling professional responsibilities can be problematic. Several teachers expressed concerns that collaboration might replace other service delivery options, including pull-out instruction. From a list of 30 potential obstacles, the three items identified as having the greatest potential for negatively influencing implementation of coteaching experiences were time,
cooperation, and increased workload (Bauwens et al., 1989). The challenges of coordinating planning time were a source of ongoing concern. Teachers reported that unless there were shared philosophies, the coteaching relationship could be jeopardized. Scheduling difficulties were linked to increased workload, compounded by concerns about overloading classes with large numbers of students with learning disabilities to accommodate the special educator’s timetable if she were involved in multiple coteaching arrangements.

Walther-Thomas (1997) conducted a 3-year qualitative study of 18 elementary and 7 middle school teams in eight Virginia school districts that were involved in whole-school initiatives to better support their students with disabilities. Coteaching was a central feature of their service delivery model. Findings paralleled Reinhiller’s (1996) regarding benefits and challenges for the participating teachers. The self-confidence and self-esteem of the students with disabilities appeared to improve, and many who had been in segregated settings reported that they attached more value to a lower grade that they received in a mainstreamed class than a higher grade in a special education class. Low-achieving general education students also appeared to benefit by being in co-taught classes and experienced more academic success. Additional benefits included more targeted instruction on learning strategies and study skills and more concerted efforts to create classroom communities.

Meta-analysis of coteaching. Because the impact of the various coteaching options on student outcomes has remained unclear, Murawski and Swanson (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of coteaching research. Their criteria for studies that could possibly be included were the following:
The study had sufficient quantitative data that would allow the researcher to calculate effect sizes for the intervention.

The study included four characteristics that identify the intervention as a form of coteaching. These were: (a) general education and special service providers were working together; (b) the intervention occurred in the same physical space; (c) some degree of co-planning occurred so the special educator was not relegated to an assistant role; and (d) the intervention required that instruction was directed to a heterogeneous group of students.

The coteaching treatment condition lasted longer than two weeks, not including pretesting and posttesting.

Eighty-nine articles were reviewed; 37 were initially considered; and only six were retained. These six studies were also coded for other recommended, but not requisite, features of effective coteaching. These encompassed parity, voluntariness, professional status, shared resources/accountability/responsibility, and using a variety of coteaching approaches (Friend & Cook, 2000). Results yielded a mean effect size of 0.40, suggesting that coteaching was a moderately effective approach to influence student outcomes. Murawski and Swanson (2001) caution that care must be taken when interpreting the findings since only three studies included effect sizes related to students with reported disabilities. They find this noteworthy since many authors recommend coteaching as an effective alternative to more standard instructional models for students with disabilities in a general education setting, yet few provide experimental data.
Methodologically, Murawski and Swanson (2001) report that studies infrequently grouped results by ability or disability type. Therefore it was not possible to know whether the intervention effects were a function of a particular disability type; for example, learning disability versus mild cognitive delay. They did note, however, that the literature is full of examples of how schools frequently classify all low-achieving students as learning disabled. Because of this, they suggest that the effects of coteaching could be extended to students with disabilities other than learning disabilities. The study with the largest effect size involved students in kindergarten through third grade; the second largest effect size was in a study with high school students. None of the articles in the meta-analysis involved students in middle school, although much of the literature on teaming or clustering (e.g. Gable, 1996, 1997) is centred on students in these grades.

Acknowledging the meagre number of studies included in their analysis, Murawski and Swanson (2001) urge caution in interpreting their results. Their greatest concern was the absence of explicit measures of treatment integrity. Without this, there could be instances where the special educator was working with special needs students at the back of the regular classroom, which would not be coteaching, thereby invalidating a study. They note that the limited data do suggest that coteaching can have a positive impact on student achievement, particularly in reading and language arts.

Murawski and Swanson (2001) concur with Weiss and Brigham (2000) that there is a set of basic, thematic problems attached to the research on coteaching. These are:

1. Vital information is omitted on measures used in the studies.
2. Teachers are interviewed where coteaching has previously been assessed as “successful,” thereby incurring potential bias.
3. Teachers’ personalities appear to be the major variable in the success or failure of a coteaching program.

4. General and special education teachers lack a clear and/or similar definition of coteaching or collaboration.

5. Due to the research design, outcomes are often stated qualitatively; e.g., “improved” or “better,” rather than quantitatively.

6. Often omitted are descriptions of the actions of the special education teacher while coteaching.

They set forth an agenda for future research that includes addressing the shortcomings seen in previous studies and recommended that accounts of research findings based on qualitative information on coteaching should be synthesized and reported.

The literature is rife with the challenges of collaborative experiences, including school-university partnerships and coteaching initiatives. Collaboration can amplify the complexity of classroom life while enhancing the quality of the learning that occurs. Collaboration can contribute to better understanding respective roles and responsibilities of school partners and university educators and to stimulating professional learning and development. Well worth remembering are Miller’s (2001) remarks,

In a sustainable school/university partnership there is no espoused “one best way” to engage educators and institutions in their own development. Nor is there room for territorial concerns about the ownership of ideas and the hierarchy of knowledge. Rather, school/university partnerships create spaces that are responsive, flexible, and inventive. They provide occasions for the reciprocal
discovery and distribution of tools, understandings, and information that inform and influence the work of all of its members. (p. 117)

Although speaking broadly of school/university partnerships, she aptly captures both the challenges and possible rewards of such relationships.

**Summary**

The literature that has been reviewed points to the significant challenges confronting older poor readers. These are compounded by the demands of expository text, relative to narrative. Instructional requirements include changes to the learning environment that allow for more opportunities for content-area reading, more explicit instruction in how to identify and extract relevant information, and using questioning methods that promote higher-order thinking. Targeted instruction is necessary that includes strategy interventions where the efficacy and utility of strategies is established. As well, practice must be wedded to corrective feedback, allowing sufficient time for metacognitive development. Key features of expository text must be actively incorporated; namely, text summary, text search, and text structure.

Additional demands continue to be placed on classroom teachers as a result of more limited special education resources and increasingly diverse classes, with a higher incidence of exceptional students in regular classrooms. Current provincial special education initiatives are promoting a closer alignment of instruction, learning expectations, and students’ needs and abilities. The ever-increasing complexity of classroom life can forestall partnership endeavours.

The challenges of school-university partnerships are described broadly in the literature. Insight into the complex manoeuvring necessary to develop these relationships
points to the need for greater understanding of the development and maintenance of partnerships that bridge two cultures. Coteaching initiatives, more commonly seen in relationships between classroom teachers and resource teachers, also reveal challenges and potential benefits. Lacking, however, are in-depth qualitative examinations of collaborative processes that are represented as both a school-university partnership with coteaching opportunities embedded within.

I began this chapter by introducing my dual role in this study. In Chapter Three, the reader is presented with considerable detail that describes how this ethnography emerged, its parameters, and critical components. Some of the challenges inherent in assuming the roles of instigator and collaborator are introduced.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS FOR A COMPLEX INTERVENTION

*Books of travel will be good in proportion to what a man has previously in his mind; his knowing what to observe; his power of contrasting one mode of life with another. As the Spanish proverb says, “He, who would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry the wealth of the Indies with him.”*

- *Samuel Johnson* (cited in Newby, 1985, p. 15)

Given that I spent from November through June in a regular classroom for a considerable part of two days per week, the best way to communicate how this ethnographic study unfolded is simply to tell the story. This chapter takes the reader through a narrative account of the methodology of the study. Consider it a travelogue that begins the exploration of the landscape of learning and communicates the lived experience of being a participant in a classroom. The reader should know that this chapter has various data sources integrated throughout and should be prepared to interact with journal entries, fieldnotes, and interview data. To aid the reader and for consistency, journal entries and fieldnotes are italicized and indented as if they were block quotations.

**In the Beginning**

Atkinson’s cautionary note is a worthwhile reminder of the multiple ways data converge and of the multiple lenses required for careful scrutiny.

Fidelity to “the phenomena” means paying attention to the forms and the media through which phenomena are enacted, encoded or embodied. It means preserving and respecting the different layers of action and representation through which cultures are enacted and social action is performed. (Atkinson, 2005, p. 10 ¶20)
Walking into the classroom after school for my initial face-to-face meeting with Reed, my first impression was of many desks and not much space. The classroom was decidedly overfull with 29 student desks, one teacher desk, one large round table in one corner that could seat 6, and three computers set on three more desks with chairs in the diagonally opposite corner. Entering the classroom, the teacher’s desk and chair were immediately ahead, with two rectangular tables and a filing cabinet parallel to and behind his desk. There was a set of bookshelves mounted above the tables and filing cabinet that was filled with his resource materials. There was a bank of windows on the far wall extending the full length of the classroom, with a window ledge used for assorted purposes, such as materials for projects, safekeeping work in progress, finished projects, and a catch-all for the usual assortment of classroom clutter. Without the students, the room felt cramped. With them, the room bulged.

The school is located in a well-established, older suburban subdivision in the west end of a mid-size city in eastern Ontario. There are approximately 320 students from Kindergarten through Grade 8. Demographically, the students are primarily from middle-class families, with a small representation from lower socioeconomic levels. Overall parents are very involved in school activities and provide significant support for their children. This is variable, however, and appears to be related to socioeconomic factors. As Reed commented, “It seems to always be the way—the kids who need the most support [at home] receive the least” (Fieldnotes, November 15th). Because parental involvement tends to be normative, should parents appear unannounced during recess, at lunchtime, or after school, they are invariably accommodated and Reed patiently addresses any question or concern.
We settled on an initial plan. Weighing the options between science and social studies as the focal curriculum area for the study, Reed preferred to hold on to science himself as he had materials already prepared and lessons planned. In social studies, the class was currently studying Ancient Egypt and working in small groups on murals to accompany their written projects. Once they were completed, one member of each group would then be responsible for a brief oral report to the whole class that described the mural, what gods or goddesses were represented, and their significance. Each of the students was also responsible for an independent written project and an oral report to the class about the project, reviewing some of the key points. Once these summative events had taken place, the next social studies unit would be Canadian Government to be followed by Ancient Civilizations. From the outset, the demands of the classroom required flexibility. It was indeterminate when the reports would be completed and when the government unit would begin. The requirement to be keenly aware of and responsive to the rhythms of the class foreshadowed how contingencies would often impact on planning and how careful negotiation would be required to enact plans.

A striking example of contingency that immediately surfaced involved the composition of the class for social studies and science. Reed’s Grade 5 class had 29 students. The class next door was a split Grade 4/5, taught by Janine, with seven Grade 5s. Although an experienced teacher, she had never taught Grade 5. There were many reasons, I was told, why all of the Grade 5s were not together in one class taught by Reed. These included the following: numbers—36 students is a very large class, particularly given the number of students with high needs in Reed’s class (12/29 had individual education plans, IEPs) and two administrative decisions that were made in
June of the preceding school year. The first was the need to separate some of the boys, as friction among them had intensified with conflicts erupting. The second was to combine all of the Grade 5s from both Reed’s and Janine’s classes for social studies and science, in part to provide some support for Janine and to appease some of the parents who had wanted their children to be in Reed’s class for Grade 5. With over 20 years of experience, he was highly respected in the school community. So there were now two teachers, a package deal, with whom to develop a collaborative partnership, as well as the addition of the seven Grade 5s from Janine’s classroom who joined Reed’s class for social studies.

**Design of the Ethnography**

This ethnographic study used a nested design consisting of three parts: (1) a descriptive study of situated learning within a Gr. 5 class and the interrelations between content-rich, authentic curriculum and the learning context; and (2) an exploratory intervention study targeting the students with the highest needs and the greatest challenges in content-area reading; and (3) a descriptive study of the process of constructing collaborative partnerships with two classroom teachers. Strategic interventions centred on critical features of expository text, including text summary, text structure, and text search, using principles of differentiated instruction (DI). Fletcher et al. (2002) suggest that without differentiated and scaffolded instruction for children with the most serious reading disabilities, interventions in large groups or inclusive settings will be ineffective (p. 57; see also Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000). The intervention component was embedded in the social, situated, and distributed cognition promoted within the classroom by virtue of the classroom content and context, with the collaborative relationship as the fountainhead.
Ethnography, with its orientation towards revealing complexity (Creswell, 2007), afforded the opportunity for ecological validity, precluded assumptions about intra-individual stability, and emphasized the social embeddedness of phenomena (Patrick & Middleton, 2002). Overall the study is framed by the literature on effective practices (see Block & Parris, 2008; Block & Pressley, 2002; Morrow, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2003; Rasinski, Blachowicz, & Lems, 2006) that supports the use of authentic, complex reading tasks, sequenced and scaffolded instruction, multiple opportunities for review and practice, and the creation of a learning context where students are engaged and motivated, where risk-taking is supported and challenge is embraced (Baker, Dreher, & Guthrie, 2000; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Mazzoni & Gambrell, 2003). Also informing this study are the seminal commissioned reports of the National Reading Panel (2000; Snow et al., 1998; Snow et al., 2005), the RAND Reading for Understanding Report (2002), and Reading Next – A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy: A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

A rigorous review process by the National Reading Panel (2000) identified critical topics for reading instruction that include the following: alphabetics (phonemic awareness and phonics), fluency, and comprehension (vocabulary and text comprehension). This study incorporated these, gathering data on each in baseline assessments on the children in the class and using those results to plan the instructional design and delivery.

The RAND Reading for Understanding Report (2002) described the current knowledge base on reading comprehension as sizeable but constrained by sketchiness and
lack of focus and inadequate as a basis for reform in reading comprehension instruction (p. xii). The report emphasized that comprehension must be taught explicitly, beginning in the primary grades and continuing through high school. Simply because children were reading at grade level in Grade 3 did not mean that they would automatically become proficient comprehenders in later grades. Acknowledging that a teacher’s expertise makes a significant difference, concern was expressed because few teachers receive adequate preservice preparation or ongoing professional development focused on reading comprehension. Three domains were identified that should be accorded the highest priority for future research: instruction, teacher preparation, and assessment. Ultimately research findings should not be exclusive to either classrooms or policymaking arenas but applicable to both settings. The report also stated that more research was needed on classroom-based multiple-strategy instruction, since most of the evidence for efficacy of comprehension strategy instruction is based on single-strategy design (Scharlach, 2008).

*Reading Next – A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy: A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York* (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) compiled a research-based list of 15 promising elements of effective adolescent literacy programs. These were divided into two sections: instructional improvements and infrastructure improvements. The latter included block scheduling for literacy, professional development, teacher teams, ongoing summative assessment of students and programs, administrative support, and, overall, a comprehensive and coordinated literacy program. Instructional improvements emphasized direct and explicit comprehension instruction, embedding instructional principles in content, motivation and self-directed learning, strategic tutoring, diverse texts, intensive writing, a technology component, and
ongoing formative assessment of students. No single approach was rated above another; rather interventions that tapped more than one instructional method were recommended, such as strategies instruction, comprehension monitoring and metacognitive instruction, teacher modeling, scaffolded instruction, and apprenticeship models. Particularly apropos to the current study was the recommendation to embed instructional principles in content.

**Instructional Model**

Given the intense needs of some of the children in the class, a model was developed that included both whole class instruction and a series of parallel lessons taught to the exceptional learners with the highest needs and the most significant reading difficulties. I used purposeful sampling to identify the children who would participate in the intensive, pull-out, small-group intervention. Sampling was based on classroom observations, consultation with the classroom teacher, classroom teacher assessments, a review of the IEPs (both formal and informal), and baseline assessments that I conducted on phonics, word identification, word attack, comprehension, and fluency, in keeping with recommendations from the National Reading Panel Reports of the Subgroups (2000), *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its Implications for Reading Instruction*. Some of the children I selected had been formally identified with exceptionalities; others had informal identifications. Each, however, was reading below grade level. Detailed information about each of the six participants in the small-group intervention is presented in Chapter 5, Vignettes of the Children: Introducing the Struggling Reader, and in Chapter 6, The Landscape of the Parallel Lessons for the Small Group, that closely details the results of each of the pull-out sessions.
The first social studies unit that was a part of this study was the unit on Canadian Government. This unit began December 15th and ended on May 2nd with the third and final unit test. Both classroom teachers were in agreement with me that we would focus initially on the upcoming federal election. I wanted to be sure that all of the children in the class had the same foundational information and experienced the richness of the whole-class discussion. Therefore, to honour the content of the classroom lessons, I delayed withdrawing the small group until after the election and after the corresponding unit test. The first of the series of eight parallel lessons began in February and the last took place in May.

This model allowed for intense and differentiated instruction within the small group, tailored to the needs of those exceptional children. This design is unique because it was not driven by an instructional program *per se* but rather by the classroom agenda. In this regard, it truly was an emergent design, emerging from the curriculum in the classroom. Because the instruction was designed for the whole class, I had not preplanned when I would withdraw the children. This withdrawal was contingent on a variety of factors, including unanticipated changes to the schedule, an emergency dental appointment for Reed, an in-service event, and so on, all part of the normal school routine. Flexibility was an imperative.

As a classroom-based and curriculum-driven instructional model, it was intense and responsive to particular needs, irrespective of formal identification. It was a highly collaborative enterprise that encompassed planning, constructing an authentic and enriched curriculum, coteaching, and developing assessment and evaluation measures. It required extraordinary commitment on the part of the classroom teachers. I had not
anticipated how reciprocal the collaboration would become, nor had I fully appreciated how helpful Janine found our collaboration on the unit tests to be and how valuable was the information I provided about baseline assessments.

You had that experience with withdrawing some of those children, the ones that were a little more needy…. You brought a lot of information to me about how those students learn, and how best they might be able to demonstrate their understanding of what we had done on assessments. And I found that to be very valuable because otherwise I would have just been basing my assessments on mostly my own seven children that I had, who have no real high needs compared to the ones that Reed had. So, you bringing that to me so that we could make them [the unit tests] up together, I think that was extremely valuable. (Interview with Janine, June 27th)

We used three very different formats on the tests for the government unit. The first test on the Federal Election had matching, fill-in-the-blank and short-answer questions, along with an open-ended challenge question. The second test on Aspects of Government had a cloze format. The summative test on Canadian Government was open book, a novel experience for the children.

Time Frame

Initially conceived as a 12-week study, this ethnographic research expanded, beginning mid-November and ending on the last day of the school year. (See Figure 1 following, which charts the timeline.) In this regard, the study met Creswell’s (2007) enjoinder that ethnography takes time and submerging oneself in the culture of a classroom as researcher and participant coteacher requires intense commitment. Initial
**Figure 1. Timeline**

- **August**: Negotiating entry into a junior classroom and finding a classroom teacher willing to participate in the study.

- **September**: Due to whole-school reorganization during the second week of school, the original teacher was no longer able to participate as her teaching assignment altered from junior to primary. Therefore entry into a junior classroom had to be renegotiated and another school and teacher had to be found.

- **October**: Initial meeting with a Grade 5 classroom teacher who agreed to participate. Application made to the District School Board for ethical approval.

- **November**: Began conducting classroom observations and initial baseline assessments. [Ancient Egypt Unit was underway with students completing murals and subsequently delivering oral presentations.]

- **December**: Baseline assessments continued. [Student oral presentations on Ancient Egypt continued.] Canadian Government Unit began on December 15th.

- **January**: Instructional intervention with a focus on the electoral process and preparing students to participate in the cross-Canada Student Vote Project.

- **February**: Instructional intervention continued, initiated parallel lesson. Initial unit test on the electoral process. Completion of an independent research project on a prime minister. The Campaign Manager Project began, with one component requiring student presentations.

- **March**: Student presentations continued. Instructional intervention was ongoing, targeting summarizing. Second unit test on Aspects of Government in Canada, including the parliamentary and judicial systems. March Break

- **April**: Instructional intervention and parallel lessons #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7.

- **May**: Government unit was completed on May 2nd with the third and final unit test. Topics assessed included systems of government, structure and organization of Canadian government, legislative processes, the Constitution and Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. Ancient Civilizations Unit began. Parallel lesson #8. Student presentations on a self-selected Ancient Civilization commenced.

- **June**: Student presentations completed. Instructional intervention continued. Archaeology Unit was undertaken, June 13-June 29.

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1 Brackets indicate that the unit began prior to my arrival in the classroom.
observations extended over a 5-week period, 2 days per week, beginning November 8th, and included naturalistic observations of the teacher and the students, using the Observation Instrument (adapted from Perry, 1998, and Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, n.d.) (see Appendix C). This involved a running record of teacher behaviours and a running record of student behaviours. Subjects observed were computers, math, language—reading and literature circles, social studies, and physical education.

**Curriculum Units**

In this Grade 5 class, four curriculum units comprised the social studies curriculum for the academic year. The initial unit on Ancient Egypt began in September and finished in December. When I began my observations in November, the students were completing their final projects for that unit, making oral presentations, and, in small groups, finishing their murals.

Over the course of this study, three social studies curriculum units were completed. The unit on the Canadian Government began in mid-December and spanned 4 months (holidays excluded), with the third and final unit test on May 2nd. The unit on Ancient Civilizations was completed mid June, with the last two weeks of the unit devoted to oral student presentations. The final unit on Archaeology extended over the last 2 weeks of the school year, with the students handing in their final project 2 days before the last day of school, and the final lesson taking place the following day.

The government unit was lengthy because we capitalized on the federal election and involved the class in the federal Student Vote Program. My rationale was that this would be authentic and engaging for the students and allow them to see more immediately and intimately what is meant by civic rights and responsibilities.
Neither of the teachers had participated in the Student Vote before but both were keen to do so. (See http://www.studentvote.ca/federal/index.php.) Janine, the Grade 4/5 teacher commented:

If there were not an election happening at that time, we may not have gone on as long into the government [unit] as we did. Because there was one going on, we continued and had a lot of discussion about it. I think the kids have had an outstanding Social Studies year. I bet you that’s probably the most Social Studies that they have had ever! (Interview, June 27th)

Although Reed, the Grade 5 teacher, Janine, and I worked collaboratively, I was the principal designer for the Canadian Government curriculum. Janine described my role, saying:

- bringing new ideas, bringing new resources, getting into the community [drawing on local election materials], and especially for the government unit…the whole unit was basically planned by you, and it was just very thorough. And I think it brought new meaning to the kids and it brought reality into the classroom because you gathered the information from Kingston.  (Interview with Janine, June 27th)

**Social Studies Schedule**

In part to accommodate projects that students were doing, such as the Egyptian murals, social studies was allotted two double periods per week, the last two periods of the afternoon on Tuesdays and Thursdays, immediately after recess, from 2:25-3:25 p.m., followed by agendas at 3:25 and dismissal at 3:35 p.m. However, there was in fact less time than the allotted hour. Transitions invariably took longer than usual because the 7 students from Janine’s class next door came into Reed’s classroom and, by the time they
were settled, several minutes had elapsed. Additionally, it was ill advised to have all seven sit at the large round table in the corner of the classroom as they were very easily distracted. With 36 children in what was an already crowded room, it could be a challenging enterprise to gain attention, maintain focus, and sustain engagement. The end of the social studies period usually was truncated by 5 minutes to allow Janine’s Grade 5s to return to their classroom for their end-of-the day routine.

Therefore what, at first glance, looked to be an hour of instructional time for social studies was usually trimmed to 50 minutes, occasionally 55 minutes. Darling-Hammond’s (2006) evocative picture of the complexities of the profession resonates as the challenges of this class emerged:

Teaching may be even more complex than law, medicine, or engineering. Rather than serving one client at a time, teachers work with groups of twenty-five to thirty at once, each with unique needs and proclivities. Teachers must balance these variables, along with a multitude of sometimes competing goals, and negotiate the demands of the content matter along with individual and group needs. They must draw on many kinds of knowledge—of learning and development, social contexts and culture, language and expression, curriculum and teaching—integrate what they know to create engaging tasks and solve learning problems for a range of students who learn differently. They must balance the often conflicting desires of school boards, legislators, parents, administrators, colleagues, and students, creating a coherent community within which both learning and social growth can occur. (pp. 34-35)
The challenges of this class remind me of Frank McCourt's (2005) evocative description of what he was not taught at New York University by his professors of education who never lectured on how to handle flying-sandwich situations. They talked about theories and philosophies of education, about moral and ethical imperatives, about the necessity of dealing with the whole child, the gestalt, if you don’t mind, the child’s felt needs, but never about critical moments in the classroom. (p. 16)

McCourt, in an inspired, critical moment, retrieved a flying-sandwich from the classroom floor, slid it away from its wax paper wrap, recognized that it was no ordinary sandwich, and, without further ado, ate it. Licking his fingers, he balled the paper bag and wax paper and arched it into the wastebasket to the collective cheers of the class.

There are parallels. The process of data collection, and data collection in concert with teaching, is filled with “flying-sandwich situations” where one is inevitably beset by events and circumstances that often require split-second assessments and actions. Capturing the data becomes another confound as I feel bombarded by the inherent “busyness” of the setting and the constant in-the-moment demands. I have to continually converse, in real time, with the “busyness,” all the while directing, choreographing, producing, and remembering what preceded, what is in the present, and anticipating what can or will arise, in an ongoing recursive cycle.
Therefore the initial challenge is constructing a frame that is both rigid enough to provide definition but flexible enough to accommodate shifting landscapes. And there is the further issue of responsibility—responsibility to the methodology of the study, responsibility to the classroom teacher by whose grace I am there in his class, responsibility to the students in the classroom, and, by extension, to their parents. Then, too, there are the concomitant pressures to accommodate to the daily and weekly class timetable, preexisting schedule of assignments, and overall culture of the classroom and of the school.

The context is indeed multilayered and the notion of emergent design must be given due credence. So, too, is the need to remain flexible in merging intent and action.

(Journal entry, November 14th)

**Baseline Assessment: Process and Product**

Given the multiple components of reading processes, a multifaceted assessment can identify readers’ particular strengths and challenges. Instructional interventions that are differentiated and more closely aligned with students’ abilities and needs can be developed accordingly. Several instruments were used to gather baseline assessments on the children whose parent(s) had granted consent. Twenty-seven consents were received and 25 assessments were completed, as two children moved while the assessments were conducted. The completed assessments included two of the seven Grade 5 students in Janine’s Gr. 4/5 class as well as 23 in Reed’s Gr. 5 class. The intent was to gather a much fuller and more informative understanding across all of the critical components of the
reading process than the assessment that the local district school board required its
classroom teachers to complete, which was primarily a comprehension-only measure.
The assessments were conducted individually and lasted approximately 35-45 minutes.

The initial instrument was a Reading Attitude Inventory (RAI) that I designed,
based on earlier research that I had done with primary students and adapted for the junior
grades (see Appendix D). It provided helpful information about the child’s attitude
towards reading, reading preferences, frequency of reading outside of school, perception
of what good readers do and awareness of “fix-up” strategies that can be deployed when
difficulties are encountered while reading. Beginning with the RAI meant that the
children had an opportunity to talk about their individual reading experiences and attitude
towards reading openly and easily, in a relaxed, non-judgmental, non-threatening setting.
I recorded their answers, so no child was disadvantaged by poorer writing skills. Each of
the children assessed appeared to enjoy the experience and the opportunity for 1:1
interaction, a novelty in a large class.

Once the RAI was completed, we moved on to an Informal Phonics Survey
(McKenna & Stahl, 2003) to assess alphabetics. The Informal Phonics Survey was
designed to monitor specific skill acquisition. The vowel subtests used real words, and
children were scored correctly as long as they pronounced the vowel correctly even if the
consonants were incorrectly pronounced. The subtests included the following: consonant
sounds, consonant digraphs, short vowels in CVC words, consonant blends in short-
vowel words, the rule of silent e, vowel digraphs, vowel diphthongs, and r-controlled
vowels. In addition, there was a test of 36 nonsense words to assess facility with rimes,
all of which had the same onset, “z.” The Informal Phonics Survey was straightforward,
took only a few minutes to complete, and acted as a strong indicator of decoding skills (McKenna & Stahl, p. 119).

The Informal Phonics Survey was followed by the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests G—Revised (1987)/Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised (WRMT-R/NU, 1998). The Woodcock Test 3 and Test 4 were used: Test 3 was Word Identification and Test 4 was Word Attack. Word Identification tapped rapid access of phonological and semantic information to recognize familiar or unfamiliar real words that ranged in difficulty. This was an efficient means, using a highly reliable, norm-referenced instrument, to assess decoding skills, including automaticity and sight word vocabulary. Word Attack focused on unfamiliar or nonwords. These nonsense words required decoding skills that relied on phonological awareness and letter-to-sound knowledge.

The results of the two Woodcock Tests were used to determine grade level for reading comprehension passage selection. Although measures abound to assess reading comprehension, it remains a difficult construct to examine (Pearson, 1998). Rarely is a single assessment sufficient, nor should the source of a child’s struggles with reading be based on a sole measure (Fletcher et al., 2002). Numerous variables are at play when a child’s level of comprehension is under consideration; for example, (a) whether a child is asked to read sentences, paragraphs, or pages; (b) whether the response format is cloze, open-ended questions, multiple choice, or think-alouds; (c) whether questions are answered with or without the text available; and (d) whether literal understanding, gist understanding, or inferential comprehension is the focus (Fletcher et al., p. 39). Therefore multiple assessments may be indicated, tapping different facets of comprehension.
An informal, criterion-referenced reading inventory (IRI), the *Bader Reading and Language Inventory (5th ed.)* (2005), was used to assess comprehension. For each grade level, there was a set of three passages which gave me the option to select one passage that I thought would be of interest to the student. Each passage had a set of literal comprehension questions, a question that required inferential comprehension, and a question that asked for a recounting, which indicated awareness of organizational structure and sequencing as well as recall. The grade-level equivalents of the passages of the *Bader Inventory* have been well established (Fitzgerald, 2001) and offer a window on the reading process so that cognitive, perceptual, linguistic, and affective aspects can be seen (Bader & Wiesendanger, 1989).

Fluency, long overlooked as a critical component of the reading process despite the seminal work of Samuels (1976), includes accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. Fluency has been “the most neglected” (Allington, 1983) reading skill because, for the greater part of the 20th century, researchers and practitioners assumed that fluency was the outcome of word recognition proficiency; therefore, efforts to develop word recognition were promoted and fluency was ignored (National Reading Panel, 2000). The recommendation of the National Research Council Report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, is clear:

Because the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on the development of word recognition accuracy and reading fluency, both should be regularly assessed in the classroom, permitting timely and effective instructional response when difficulty or delay is apparent. (Snow et al., 1998, p. 7)
For this study, I used the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Fluency Scale Rubric (1995). It was easily administered, served as a companion to the oral passage reading, and acted as a broad indicator of a child’s fluency. It was also a flexible instrument that could be used on any oral reading sample, either from an IRI or an in-class or pull-out small group reading.

Each of the children also contributed a writing sample that consisted of a brief paragraph related to the current social studies topic. They were asked to identify something else that they would like to learn about in the unit on the Canadian government. If they appeared to draw a blank, the alternate question had them thinking of something that they had already learned in the unit that they found particularly interesting, surprising, or novel and indicating why this was so. This writing sample provided ready information about complexity of sentence structure, organization of ideas, use of descriptive language and, overall, relative facility in writing. The sample also helped me to see more clearly the range of abilities in this class. By way of example, one boy was thinking of his future when he wrote, “I have learned the process of voting, the importance of voting. Also I have learned that voting is not complicated and that it is fun. I might become a politician.”

A multifaceted assessment that targets each of the components of the reading process underscores the importance of “domain specific factors” (Stanovich et al., 1997; Torgesen & Wagner, 1998) in contrast to all-purpose measures such as IQ. “Every child who is behind in reading is working below their potential” (Fletcher et al., 2002, p. 31). What is so challenging, however, “is to discover and remediate the child’s underlying
difficulties, whether they be cognitive, instructional, and so forth. Performance on IQ
tests does not facilitate this process” (Fletcher et al., p. 31).

Buly and Valencia (2002) also make a strong case for the need for multifaceted
indictors of students’ reading abilities and more targeted instruction. Their study
challenges the assumption frequently tied to high-stakes reading assessments that
students’ poor performance is symptomatic of a monolithic reading problem, remedied by
either the “silver bullet” or the “quick fix” (Allington, 2001). Buly and Valencia’s final
sample consisted of 108 students drawn from an ethnically diverse semiurban school
district of approximately 18,000 students. This sample represented high and low-scoring
schools and students drawn from 17 of the 20 elementary schools in the district. Excluded
were students who had received in-depth assessments, i.e., ESL and special education
students, and were consequently receiving supplemental support.

They administered multiple measures designed to assess components of reading
processes, such as phonemic awareness, word identification, vocabulary, comprehension,
and fluency. Findings from descriptive data and factor analysis included many students’
poor performance on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL, a
statewide comprehension test administered to all students in the fourth, seventh, and tenth
grades), which could not be attributed to a fundamental decoding or word identification
inability. Students could decode at a higher level than they could comprehend, and
students encountered significant difficulties with fluency in both rate and expression.

Cluster analysis, however, revealed that the pattern suggested by the averages for
the whole group did not apply to even the majority of the sampled students. Clusters
included automatic word callers—students who “read” words quickly and accurately but
without understanding, many of whom were ESL learners; struggling word callers—
students, including ESL, who had difficulty in word identification and poor decoding
skills; word stumblers—slow readers from English-speaking families who over-relied on
context clues to compensate for poor word identification skills; slow and steady
comprehenders—students for whom fluency was lacking, automaticity was
compromised, and more advanced decoding skills were absent; slow word callers—
students who, like the automatic and struggling word callers, lacked fluency but were
accurate decoders who slowed down to attend to word meanings but then lost the sense of
a passage; and disabled readers who struggled with word identification, fluency, and
meaning, and who required intensive interventions, beyond what most classroom teachers
could provide.

Buly and Valencia (2002) argue that their data suggest that predetermined
instructional approaches cannot meet the diverse needs of reading disabled students and
that there must be multiple indicators of reading disability based on classroom-based
diagnostic assessments. Similarly they argue for instructional approaches that are more
closely aligned with individual needs rather than grade-level content standards. Given the
emphasis on early intervention, supplemental support for students beyond these grades is
often lacking. They conclude by suggesting that professional development is the linchpin
to improved teaching and learning, recommending that it be in-situ within schools and
classrooms and within environments “that inspire trust and conversation about difficult
pedagogical issues” (Buly & Valencia, p. 234).

Following Buly and Valencia (2002), using multiple indicators of reading
(dis)ability provided multiple patterns. The information that I gathered gave me the
opportunity to provide the classroom teacher with an overall assessment of the grade level at which the student was reading, a summary of her or his strengths and areas of weakness, as well as suggestions and strategies to address those areas where the student struggled. There were often surprises, such as students like Cody who read with far greater accuracy, but not prosody, as the year progressed; however, his comprehension was weak. This went some way to explain why his written work on projects that were research based was poorly developed. What he required were targeted directions and reminders to slow down and work on comprehension by identifying purpose, looking for key words, reading a short selection, rereading, attempting to summarize what was read, reviewing the topic sentence(s), and then repeating the process. Full descriptions of the assessment results for each of the children in the small group who were withdrawn for parallel lesson instruction will be reported in the vignettes of these children in Chapter 5. Providing a succinct account of the results of the baseline assessments on the children was a critical first step towards building a collaborative partnership.

After I completed a baseline assessment, very quickly a pattern emerged. When the student and I returned to the classroom, Reed would ask, “So, how did it go?” I would respond, “Very well,” and would then proceed to tell him what I had found out including strengths and weaknesses, particulars of word identification and word attack, grade level for reading comprehension passage, and fluency assessment, followed by a quick synopsis of possible intervention strategies. Often he would say, “I didn’t know that,” and we would flesh out some of the interventions. We would then discuss what possible next steps could be. As always, time was an issue. These conversations were inevitably brief, a few
minutes, often before recess. What I learned was that I had to be clear and succinct, as time was so limited. I truly believe that the collaboration would not have unfolded as it did had I not been able to provide this type of information. It meant that I had something to offer that he could readily apply to his practice, would build on his already deep knowledge of his students, and would work to their benefit. In addition, the information was “classroom ready” and transferable across other subject areas. In return, I earned credibility which, in concert with the curriculum development that I was doing and the co-teaching, gave me the “keys to the kingdom”—quite a gift!!

(Journal entry, January 16th)

**Multiple Data Sources**

In addition to naturalistic observations and baseline assessment instruments previously described, other data sources included samples of students’ written work, anecdotal comments reported in fieldnotes, and classroom observations. Fieldnotes were kept, and reflective journaling took place over the course of the study. Ongoing dialogue occurred with both the Grade 5 teacher and the Grade 4/5 teacher. Each of the three curriculum units, on Canadian Government, Ancient Civilizations, and Archaeology, had accompanying curriculum materials. Transcript data included: the eight small-group instructional sessions, an interview with a student teacher from a university in upstate New York, in February, as he neared the end of his practicum in the Grade 5 class, year-end interviews with the classroom teacher and the Gr. 4/5 teacher, and brief individual interviews with each of the children who were in the small group for all of the parallel lesson instruction. (See Figure 2 following which is a compilation of data sources.)
Data Sources

- Naturalistic observations using Observation Instrument (adapted from Perry, 1998, and Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, n.d.)
  (Observations occurred from November 8th-December 13th.)

- Baseline assessment measures that included: a Reading Attitude Inventory (RAI) to determine the children’s perception of their reading ability, perception of what good readers do, and whether they read for interest and pleasure outside of school; an Informal Phonics Survey (McKenna & Stahl, 2003) to assess alphabets; Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests G—Revised (1987): Test 3 Word Identification and Test 4 Word Attack; a passage selection from the Bader Reading and Language Inventory (5th ed., 2005), a criterion referenced Informal Reading Inventory (IRI); a Fluency Scale Rubric (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1995) that was administered in concert with a child’s oral passage reading; and a brief writing sample. Grade level reading comprehension passage selection was based on performance on the Woodcock measures. At the conclusion of the study, these measures, with the exception of the RAI, were administered as a posttest to all of the participants in the small group and a representative sample from the whole Gr. 5 class.

- The data record also includes samples of students’ written work, including projects, unit tests, and homework assignments, fieldnotes, and the researcher’s reflective journaling. These data were triangulated with researcher observations, student performance, and ongoing dialogue with the classroom teachers to assess and consolidate what we were doing.

- Curriculum materials relating to the development of the social studies units on Canadian Government, Ancient Civilizations, and Archaeology.

- Transcripts of audiotaped parallel lessons, conducted in small-group instructional sessions.

- Transcript of an interview conducted with a student teacher in February, at the conclusion of his practicum.

- Transcripts of end-of-year interviews with the Grade 5 classroom teacher and the Gr. 4/5 teacher whose seven Gr. 5 students joined the Gr. 5 class for social studies (and science) over the course of the entire year.

- Survey completed by all Gr. 5 students (both classes), “How Good Was Your Learning This Semester in Social Studies?” that was administered at the end of the school year, during the last week of school.

- Audiotaped and transcribed brief individual interviews with each of the “regulars” in the small group at the end of the school year during the last week of school.
Instructional Design

Cunningham and Creamer (2003) offer the following comments about how to teach literacy:

In teaching literacy, it is the minute-to-minute, second-to-second execution of discipline and instruction, with all the affective dimensions of both, that determines whether children are learning in that classroom. That, we believe, is the lesson of the classic First-Grade Studies (Bond & Dykstra, 1967/1997) and of more recent research on effective schools (Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001). (p. 344)

To accommodate the affective dimension, not only was it imperative for the curriculum to be content rich, but also it had to be authentic, meaningful, and engaging.

*The unit on the Canadian Government consistently receives such bad press.*

*Whenever I go into a Gr. 5 class to observe one of my teacher candidates and the government unit is upcoming, almost invariably it is off-loaded onto the candidate. In conversations with associate teachers, they tend to roll their eyes, shrug, and sigh when they refer to that unit. They then proceed to tell me that they have asked the candidate to pick that one up. I am bemused because it offers so much possibility. Certainly the information in the textbook has to be supplanted as the electoral information is out of date. However the chapters are clearly laid out, the key features of expository text are readily identified, and, overall, it does not succumb to the seductive detail effect that Garner (1992) cautions against. BUT it should not be the sole source. I will not use it as a starting point but*
incorporate it later on. Instead, I think the election and electoral process is a better beginning. I will run this past Reed and see what he thinks.

(Journal entry, December 8th)

The 3 Ps: Prior Knowledge, Preview, Purpose

Broad-based principles of learning and cognition were foundational and infused the instructional design. At the outset of a lesson, the class was introduced to the “3 Ps,” prior knowledge, preview, and purpose. Tapping prior knowledge afforded an opportunity to make explicit connections to previous lessons and to quickly review key concepts, specific vocabulary, and homework with the aim of working towards consolidating what we had taught. As well, it served as a “pulse taker.” If we were met with blank stares or refrains of “I dunno” or “don’t remember,” then we would quickly know that some degree of reteaching was in order. Making direct connections between previous lessons and the present lesson helped the children to recall what had transpired and anticipate what would transpire. For a class with such a wide range of needs and abilities, this appeared to be useful.

Preview was the motivational hook, the carrot, to set the stage. Sometimes previewing meant a quick “show and tell,” for example, photographs of the Parliament Buildings or the interior of the House of Commons and the Senate. Sometimes it was campaign pamphlets for local candidates and campaign buttons; sometimes it was a newspaper article that we would read as a class. Sometimes it meant a brief overview of the topic for the day and an agenda; and sometimes a combination of these. Previewing allowed for an efficient and effective way to gain the children’s attention, establish their focus, and maximize available instructional time.
Purpose provided validation for the lesson, allowed the students access to a bigger picture perspective, and worked to establish and secure their commitment to the topic. Of the three, purpose was the one that, at least initially, appeared to generate more quizzical expressions. Conjecture could lead one to deduce that this was a perspective that was unfamiliar to the students and, for most, not consciously considered in any significant way. In other words, students can often be fatalistic about what goes on in a class and oblivious to the overriding plan that is intended to provide them with conceptual understandings that extend well beyond factual knowledge.

The kids looked stunned when I asked them what they thought was the purpose of reading newspaper articles. Even Sanders, our most outspoken student who had been formally identified as gifted with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, did not respond right away and appeared a bit blindsided. I needed a few prompts, “Why are we doing this?” No thundering responses. “We have a textbook, why don’t we just use that?” Of course Sanders stated the inevitable, “Because you and Mr. T. say we have to [read them].” Once we moved beyond that as I admitted that yes, we were asking them to read it, but why were we doing that, they slowly began to see that there was a reason beyond “’cuz the teacher says I have to.” And then the pace picked up: “because they tell us what’s happening right now;” “because then we know about what promises the candidates are making;” “because we can get an idea and then think about it;” “so we can learn stuff like grown-ups do.” (Fieldnotes, January 19th)

Distilling the “3 Ps” meant that the language had to be clear, focused, and sufficiently simple to be easily remembered. To this end, the descriptors were as follows:
Prior knowledge: What do I already know about this topic or this material?

Preview: Look at it [the reading]. What stands out? Prompts focused on text features such as bold or italicized text, pictures, illustrations, diagrams, headings, subheadings, etc.

Purpose: Why am I/we reading this?

Every effort was made to achieve consistency in language used when the 3 Ps were introduced and also when cueing for strategic knowledge; for example, reminding the children to ask themselves, “What do I do when I come to a word that I don’t know or understand?”

Strategy Interventions and a Strategic Repertoire

Some “fix-up” strategies had already been introduced to the class such as look at the pictures, sound it out, cover up part of the word and break it into syllables, read ahead/go past a word, skip ahead and then reread. To these we added, look for little words in big words, “peel off” the affixes, really LOOK at it, stop and think, make a good guess and, after guessing, ask yourself: Does it look right? Sound right? Make sense?

These strategies were embedded within the lesson and readings for the day. Most lessons included oral read-alouds by the children; therefore, as unfamiliar words were encountered, it was very easy to introduce an appropriate strategy and equally easy to underscore its utility as the read-alouds continued.

Since a strategic repertoire must be used flexibly and called upon as needed, we modeled using the strategies flexibly and as needed. As well, these were strategies with which the children had some conversance. This differs from instructional approaches used in the primary grades that require a more dedicated introduction, often focused
solely on one strategy, and direct instruction (Duffy, 2002; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Martin, 1994).

Comprehension-monitoring had to be threaded into all of the reading that the students were doing if they were to become more competent at extracting meaning from expository text. This required careful modeling, guided practice, and independent practice, followed by subsequent review, modeling, and guided and independent practice in a recursive cycle. This set of strategies included, in addition to the 3 Ps described above, finding the main idea, summarizing, questioning, and cross-checking or checking back. The hierarchical organization of expository text lends itself to practicing finding the main idea, identifying topic sentences, summarizing paragraphs, generating questions about content, and backtracking to support meaning-making. Rather than take a more scripted approach, as many multi-strategy interventions have done (see Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 1998), these comprehension and comprehension-monitoring strategies were incorporated into the lessons “in the moment.”

Think-alouds were used to directly identify strategies, which were then modeled: “This is what I do when I think back about what I have just read. I ask myself questions like….” Multiple opportunities were provided for the children to independently find the topic sentences, identify the main ideas, and write summaries using a variety of text sources, including newspaper articles, photocopied readings from a number of informational texts that I thought would pique the children’s interest, election campaign materials, educational resources on the House of Commons, the Senate, and the Supreme Court requested through the local MP’s office and sent from Ottawa, and downloads from
Some examples of text sources that readily aroused interest were these: *You Can’t Do That in Canada! Crazy Laws from Coast to Coast* (Spencer, 2000), *Canada Votes, How We Elect Our Government* (Granfield, 2007), *Canada’s Maple Leaf, the Story of Our Flag* (Owens & Yealland, 1999), *Who Runs this Country, Anyway? A Guide to Canadian Government* (Stanbridge, 2005), and *The Kids Book of Canadian Prime Ministers* (Hancock, 2005). Multiple sources were used to provide variety, to demonstrate currency and authenticity (hence the newspaper articles), and to engage.

Solely relying on the textbook could easily have turned into a “dentistry of the text” (Aoki, 2000, p. 354) where meaning and ideas are extracted, hardly conducive to sustaining the interest of 36 children for a double period, after recess, at the end of a school day. This extraction is certainly necessary and important, but, Alvermann (2000) contends, not at the expense of classroom talk, which can serve as an antidote. It was not enough to merely identify topic sentences or main ideas. Instead there was rich discussion during the oral readings when we had the class reread silently a paragraph that had been read aloud and then identify the topic sentence and main idea. Sometimes they would do this with a partner. We would follow this up with discussion where students could agree or disagree and explain their reasoning. If they were to learn how to become more strategic, then they needed to practice and to recognize that they had to be able to justify what they were doing.

*Increasingly, I am coming to the realization that, in the preservice context, we do not give enough credence to or talk enough about the relationship between*
learning and practice is required for all students to achieve a reasonable level of competence. That includes gifted students. For the children with higher needs who struggle with reading, what they require by way of practice is, of course, exponentially greater. Not surprising that they fall further and further behind. I see how much practice virtually all of the kids in this class need and, therefore, how long it takes to get through some of the readings. To push through them more quickly, however, would seriously compromise the quality of the learning. So, we will take more time. Fortunately, Reed and Janine seem o.k. with this.

(Journal entry, February 16)

As children become older, their strategic repertoire has to become comfortable if it is to be worn well and if they are to take advantage of it appropriately and effectively. To do so requires both skill and will. Paris and Cross (1983) described the fusion of cognitive skill and motivational will into self-controlled learning that can occur if there is persuasive teaching and repeated practice. They developed a program of comprehension instruction, Informed Strategies for Learning (ISL), to make children more aware of declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge while also teaching them how to go about evaluating, planning, and regulating their own comprehension in strategic ways (Paris, Cross, & Lipson, 1984). They recognized that the “instructional dialogues and dynamic interactions among students and teachers are as important in ISL (Informed Strategies for Learning) as the information about particular strategies” (Paris, Cross, et al., p. 1250). Paris, Cross, and Lipson’s recognition and recommendation are as timely today as they were originally. Actively promoting instructional dialogue and dynamic
interaction is critical if students are to commit to working towards acquiring a flexible, responsive, and efficacious strategic repertoire.

*Metacognition*

Repeating “think about what you can do to help you remember what you have read” and “think about what you can do to help you answer the questions (at the end of a chapter or in a written assignment)” helped the children to think metacognitively. Usually, additional prompts were needed. These included: “What is most important?” “Why?” “How do you know?” The students also needed reminders to ask themselves, “What do I do when/if I’m not sure what this means.” For the able readers, these were reminders; for the less able readers, these were explicit directional signals. Immediate feedback helped to keep the student on track and reduced anxiety about having an incorrect answer. Being matter-of-fact, straightforward, and nonjudgmental garnered tenacity from many of the students who found reading challenging but who wanted to participate.

With the whole class, we had been working on strategies that would help to answer text-based questions and that would also help them to remember the answers. It was important to break down into steps what, at first blush, might seem like an easy correspondence between question and answer. This was necessary for many reasons. The baseline assessment results revealed a number of children who appeared to be able to read with accuracy but without comprehension. Others read very quickly, thinking that speed was the measure of a good reader, but comprehension was seriously compromised. Others got lost in what they were reading, caught up by word identification and the perils
of complex vocabulary. The children needed to learn to carefully read the question, think about what it was asking, and then cue with the text to find the answer.

During one of the initial small-group pull-out sessions, I asked the children, “What can you do to help you remember the answer?” The children were able to easily rhyme off the following strategies: say it in your own words, find the key word(s), write it down, highlight, write in the margin next to it, and say the answer aloud. The small-group milieu afforded the opportunity to intensively demonstrate and talk about the utility of each of the strategies that they had listed as they took turns reading aloud.

Pressley (2000) describes the need for instruction to be “metacognitively rich” (p. 44) where teachers provide extensive commentary to students about when and where strategies can be applied and specify what the benefits are when strategies are put to good use. Incorporating instructional approaches that promote metacognitive thinking requires prompting students to think about what they could do rather than directly telling them what to do, i.e., which strategy to use. Put simply, effective teaching is not telling. This cannot be accomplished over the short term, however, and calls for explanation, modeling, and long-term student practice of the strategies in a variety of situations and with a variety of texts (Pressley). These guidelines were embedded in this study and served as metacognitive markers.

The Overlay

Text structure, text search, and text summary are critical requirements of reading expository text. These served as the overlay to the design of the study and to curriculum development. Without a firm understanding of what these are and what they entail,
children will be thwarted throughout their school careers. Therefore, these were firmly embedded within the content of the lessons.

*Text structure.* Selecting considerate rather than inconsiderate text was essential (Armbruster, 1984). Clear structure with ideas systematically arranged and coherently presented is prerequisite. Another aspect of considerate text is the type and degree of detail intended to catch wandering students’ eyes. As Garner (1992) noted, students can be caught by the seductive detail effect and lose sight of the forest for the trees. Poorer readers are particularly vulnerable, getting caught up in vivid details and losing sight of the more important, often abstract, topics.

To help the children understand the particular characteristics of informational text, I made overheads of the key features with brief explanations of each and introduced them to the class. These included headings/titles, sub-headings, illustrations/photographs, labeled diagrams, captions, boxed information, table of contents, index, and glossary. A hard copy of each overhead was subsequently posted in the classroom for easy reference and review. These features were not decontextualized and we used the textbook as demonstration. Subsequent lessons reviewed the terms, again within the context of what we would be reading that day.

Alerting the students to text coherence helped them to think not only about the content but also how it was presented. Global coherence refers to lists of items or ideas, comparison and contrast, temporal sequence, problem/solution (Armbruster, 1984), cause and effect, and description (Meyer et al., 1980; Meyer & Freedle, 1984). Local coherence requires connective tissue so the ideas fit together. Therefore students need to be aware of conjunctions, pronoun referents, and sequence markers. Inference is closely connected to
coherence and has its own set of challenges including meanings of unknown vocabulary, subtle connotations in text, elaborations of ideas, clarity of explanations and concepts, and whether connections are drawn explicitly or implicitly (Pressley, 2002).

**Text search.** We repeatedly addressed the importance of being alert to textual cues such as bolded or italicized text. We practiced identifying topic sentences and the order of sentences in a paragraph, with the most important ideas superordinate. Using the table of contents, the index, and the glossary was, interestingly, a novel experience for many. We introduced previewing and looking ahead to see what the chapter was about and what the photographs or illustrations revealed. We modeled checking to see whether there were end-of-chapter questions and, if so, the need to take the time to read them carefully.

I gave all of the children highlighters, which they had to return at the end of each social studies class, and we practiced repeatedly identifying and highlighting the main ideas. We encouraged writing marginalia, again modeling and using guided practice. We introduced sticky notes as a study skill and modeled how to use them to prepare for the final government unit test, which was an open book test, a new experience for the class. Janine commented retrospectively,

I think that the students are more able to read various formats of material and developed a better understanding of what tables, what diagrams, what captions, what table of contents, index, and glossary are and how these features of a text and the organization of a text can help them to understand what they are learning about. (Interview, June 27th)
Text summary. Although the children had had experience with summaries of short narrative stories, most of the class tended, when asked to provide an oral summary of a reading, to resort to “blow-by-blow” detail, rather than to summarize. Therefore, we reviewed “What is a summary?” and “Why do we summarize?” and “How is a summary different from a recount?” We directed them to summaries at the end of newspaper articles, textbook chapters, and other selected readings. We discussed criteria for summaries such as clarity and concision. We encouraged them to revisit their summary by reviewing what they had read to see if they had omitted any important information. We reiterated that summaries meant they needed to “put the pieces together, like a puzzle” so, metaphorically, “someone who couldn’t see the whole puzzle could imagine what it looked like.” And we practiced.

Parallel Lessons

An ongoing dilemma tied to pull-out instruction is what the children who are being withdrawn for intensive support will be missing. Will what they gain by virtue of targeted instruction compensate for what they will miss? Can these children afford to miss classroom lessons since, in all likelihood, they would already be lagging behind many of their classmates. In part, the rationale for differentiating instruction is to support those with the greatest needs through tiered lessons that are carefully sequenced and scaffolded, within the regular classroom. To do so requires flexibility and responsiveness and sets the teacher the task of adapting curriculum and making adjustments, rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum.

Classroom teaching is a blend of whole-class, group and individual instruction, Differentiated Instruction is a teaching theory based on the premise that
instructional approaches should vary and be adapted in relation to individual and diverse students in classrooms. (Hall, 2002, p. 2)

Given the extensive data on the compounding effects of reading difficulties as children enter the junior grades and encounter the multiple demands of expository text and an increasingly dense curriculum, the regular classroom may not serve the struggling readers well. Parallel lessons allow for intense instruction of the same or similar material. Although the children receiving this intervention may not experience the depth and richness of whole-class discussion in a small group, they can be left with a sense of self-efficacy because they are addressing comparable content and completing the same tasks.

Substantive detail on the content-rich lessons will emerge in Chapter 6. That chapter depicts the instructional design and presents a highly detailed and contextualized picture of the eight parallel lessons and, comparably, of the whole class lessons conducted simultaneously by the Grade 5 and Grade 4/5 teachers. Also presented are the broad principles of cognition and social cognition that applied across all of the three units, as described previously, and anchored instruction.

At the End

And so it is June. We are making headway on the oral reports that the children are doing on their Ancient Civilization Projects. Although Reed has limited the reports to the students showing the models they constructed or the Bristol board posters that they made (e.g., the Roman amphitheatre and the plasticene gladiators or the Chinese pagoda made of wooden popsicle sticks or the mounted pictures of the dress, jewelry, and other adornments of the women of Ancient Egypt) and then had the children explain why they chose that civilization and
what they did, the presentations are still taking a long time. In addition to the regularly scheduled two double periods of the week, we have also used English and computer periods this week. It is so very challenging trying to organize Janine’s students so they can participate and listen to the reports. As the year advances, time is in ever shorter supply.

(Journal entry, June 6th)

Reed and I talked about what we could do in the two weeks remaining of the year. Although time was short, we decided to go with the archaeology unit, the one that I had observed the first year I taught PROF 190, when I had candidates in Reed’s classroom over the course of the year. Initially he didn’t think that we could do it because he had always had a student teacher mark out the 1 metre x 1 metre grids early in the morning on the day of the dig. When I suggested that we have the kids do the measuring, he thought that might work. We would use the archaeology booklets that he had used in previous years, but I would see what I could come up with by way of additional curriculum. We would continue with read-alouds and rich discussion, pursuing text search strategies, identifying text features, and practicing summary writing and our usual modeling and scaffolding, pushing hard at strategic repertoire. I think that we were all caught up in the social studies momentum and just couldn’t let it slide. Janine was fine with this plan as she was trying to compress the remaining strands of the dense mathematics curriculum for her Grade 4s and Grade 5s and work that in wherever she could. So, by sending her 5s over to us, that would accommodate what she was attempting to complete. If we were to prepare for the dig, do some
reading beforehand, and allow time for the class to complete the booklets, then we would need additional time. Given Reed’s previous experience and my observations, the dig itself would take virtually the whole day.

(Journal entry, June 8th)

I have been doing informal data collection all the way along and have amassed a binder filled with fieldnotes, lesson plans, election campaign pamphlets and party bumph, and folders with curriculum resources, samples of kids’ work, and on and on. And then there are my journal and classroom observations and interactions. BUT I had wanted to complete end-of-year assessments, using all of the multiple measures except for the RAI, on each of the 25 kids whom I assessed at the outset of the study. Just cannot fit that in anywhere. When I took the kids out of the class for the post-assessment, I aimed for a representative sample, kids who spanned the range of abilities in this class. I think I managed that, but we have become so caught up in teaching and focused on the instruction, on the dig, on squeezing out time to do all the component bits of the booklet that it feels as if all of that is conspiring against me. It’s frustrating, but there is no recourse. McDonald’s (1992) evocative description comes to mind,

Teaching is not like building bridges between stable points, but like building flexible webs among constantly moving points—among, for example, the evanescent images of a poem and twenty-two different minds, including mine….Teaching, closely read, is messy: full of conflict, fragmentation, and ambivalence. These conditions of uncertainty present a
problem in a culture that tends to regard conflict as distasteful and that
prizes unity, predictability, rational decisiveness, certainty. (pp. 20-21)

Well, I got caught up in the messiness....

(Journal entry, June 14th)

Ultimately, the benefit of an intense and genuine curriculum-based intervention is that the students become surprised at themselves and at what they are able to do. As Janine said, “If you don’t provide that purpose and that connection, then they’re not going to be interested. You know, you have to engage your learners, and the way you do that is to make it meaningful to them” (Interview, June 27th). The four results chapters that follow explore how this unfolded. Chapter Four, The Collaborative Enterprise: Enactment in the Moment, introduces the reader to the collaboration experienced by the two classroom teachers and myself in the dual role of collaborator and instigator. Chapter Five, Vignettes of the Children: Introducing the Struggling Readers, allows the reader to meet the children who were in the small, pull-out group and received intense, targeted instruction in parallel lessons. Chapter Six, The Landscape of the Parallel Lessons for the Small Group takes the reader inside these lessons and explores the comprehension challenges confronting the children, the instructional interventions necessary to support their needs, and the resulting learning community that was created. The final results chapter, Chapter Seven, A Retrospective: Listening to the Children’s Voices and Authorizing Their Perspectives, allows the reader to hear the voices of the children in the small group as well as those of the other children in the class who were asked to assess the quality of their learning in social studies over the course of the year.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE COLLABORATIVE ENTERPRISE: ENACTMENT IN-THE-MOMENT

“It’s been a great year for the kids. They really learned.”

(Grade 5 classroom teacher, end-of-year interview)

Looking upon teaching as a craft calls for sensitivity to the practical aspects of teaching and to the nature of competence as “reflective practice” (Leinhardt, 1990; Schön, 1983). Growth in competence, from this perspective, can only be established within the cultural milieu of teaching itself through a (re)construction of knowledge in real-life situations (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986), where teachers learn from their own experience (by cumulative reflection) or from one another.

(Tillema & Imants, 1995, p. 135)

This chapter introduces the reader to the collaboration experienced by two classroom teachers and the researcher. As an ethnography, it is an “up close” representation of the social reality of school life in one Grade 5 classroom. Multiple perspectives are embedded and multiple lenses reflect and refract the richly textured experiences of the constituent players. Their voices are represented in the chapter. In addition to interview data collected from the two classroom teachers at the end of the school year, interview data is also included from Antony, a student teacher. Additional data sources for this chapter include fieldnotes, classroom observations, and entries from my reflective journal. Fieldnotes also contained annotations based on ongoing dialogue with the two teachers. As data were triangulated and analyzed, five themes emerged: shared purpose, negotiated pedagogy, emergent mutuality, trust, and accountability. Broadly, the first three themes inform the nature of the relationship that developed, while
trust and accountability were tensions that, without careful attention, could have thwarted the collaborative enterprise.

The chapter initially considers the challenges attached to exploring the tacit knowledge base of expert teachers, deconstructs the notion of “forms of representation,” using Eisner (1993) and its ties to school curriculum, and moves on to probe the five themes. The last part of the chapter charts the course of the collaborative relationship, highlighting critical points and identifying silences in collaboration (Johnston, 1997). Throughout, relevant literature is interwoven. To convey the dynamic nature of our collaborative enterprise, narrative will be integrated with thematic analysis.

**Tacit Knowledge**

Giving credence to the richly elaborated knowledge of expert teachers is not difficult; fully understanding the depth of that knowledge and how expertise is translated into practice is undeniably difficult. Further, there is an inherent paradox attached. Because the knowledge is tacit, working to uncover the concepts or propositions tied to practice necessarily becomes a problematic enterprise. Broadstroke descriptions of expertise can invoke the divergent knowledge base, point to the complexity of the teaching act, address the classroom dynamic, underscore awareness of the particular and diverse needs and abilities of learners, and charge that all of the above are fused. At first blush, observing experienced teachers may seem a likely opportunity to gain access to the more particular aspects of their craft. Yet, as Jackson (1968) recognized in his classic account of *Life in Classrooms*, observation, even careful observation, can be limited. “The teacher’s classroom behaviour does not always reveal what we want to know” (Jackson, p. 115).
Reed’s view of the importance of incidental learning remained part of his tacit knowledge base and was not clearly revealed to me until the interview that I conducted with him at the end of the year. Munby et al. (2001) draw the distinction between novices whose focus is limited to surface features or particular objects and experts whose store of knowledge “is organized around interpretative concepts or propositions that are tied to the teaching environment. Because the knowledge is tacit, it does not translate easily into direct instruction or formalization” (p. 889). They suggest that this difficulty with translation could contribute to understanding why teachers appear to struggle to articulate the components of their performance and knowledge base.

During that interview with Reed, he began talking about his view of the importance of incidental learning. He referred to the Grade 10 Literacy Test and the fact that it was not simply a matter of reading a passage and circling the best response. Instead,

there’s a lot of math, data management, when you look at a graph or a pie chart and you’ve got to extrapolate information from it. It’s that type of meaning and understanding that often will cause difficulty for students that aren’t fully literate in all aspects of life. (Interview, June 27th)

He continued, relating the notion of incidental learning to a class discussion we had had about the campaign budget and party expenditures. He referred to a reading that I had brought in for the class on the budget and commented, “That type of reading is excellent for the kids [who] relish in details and facts and data. They understand it. They look at polls; they look at bar graphs, and everything. They understand that stuff.” (I had found the information in response to a question from one of the children when we were talking
about campaign promotional materials. The student wondered where the money came from to print all of the campaign flyers, make the buttons, etc.)

Jackson (1968) saw classroom life as far too complex to be considered from any single perspective. “Accordingly,…we must not hesitate to use all the ways of knowing at our disposal. This means we must read, and look, and listen, and count things, and talk to people, and even muse introspectively over the memories of our childhood” (pp. vii-viii). Reed, Janine, and I appreciated the complexity of the classroom; however, this was tacitly understood. Throughout the unit on government, we regularly tracked the poll results. And we had a full discussion in class about the cost of campaigns, how they are funded, who decides where the monies will be spent, and how people can become card-carrying party members. So the incidental learning that the very able children would easily acquire also became accessible to the students who would otherwise, in all likelihood, miss out. Reed had not previously articulated his assessment of the importance of incidental learning, but it helped to explain the elaborated anecdotes and supplemental information that he included as he was teaching other subjects like math.

*Life in Classrooms* (Jackson, 1968) speaks powerfully to and promotes vigorously the value of “moving up close to the social realities of school life” (p. viii). “Moving up close” meant, for me, establishing a presence in the classroom, knowing the children, understanding the routines, and seizing opportunities, albeit often abbreviated by external constraints, to confer with the classroom teachers. Reed noted,

We had the opportunity to speak prior to our instruction with the students [about] the planning of the curriculum and our instruction. It was on an ongoing basis and
we were able to adjust lessons and bring new resources in. I think we collaborated very well. (Interview, June 27th)

Becoming aware of the context of the classroom meant that, concomitantly, I also became aware of the “richly elaborated knowledge about curriculum, classroom routines, and students that allows [expert teachers] to apply with dispatch what they know to particular cases” (Munby et al., 2001, p. 889). Reed’s notion of adjusting lessons neatly captures application with dispatch.

**Forms of Representation**

The nested design of the study requires the reader to maintain a dual focus to see the shifting gestalt of foreground and background both independently and interdependently throughout. Helpful in understanding this duality is Eisner’s (1993, April) presidential address at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting in which he recounts his own odyssey to understand the development of mind and the forms by which its contents are revealed and made public. He introduces the notion of “representation” as “the process of transforming the contents of consciousness into a public form so that they can be stabilized, inspected, edited, and shared with others” (Eisner, p. 6). To be attentive to forms of representation is to focus on “matters of meaning” and the impact of “modes of treatment.” Tying these to educational practice, Eisner argues that school curriculum defines the opportunities students have “to learn how to think within the media that schools provide….Different forms of thinking lead to different kinds of meaning…. that students can learn to secure and represent” (p. 6).
The lynchpin to working towards understanding the kinds of meaning that the students in this class secured and represented requires first understanding the forms of representation held by the participating classroom teachers. Retrospective interviews at the end of the school year allowed for the stabilizing—by virtue of the interview experience itself—and subsequent inspection, editing, and sharing that Eisner saw as inimical to representing the contents of consciousness.

The challenges of simply finding a time to schedule the interviews are remarkable. This was followed by the challenges of attempting to conduct the interviews. The numbers of unexpected events that interrupted us reflect what has been, perhaps, the greatest obstacle over the last months, insufficient time.... just as we were getting going, a parent unexpectedly appeared, requesting a few minutes, which turned into 15!! Interview aborted....to be continued.

(Fieldnotes, June 27th)

Ultimately, the interviews were conducted on the teachers’ own time. With Reed, it was over the course of two days at the end of the school day. With Janine, it was during lunch and after school. Despite ongoing dialogue with both of them over the past months, captured in fieldnotes and my reflective journal, I thought that the chance to be retrospective would be novel, given all of the time pressures that we regularly confronted, and valuable—certainly for me and hopefully for them, too.

(Fieldnotes, June 28th)
Emergent Themes

The five themes that emerged are not mutually exclusive but interconnected and interdependent. Each does, however, stand on its own. Most definitions of collaboration include shared decision making and responsibility, common goals, and accountability. These aspects will be discussed within the context of the emergent themes. The five themes—shared purpose, negotiated pedagogy, emergent mutuality, trust, and accountability—are briefly summarized and subsequently detailed. Shared purpose refers to our collective commitment “to give a purpose to their [the students’] learning” (Janine, Interview, June 27th). Negotiated pedagogy is two-fold: it is both the instructional approaches that we used and the decision-making process that we followed to arrive at those approaches. Emergent mutuality follows from the second theme of negotiated pedagogy and reveals requirements for a collaborative enterprise. These include the need for flexibility in role definition, shared and nuanced understandings, and the ability to read classroom life closely and well. Trust had to be built over time, emerging out of our shared experiences and actions, but it carried the burden of proof that rested on the quality of learning and student outcomes. Because accountability was performance based, it had to be demonstrable and sustainable. If these criteria were not met, then trust could be undermined.

Shared Purpose: “To Give a Purpose to Their Learning”

Each teacher held a similar driving belief: their principal responsibility demanded that they ensure that their students would understand the value of learning and the attendant possibilities afforded. “That’s my goal as a teacher…to help them to make the connections between life out there and what they’re doing in here because we have to
give a purpose for them learning” (Janine, June 27th). Similarly, Reed emphasized the need for students to be “fully literate in all aspects of life” and able “to extrapolate information” (Interview, June 27th) from multiple sources and to assemble information from multiple sources, recognizing that understanding is not subject specific. This anchored the propositional and procedural aspects of their practice, what Eisner (1993) described as matters of meaning and modes of treatment. As Eisner remarked, “In the end, our work lives its ultimate life in the lives that it enables others to lead” (p. 10).

Teaching as an intentional act. Teaching is, necessarily, an intentional act (Brookfield, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Palmer, 1998; Phillips, 1981). It is purposeful, planful, and responsive. It requires care, choreography, and design. And it must be crafted to the unique context of a particular classroom. From the marriage of intention and action, learning may—or may not—emerge. Palmer (1998) plays out this marriage:

I have no question that students who learn, not professors who perform, is what teaching is all about: students who learn are the finest fruit of teachers who teach. Nor do I doubt that students learn in diverse and wondrous ways, including ways that bypass the teacher in the classroom and ways that require neither a classroom nor a teacher! (p. 6)

Whether learning occurs or not is contingent on the power of the teacher and whether what Sarason (2002) describes as “contexts of productive learning” are created.

Teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional
act of creating those conditions, and good teaching requires that we understand
the inner sources of both the intent and the act. (Palmer, p. 6)

Reed expressed his hope that “If you do it right, when they’re older they’re going to have
an interest [in government and the election process], so they won’t be intimidated by it”
(June 27th). He continued,

If you don’t learn, if you’re not a newspaper reader in high school, and suddenly
you’re of age to vote, you’re 18 years of age and you’re seeing all these signs pop
up around your neighbourhood and you don’t understand the whole political
process, you’d feel ashamed or you’d feel naïve, and then [you would think] I
don’t even want to go in and cast the ballot because I’m not even sure what it’s all
about, right?

Had he not believed in the fundamental importance of the unit on government and what
the class was learning, we would not have continued for four months. This shared
purpose was represented in how caught up we became, collectively, in teaching and in
offering meaningful and authentic experiences, like Student Vote, for the students.

**Melding actions to beliefs.** Both Reed and Janine were keenly aware of their
purpose and melded their actions to their beliefs.

[what] I really strive for in my own teaching….I really want them to be able to
understand, not just to memorize. They need to be able to understand and be able
to explain that. My kids know that on every test there is that word—“explain,”
“explain,” “explain,” because it’s throughout the Grade 3 assessment, and Grade 6
assessment: explain your thinking, use evidence from the text to support your
answer, or use evidence from what you have learned to support your answer in assessments. And I think that carries throughout the grades. (Janine, June 27th)

As a summative activity and to consolidate the unit, Reed organized a field trip to Ottawa to tour the Parliament Buildings, visit the gallery in the House of Commons during Question Period while it was in session, see the Senate chamber, and meet the local MP, Peter Milliken. We had introduced the class to Peter Milliken through his campaign materials and the newspaper articles we had read about his re-election as Speaker of the House. As he remembered the trip, Reed commented that, apart from a few of the boys who had “a little hockey sort of mentality” and wanted to know how many people the sergeant-at-arms had thrown out, “all their other questions were right on.” When the children were asked questions by the tour guide or by Peter Milliken, such as, “‘Do you know how many seats there are in the House?’ ‘In the Senate?’ or ‘Who sits there?’, they would know all the answers to them.” Almost by way of affirmation, he noted, “So they do pick up a lot, even though you think they’re young and they’re not all that interested in it. They do pick up a lot” (June 28th).

For Reed and Janine, the teaching enterprise was laden with intentionality that reflected how interconnected beliefs and action were. Building on McDiarmid, Ball, and Anderson (1989), Feiman-Nemser and Remillard (1996) suggest that teachers do not singularly draw on knowledge one domain at a time; instead they weave together various types of knowledge as they think through what they will do, how they will do it, and then act accordingly. This weaving is seen in the components of the planning process when a teacher may consider what concepts she wants students to learn (content), how those topics fit with previous and future topics (curriculum), how appropriate the
activity is for her particular group of students (learners), what might be difficult for them (learning), how she will find out what students do and do not understand.

(Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, p. 74)

Teachers often do not have the opportunity to articulate how and why they plan; so this, too, becomes part of their tacit knowledge storehouse. As Reed thought about the summative unit test in the Government unit which was an open book test, a novel experience for the class, he said: “That just came about because I knew that they were going to really struggle [with all the content]. But I figured, okay, how do you motivate the ones that just go, “Oh, that’s beyond me, like there’s no way”” (June 28th). This succinct rationale reflects a deep knowledge of his students, their range of abilities, the breadth and depth of content that we had addressed, and the need to motivate the many reluctant learners in the class. In my journal, I also recorded the thinking that led to this form of assessment.

*Reed and I were playing out options for the summative government test. The kids’ duotangs are full with handouts of the readings, Student Vote materials, their Campaign Manager Project notes, articles about the Governor General and her recent visit to some schools in Winnipeg, information on the Houses of Parliament and the Supreme Court, the Rainbow Horizons Publishing Unit on “Government, Elections, and Other Such Stuff,” their research report on a Canadian Prime Minister, homework, and the list goes on. We replayed what we had done previously—the first test on the Federal Election had matching, short answer, and the challenge question which we had given them in advance, to work on as homework. Then the second test on Aspects of Government was primarily*
cloze format. We figured it was time for something else. Too much writing would
disadvantage some of the kids; so we discarded giving them a few questions in
advance to prepare. Reed asked, “What about ‘open book’? He said that he had
not done that with junior grades but had used it several years ago when he taught
intermediate. I thought that that would be an excellent option and we moved on
to planning for the test.

We are at the point that the planning feels seamless—very different from
January when I was feeling my way. I think that the planning feels seamless
because we are all, Janine too, on the same page. Even though the time issue is,
and will be, forever a constraint, we share a commitment to an enriched,
authentic social studies curriculum.

(Journal entry, April 27th)

Negotiated Pedagogy: “An Ongoing Tension”

When change is introduced, there is accompanying uncertainty as to
consequences and outcomes. Despite negotiation, there will be tension. When the
learning of an entire class is involved, the stakes are high.

I am reasonably convinced that these kids will go nowhere in gaining any kind of
a deep understanding if they are limited to reading the social studies text [on
government]. As well, beginning with the text is guaranteed to kibosh the whole
thing. This is not just about a hook—it is so much beyond that. They have to buy
in, from the outset; not simply be momentarily enticed or inveigled. Reed’s plan to
use the resource package that he has used previously in other years makes sense
as he had good success with the Campaign Manager Project and he told me that
his students bought into it. The class is so large, the range of abilities so great, the attention spans so variable, and the interest in the topic ranging from nonexistent to reasonably curious that the challenge is screamingly apparent. It seems fair to assume that the kids have negligible background information and prior knowledge about the election process. Will check this out.

(Journal entry, November 15th)

John-Steiner’s (2000) notion of collaborators constructing zones of proximal development for each other (p. 189) is apt as the dance of negotiation is enacted. My immediate challenge was maintaining what had worked well for Reed and his previous classes while introducing what would be novel, both in content and process, for this class. In some ways, the even bigger challenge is to convince Reed that we can come at this quite differently and in a way that hasn’t happened before. So the question becomes—How to move him out of his comfort zone without jeopardizing what he knows works? Of course, it is HIS class with HIS kids and he is the one responsible for them and accountable to their parents and to the school administration. I am feeling my way along here.

(Journal entry, November 15th)

Darling-Hammond (2006) uses Glaser’s (1990) notion of modes of teaching where modes are adjusted to individuals’ backgrounds, interests, talents, and past performance. Glaser contends that schools must shift from a selective mode, with minimal variation in the conditions of learning, to an adaptive mode, where the educational environment provides multiple opportunities for success. The focus of adaptive teaching is on “maximizing learning for each student. Such teaching, however,
requires deep and sophisticated knowledge about learning, learners, and content” (Darling-Hammond, p. 77). That deep and sophisticated knowledge arises from experience and extends beyond general propositional knowledge. The ability to meld knowledge and translate it into practice is a hallmark of experience and a marker of expertise (Kennedy, 1987).

van Manen and Li (2002) describe the pedagogical task of teaching as centred on the “experiential dimensions of everyday lives of students” (p. 216), encompassing the complexity of relational, personal, moral, and emotional aspects of teachers’ everyday interactions with those they teach. Thus pedagogy becomes the instrumental component of practice, making the practice of teaching possible in the first place. Characterizing this practice, van Manen and Li describe a “constant flux of actions and interactions, interventions and interruptions that reach forward and backward in time and that make teaching a pedagogical life” (p. 217). These phenomena make uncovering the multidimensional features of the classroom so fraught. To see teaching as a phenomenological pursuit is to see it as an embodied practice. It eschews dualisms and resides in questions like, “What is this situation or action like for the child?” “What is good and what is not good for this child?” (van Manen, 1997, p. 145). This notion of an embodied practice describes how we planned and proceeded, always working with dual lenses focused on the needs of the class collectively and of the students individually.

*There is an ongoing tension between helping those children who struggle while not disadvantaging (either boring or losing) those who get it. This morning, for example, Reed commented after the math lesson, “You can see when the kids who*
get it are getting turned off and there are still so many who don’t [get it].”

(Journal entry, November 15th)

The challenges presented by this class were significant and readily acknowledged by all of the staff in the school. Other teachers commiserated while breathing sighs of relief that they were not teaching them. As Reed described, “The class, as you know, is quite challenging with a dozen identified kids, the one gifted, but many that require additional support in reading and writing and learning.” He elaborated,

There are some kids identified as having attention difficulties, and there are a whole group of students that are academically advanced. The challenge for us was to try to stimulate those that are more independent while trying to bring along the lower group to maximize the average overall achievement of the class, and I think we did a fairly good job in doing that. (June 27th)

Negotiated pedagogy meant that new readings could be introduced in concert with the prepared unit that Reed had successfully used the last few years. We began to adopt a more flexible stance, incorporating more current materials on the election, including readings from newspapers, trade books on the Canadian election and government websites. As curriculum development was ongoing, we conferred before each lesson, remaining vigilant about incorporating big picture questions in language that was accessible to the whole class. Rich classroom discussion meant that independent seatwork for each lesson was neither appropriate nor necessary. Consequently, children with the highest needs and most significant comprehension challenges were not disadvantaged.

Assignments and tests were often developed in a variety of ways, contingent on time, but always with opportunities for feedback from one another. Sometimes I would
work up an assignment, like the Prime Minister Research Report, and Reed and Janine would edit. Janine and I developed the first test and then we asked for Reed’s response to it. Reed primarily wrote the second test, but I added the challenge question. For the third test, we discussed it together and Janine and I wrote it.

*Our “instructional packaging” means that higher level questioning is the norm and student questions are respected and encouraged. Optimally, this will be generative and the children will become more engaged. Of course, not all, too much to hope for, but many. Their questions do come fast and furiously! I am becoming more comfortable interjecting as Reed tends to direct the discussions and Janine enters in along the way. Still feel as if I have to proceed carefully, however. I think that if we can model for the kids what critical questions are about, most of them will be able to pick up on it.*

(Journal entry, January 15th)

Pugach and Johnson (2002) describe coordination of instructional responsibilities as a critical feature of collaborative teaching, sometimes described as team teaching, co-teaching or cooperative teaching. Using Cohen (1981), they describe two kinds of interdependence in teaching teams: *throughout interdependence* when teaching teams split instructional tasks and work with particular groups of students and *instructional interdependence* when teachers work with the same group of students in the same subject. This exacts more demands since it requires the collaborating teachers to be more directly involved in developing and coordinating instruction. As a more challenging form of interdependence, teachers are placed in a reciprocal relationship regarding instructional
stimulation and feedback, in contrast to other collaborative arrangements that focus on more routine aspects of teaching (Cohen, 1981). Janine noted:

You and I would talk after school and think about how things would plan out, or discuss and work up the assessments and that sort of thing together. I think that that was valuable for me; it was valuable for you. (June 27th)

Although she (and Reed and myself) would have liked more time for discussion and planning and she “would have appreciated Reed being included [in our impromptu meetings],” Janine emphasized the value in “the talking part” when she described how, at “every in-service that we go to we’re talking about how we don’t have time to share with other people what we’re doing and strategies we’re using and how we can improve” (June 27th). Cohen’s notion of a reciprocal relationship earmarking instructional interdependence centres negotiated pedagogy. The ongoing tension between supporting the struggling learners while holding the interest of the more able students was felt by each of us and pushed us to work harder to expand our collective instructional repertoires.

Emergent Mutuality: Boundary Crossing

Emergent mutuality reflected the reality that we were trying to cross traditional boundaries that divide school and university. For the partnership to develop, roles had to be defined with flexibility and elasticity and we had to build a set of shared and nuanced understandings about the classroom dynamic, which also involved a close reading of classroom life. Baumfield and Butterworth (2007) suggest that mutual interest, prompted by sufficient uncertainty or ambiguity to initiate an exchange of ideas and interpretations
between or among all parties, is critical. Mutual interest and shared intent can go some
distance to counter changes to established practice and procedure.

In our reflections on the nature of the school-university partnerships in which we
have been involved…, we have come to think of the collaboration as a process of
learning both from each other across the institutional boundaries but also together
within the context of the project which forms the space for our joint activity.
(Baumfield & Butterworth, p. 422)

*Role definition: Flexibility and elasticity.* Defining the space for our collaborative
enterprise required role definition but also required flexibility in how those roles were
enacted. Making the boundaries sufficiently elastic meant that we each had to be
confident about our respective contributions while remaining open to opportunities for
elaboration and expansion of our particular roles. Janine noted how she “enjoyed the
team teaching rapport where I think the three of us felt very comfortable interjecting
throughout the whole year and adding our own little tidbits onto it” (June 27th). Reed
commented on the instances when I would interject with corrections or additions to
information presented during the class.

You had a good knowledge from your readings and just your life experience to be
able to [correct me] when I would either say something that wasn’t fully
correct…and you just made note of [it] [or] you [were] very tactful, which was
good too. It wasn’t like, “No, Mr. T., I beg to differ on that point.” (June 28th)
He was referring to early January when we had moved into the government unit with
considerable momentum as the election was rapidly approaching. The overall number of
seats in the House of Commons had increased since the last federal election, which made
the information in the textbook and in the Student Notes from the Rainbow Horizons Publishing Unit incorrect. Before we began the day’s lesson on electoral ridings and constituencies, number of seats, and majority and minority governments, it had not occurred to me to specify the change in numbers when Reed and I previewed the lesson during recess. So, as the lesson progressed and Reed was using the old numbers, the dilemma was: do I say something and correct him in front of the class, say nothing at all, or say something after school?

Running through my head was the need to be sure that the kids had the correct information about the number of seats in the House of Commons played off against how Reed would react to being corrected in mid-stream. There were lots of what if’s…. What if he put on a good face but the next time it happened, he would not be amused? What if he put on a good face but subsequently did not encourage my participation during whole class instruction? What if he did not put on a good face? And what about the perception of the kids? I think that it is a powerful model to see adults/teachers engaging in dialogue where they do present different information and where they do challenge one another politely and respectfully. If I had not said anything at the time, at least one of the kids, for sure, would have picked up on the numbers and pointed out that last class we had used different numbers. So, for many reasons, I had no choice. That didn’t make it any easier or less daunting, however.

(Journal entry, January 10th)

Confirming the notion of emerging mutuality, Janine remarked, “I was very on edge at the beginning of the year thinking how am I going to do this with a split grade,
and what kinds of things can we do so I can involve or integrate my Language with the Social Studies to make it more meaningful.” Retrospectively, she tracked how she saw Reed as “very much the main teacher for a lot of it, having taught Grade 5 for several years now, he knows the content, and he knows the information.” She saw me as the person who “brought the resources, so you knew all about the resources,” and herself as “a follow-upper and an assistant kind of thing…I was more of a learner, but I could contribute reading strategies and assessment strategies.”

For the collaboration to unfold, roles had to be established and delineated. Although not explicitly identified initially by any of us, “each one of us had a responsibility; although we didn’t plan that out, that’s the way it ended up” (Janine, June 27th). It was clear that we shared a common purpose; however, mapping out the respective roles was an evolving process.

*So much is about feeling your way through. One cannot come in and bulldoze and steamroll…. It is so important that I asked Reed, “Was the language right?” for the handout/assignment for the holidays. It was a relief that it was; but had it not been, that would have been all right too. There are boundaries that have to be respected; working out where they are is the challenge.*

(*Journal entry, December 15*th*)

Janine’s summative assessment of the collaborative process described an integration of roles rather than differentiation, “the three of us really working together really brought good closure to each of the different [units], and we contributed everything; we all did. We contributed in marking, in creating assessments, in bringing things to the table. It was a very, very good working relationship.”
Shared and nuanced understandings. Loughran (2006) sees professional learning as not singularly tied to the acquisition of more knowledge, “rather professional learning is enhanced by one becoming more perceptive to the complexities, possibilities and nuances of teaching contexts” (p. 136). Reed and I would speak briefly, usually during afternoon recess, which preceded the double Social Studies period. To a naïve observer, our interactions could have appeared cursory, the dialogue rapid, and the presentation of photocopied sheets hurried. As the process of collaboration unfolded, these exchanges were rooted in a shorthand of shared, often implicit, understandings. The school day was so full, the daily schedule so tightly planned, recesses taken up with administrative details, yard duty, phone calls, troubleshooting student issues, and negotiating the unexpected that opportunities for conferencing between Reed and myself were rare. Therefore, for this collaborative effort to succeed, our dialogue had to be focused and concise. Five minutes was not unusual; ten minutes felt like a delightful indulgence; anything beyond that was rarely possible.

Reed noted how we enriched the curriculum with “the reading resources that we would select and the reference material that ran along with the curriculum.” He acknowledged how his professional learning was enhanced alongside the students’ learning: [This] “was a great assistance to the students and to myself as a teacher” (June 27th). Janine commented, “having you there and you had basically prepared the materials for us, so that was a huge bonus, because you were already knowledgeable about it [unit on government]” (June 27th). Reed described how he had previously relied on a single source,
I’ve taught the Social Studies now in Grade 5; but before this, I was teaching the intermediate grades. So when I first came here and looked at the new curriculum, there was just that one resource that I had. So I tried to build up some of my own assessments. What you provided additional to it just really helped the program out by giving a lot more diverse reading resources. (June 27th)

*Reading the classroom: Teacher as channeler.* Emergent mutuality was constructed out of the life of the classroom, out of the myriad daily events, the 100s—if not 1000s (Jackson, 1968)—of interactions, as well as out of the lessons themselves with their attendant understandings and related assigned tasks. Jackson describes the teacher as a channeler of the social traffic of the classroom, rapidly managing the flow of dialogue with its accompanying hand waving and call-outs, dealing like a supply sergeant with the allocation of material resources and space, dispensing rewards and punishments, and acting as official timekeeper. However, as Jackson writes, “our ultimate concern is with the student and the quality of his life in the classroom…[and with] what school is like for those who are at the receiving end of the teacher’s actions” (p. 13). Jackson, perhaps, understates the effects of the countless demands on the teacher. No matter how efficient the supply sergeant, as Janine remarked, “Just handing things out takes us so long. With a curriculum so full and a perfect class, it would not be possible to cover everything” (Fieldnotes, December 20th).

Teacher as channeler is predicated on learning to read the class. This required anticipating which children would disrupt the flow of discussion by an offhand remark, a pencil flying off a desk, a handout misplaced, a whispered conversation and so on. It required anticipating which children would participate actively, which children one could
call on to read aloud whether their hand was up or not, which children needed to be
gently cajoled to read, and which children would require reminders about listening
respectfully if a classmate faltered and stumbled while reading. Reed somewhat wistfully
compared his class with the class across the hall which included many of his former
students,

I see over there and I [remember] what they worked on last year and see what
they are doing this year and I wish my kids [now] were reading like that. It’s not
just the fluency or productiveness. They argue…they want to try to bully each
other….Anyway, it did get better. (June 28th)

Trust

Revisiting the student teacher’s observations helps to provide some direction in
understanding how a collaborative enterprise is a delicately negotiated undertaking.
Antony described the potential for “people getting defensive or butting heads” over any
number of issues, like instructional approaches, lesson content, assignments, assessments,
and so on. Certainly our shared purpose and shared understanding of the dynamics of the
class informed instructional decisions. Zeichner and Liston (1996) suggest that
conversations between and among practitioners can be demanding and rewarding when
long-held beliefs are open to questioning, when there is a willingness to examine the
consequences of actions, and when there is a total commitment to be fully engaged in the
teaching endeavour. They contend that trust must be a prominent feature of these
conversations for critical reflection to take place. That said, trust must be built over time
and emerge out of shared experiences and actions. Trust carries with it a burden of proof,
however. The burden of proof rested on the quality of learning and student outcomes.

Antony remarked,

> It shows on their tests for sure; their marks were fairly high. And just talking to them, they seem to be getting it. As you circulate the class, they seem to be doing well. Even some of the students who you’d think would have a lot harder time seemed to be doing okay. (March 21st)

Reed noted, “When you sat down and you actually talked to the kids about the Government, the kids that are fairly verbal could tell you a lot.” He expressed the hope that “if you do it right [then] when they’re older they’re going to have an interest, so they won’t be intimidated by it” (June 27th).

And Janine really felt “confident that our kids have a very good understanding of civilizations and of the government and of archaeology because of the hands-on involvement that they had and [because] the projects that they did were meaningful” (June 27th). To achieve that level of understanding demanded that I


> not lose sight of the “big picture” conceptual understanding that is so critical to understanding government and therefore incorporated “big questions” into the mix, while not losing sight of key pieces of information that help to anchor that big picture. And the big questions have to be sufficiently accessible to all the kids and sufficiently engaging so they are virtually stumbling over one another to answer them. I always seem to be holding my breath to see how the lesson plays out. How deeply can the kids engage? Where’s the ceiling for higher order questioning for this class with these kids and these teachers at this time? (Journal entry, January 17th)
Sawyer and Rimm-Kaufman (2007) point to the numerous demands on teachers and the current structure and climate of schools to explain why collaborative efforts are “typically rare and difficult to sustain” (p. 216). Without instantiating myself into the classroom, without becoming a part of the rhythm of the class, without making myself a familiar presence, there would be little opportunity to build trust, to appreciate fully the classroom context, and “to see things as they change rather than things as they are” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 485). Trust not only had to be established with the teachers but also with the students, if they were to be willing and full participants both during whole class lessons and activities and in small group experiences. Antony expressed pleasant surprise at the numbers of students who were reading the newspaper, or at least looking for articles about local candidates: the “kids would bring in all the articles and you could really see at least some of them, for sure, seemed really interested in what we were talking about in class” (March 31st).

The impromptu bulletin board [organized by political party with articles masking taped to the chalkboard] gives the kids an opportunity to display “their” article and make their contribution more public. It’s interesting to see how they will do a “show and tell” with their friends at recess or at lunch. Interesting, too, to overhear how they are starting to promote “their guy” and provide some reasons why “he’s the man!” if they are challenged by a classmate. Even the “lesser” candidates are being noticed and articles about them are appearing. The board is growing and we’re running out of room!

(Journal entry, January 17th)
**Accountability**

Collaboration is often heralded as a means to provide professional development opportunities locally, within the context of the school environment, which can then promote the satisfaction of teachers and increase teachers’ capacity (Martin-Kniep, 2004) and perhaps temper ongoing rising demands for accountability. Although a laudable goal, as Sawyer and Rimm-Kaufman (2007) suggest, the mechanisms by which collaboration can be increased remain obscure. Accountability played a large part in the development of trust, which was constructed over time. Accountability was performance based and, as such, had to be demonstrated and sustained. Had the students not appeared to be engaged and focused, had the curriculum materials not aligned with the widely varying needs and abilities of the students in this class, had the expectations attached to our respective roles not been fulfilled, then it is highly unlikely that the collaboration would have been or could have been sustained over time. Antony’s assessment of the instructional milieu is helpful in operationalizing the underlying pedagogy,

You have been presenting other activities and handouts and different things for the kids that do better…you’ve had overheads and you’ve had other things [read-alouds and discussions] and really incorporated all those for the different types of learners—the visual, the auditory, the ones that you had reading and the ones that you had discussing. There’s been a nice blend of all of those, I think, and that can be hard [to achieve], especially in Social Studies. In Math you can use manipulatives and in Science you can have experiments and hands-on, but it’s a little bit more tricky in Social Studies; but I think that was done really well.

(March 21st)
For accountability to be trustworthy, the assessments had to be meaningful, the discussions productive, the tasks purposeful and interesting, and the learning incremental and sustained.

Janine provided a window into further understanding the extent to which trust and accountability were interwoven. She described, by way of contrast, some of the challenges associated with having a student teacher in her classroom.

When you have a student teacher, you put a lot of trust in them; and if they [the children] don’t perform well as a result of their teaching, you don’t have time to reteach those concepts. And it’s a struggle when you do have a student teacher come in for that reason. In the past two years, I have not had a student teacher just because of the extra work that it takes on my part. (June 27th)

Although she wanted “to share my knowledge,” the demands on her time if candidates were less able proved too much, compounded by the lack of time to reteach content that was not well taught initially, “There’s no time to do that [play catch up].” She spoke of her frustration, fuelled by time constraints, when “nothing is done to the calibre or to the extent that you want it to be.” She compared this to asking one’s own children “to dust or to clean [and] it’s never done the way you want it to be. It gets done, but it’s not done to the same standard.”

Janine believed that unless one could fully trust a teacher candidate to be able to “carry on with the lesson and to get to the point where you want them [the students] to be and you want them to understand,” then it was not likely to be a worthwhile undertaking. Professionalism, for Janine, meant that “ultimately we are responsible; the teacher is responsible for the learning of the students.” Therefore her decision not to take on the
additional responsibility of a student teacher resulted from her primary commitment to
the children in her class. Consequently, her commitment to the profession itself was
secondary.

Some of these teacher candidates…[have] a lot to learn in a small amount of time.
They need time to link with the kids and to figure out what the kids need, how to
teach, different approaches, setting those higher order thinking questions, and it’s
a time factor. You just don’t have all the time. You don’t have the time to reteach
different things.

Janine contrasted our collaboration where “you knew the topic,” to teacher candidates
who

are learning a whole bunch of things at the same time, not only content but the
delivery of the content…plus they are pressured. They feel pressured when
they’re in front of the class because there are all these people that are listening to
them and I guess they feel as though they’re being judged and constantly so. (June
27th)

The teaching act is a public one and one is constantly being judged by one’s
audience. I was a participant, but I was also a part of that audience. Therefore the
collaborative process required that I validate what Reed and Janine were doing as much
as, if not more, than they validated what I was doing. I affirmed Janine’s contribution to
the calibre of the discussions:

Don’t underestimate what you did. You are masterful at leading discussion and
doing higher order questions. You truly are; you make it look so easy. There we
were at the end of the day, and you would just pull out all of these very high level
questions….The kids ended up often times in very provocative discussions, and then the next day they would ask me a question that related to the discussion.

(June 27th)

And her response, “Oh, I didn’t know that.” As she mulled over what we had done, she restated her commitment to “provide that purpose and that connection…to engage your learner, and the way you do that is to make it meaningful to them” (June 27th).

Although the themes have been described discretely, they were synchronous. Shared purpose provided a foundation on which negotiated pedagogy was constructed. Emergent mutuality was a cumulative process and reflected how roles were initially delineated but later converged, how shared and nuanced understandings developed, and how the teacher acted as channeler of the social traffic of the classroom, all the while reading the class. Trust and accountability represented the tensions that confounded the collaborative enterprise and had to be addressed if we were to move forward. The next section charts the course of the collaboration, highlighting critical points, followed by a consideration of the silences that accompanied this collaboration.

**Charting the Course of the Collaboration**

Geertz (1973, p. 24) suggests that it is the “delicacy of distinction” rather than the “sweep of abstraction” that enables practitioners to place events in an intelligible and personally meaningful frame. That frame is constructed out of the particular teaching act and the recursive process of reflection.

*I have been thinking about consonance and the many challenges involved in creating and establishing a collaborative partnership. The dynamics of context are so layered: the kids’ interactions with their teacher, with the classroom*
teacher from next door, with the student teacher, with me, and, of course, with one another. Then there are the interactions between Reed and me, between Janine and me, between Reed and Janine, and among all three of us. That is without factoring in anything by way of administration or parents or other teachers or staff in the school. It is much, much easier to come in, deliver a single intervention or even a set of interventions, and leave, all rather decontextualized. Some of the problematics impacting consonance include: follow-up since lessons are sequential, threading and integrating prior knowledge and what has been taught previously, and the whole notion of a team approach. The kids have to perceive us working together in concert. This is particularly important for me; otherwise I am simply not credible in their eyes. Rather a convoluted path.

(Journal entry, February 20th)

If events are going to be framed intelligibly and meaningfully, then the “delicacy of distinction” has to be set against a backdrop of problem setting, rather than problem solving. Schön (1983) draws the distinction, suggesting that an emphasis on problem solving leads to ignoring problem setting, which is

the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, the means which may be chosen. In real-world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as givens. They must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain.

(p. 40)
Gately and Gately (2001) present a model of the developmental stages of coteaching, based on their work with coteachers over the course of a decade. They propose a Beginning Stage, a Compromising Stage, and a Collaborating Stage. In the Beginning Stage, teachers’ communication is careful and guarded, as they work on developing a sense of boundaries and establishing a professional working relationship. The Compromising Stage is characterized by give and take communication with compromises contributing to building trust. The Collaborating Stage is marked by open communication and interaction with complementary interactions and a high degree of comfort that is felt by teachers and students. Limitations of stage theory are well established; however, Gately and Gately’s framework is helpful in putting a shape to the development of our partnership. A cautionary note is needed. Although the course of the collaboration is presented as a developmental sequence, each subsequent stage did not subsume the preceding stage. (See Chin, Steiner Bell, Munby, & Hutchinson, 2004, for an analysis of the sequential and integrative aspects of a hierarchical model applied to cooperative education and workplace learning.) While the nature of the collaborative relationship became more complex over time, no stage was completely left behind. During the Ancient Civilizations Unit, for example, I took my cues from Reed about the level of student support needed for the independent projects. Although I was comfortable in that role, comparatively the unit was less collaborative than the Canadian Government Unit had been.

The beginning stage. The Beginning Stage was bounded by naturalistic observations of the classroom teacher and the students and preparing for the schedule that
we would follow. The plan was that I would be at the school, initially full days twice a week for observations and subsequently twice a week from morning recess through to the end of the day. As the consent forms were returned, this stage also involved conducting baseline assessments. At this point, “I felt like an observer in the classroom, but not of the classroom.” (Fieldnotes, November 17th).

I am so aware of my sense of being on the sidelines and needing to tread slowly, and feeling as if I am under the microscope. Yet, to be fair, Reed probably feels in some ways as if he is under the microscope given all the observations I am making and my constant note-taking. There is a subtext here around issues of authority and the very nature of a school/university partnership. There is no script.

(Journal entry, November 22nd)

Reed recalled how, at first, I was rather tentative: “Do you remember how you didn’t jump in right away [during the lessons]; you held back, were more conservative. I remember telling you, “Feel free to just jump in, but it didn’t happen right away” (Fieldnotes, February 20th). The subsequent entry in my fieldnotes is brief, “I remember well. This ‘dance’ is anything but straightforward” (February 20th).

Once I did begin to “jump in” and interject and gently correct, the dynamic began to change and the transition to the second stage, Compromising, was precipitated. As the baseline assessments progressed, I began giving Reed a brief summary of what I had learned about the student. These assessments were much more detailed than the board mandated “PM Benchmarks.”
Reed and I seemed to slide into a pattern after I would return to the class with the student whom I had assessed. He would ask, “So, how did it go?” And I would proceed and give him a “down and dirty” synopsis, indicating not only what I had learned but including some possible strategies to support the needs of that particular child, be it word identification, word attack, etc. Often, he would say, “Oh, I didn’t know that” or “That’s helpful. Thanks.” While acknowledging the limitations of the PMs [PM Benchmark], he noted that they did not take very long to complete and, with limited time and a very large class, “It can be a struggle to get them done.”

(Journal entry, January 24th)

Additional contributing factors that moved the partnership along were the quality of the curriculum resources I provided and the observable, enthusiastic responses of the class as they engaged with them. These included the Student Vote materials and readying the class for voting day.

Antony, the student teacher, provided perhaps the most objective descriptions since he was not invested in the instruction to the extent that Reed, Janine, and I were. He circulated throughout the class during whole class instruction and provided support during any accompanying independent seatwork. Antony had not previously experienced a class as large or as complex as this one. His was the only voice that explicitly identified potential pitfalls:

It could be a disaster with that many people and ideas and “I want to teach this,” and “I want to do it this way;”…and people getting defensive or butting heads over things,…but everyone’s so free with their ideas and no one feels threatened
when someone else jumps in and says this or that. I don’t feel like I’ve done something wrong or anything like that. It’s just another angle, another aspect…with the different perspectives from the different teachers. (March 21st)

Antony singled out the model of an open classroom where “kids feel free to discuss and not feel like they’re going to say something wrong or just ask questions or give ideas where they see fit.” He included himself, as well as the students, as “learning way more from talking.” In contrast, “too many teachers that I’ve seen or that I’ve been with are too much handouts and lecturing or things like that.”

> It was not until I replayed the interview with Antony that I realized the significance, for a student teacher, of being able to see more than one teacher working with the same class. As a teacher, one necessarily becomes embedded in one’s own class and works with the class that one has. Sounds like stating the obvious but there’s another layer here. How much could be gained by having student teachers, if there were any rotary options, following that part of the class into another teacher’s classroom and even teaching a lesson there, rather than remaining in their associate teacher’s classroom and teaching the rest of the class in what is familiar space. This assumes that the class was a split grade and two split (same split) classes were joined to make a single grade, e.g. for science or math or social studies.

> Taken to the in-service level, how much could be gained by having teachers follow their students into another class and simply observe and, perhaps, subsequently teach a lesson, with their colleague observing. If one needed some nomenclature, perhaps it could be seen as a much less formal, if not minimal,
version of lesson study. Not a novel idea by any means, fraught with logistical issues, but with enormous potential for seeing through a different lens, refocusing, and reframing. There is enormous comfort in the known of one’s own classroom that goes some distance to counter all of the “egg crate” metaphors about the isolation of the classroom.

(Journal entry, March 22nd)

The compromising stage. This stage was marked by a growing sense of ease in the classroom as I moved into an “emic” role where I adopted an insider’s view of classroom dynamics, while still maintaining the “etic” perspective as researcher (see Patton, 2002, for further explication of emic and etic perspectives). Reed would provide snippets of what had gone on earlier in the day, before I arrived. The children would chat about the time intervening from the last Social Studies day. Janine would give me updates on her seven Grade 5s and what she was doing in Language with her Grade 4s and 5s. This stage was further marked by an increasing reliance on me to provide all of the curriculum materials and develop all of the assignments, with the exception of the Campaign Manager Project that had been so successful for Reed and his students in previous years.

Compromise manifested by recognizing that each of us had to relinquish control, to some degree. Reed was certainly relinquishing control over the curriculum, over the way he had structured, planned, and delivered his lessons. Although I wanted more control over when I would withdraw the children for the small group intensive support, I had to respect the momentum that we were building and the need to sustain that through whole group instruction leading up to “election day” for the class and electronic submission of the vote results to the Student Vote Project.
Although all of us would have found more joint planning time worthwhile, the realities of never-ending time constraints and the unexpected had to be accepted. As Gately and Gately (2001) remark, “Without planning time, some coteachers move at a very slow pace in the development of their relationship [and] are not able to discuss the curriculum goals and modifications that may be needed by students” (p. 43). In our experience, we addressed curriculum goals and modifications indirectly through the types of curriculum materials that we used, the instructional approaches that we adopted, and the strategies that we taught. This pragmatic approach meant that we were continually enacting collaboration. The “authority of the classroom” required that I always checked-in prior to a lesson—call it positioning, call it respect, or call it expediency. I recognized that it was essential to touch base, do a quick overview, address any logistical challenges, and tweak as needed or as advised. Similarly, after a parallel lesson, I would quickly summarize how the children responded and how far we traveled towards meeting the expectations for the lesson. The willingness to be adaptive and responsive is indeed a prerequisite if compromise is to be achieved.

Compromise also meant that I had to demonstrate my credibility through the baseline assessments that I did, the curriculum resources that I provided, the lesson plans that I developed, as well as contextually through our interactions and the coteaching that we did. In addition, the performance outcomes that resulted were crucial. These were demonstrated by the children’s display of interest and engagement as the unit(s) proceeded, the calibre of the whole class discussions, and their very satisfactory results on assignments and tests. Credibility is crucial to the collaborative process and not generally presented explicitly in the literature on collaboration, professional
development, and school-university partnerships. Credibility became the fillip to advance to the next stage.

*The collaborating stage.* van Manen and Li (2002) address the need for teachers to be attuned to the experiential dimensions of the everyday lives of students, the “complex and subtle phenomenology of temporality and lived space” (p. 216). They contend that pedagogical competence is tied into pathic knowledge which depends on the “teacher’s personal presence, relational perceptiveness, tact for knowing what to say and do in contingent situations, thoughtful routines and practices, and other aspects of knowledge that are in part pre-reflective, pre-theoretic, pre-linguistic” (p. 217).

Continuing, they suggest that the pathic dimensions of the epistemology of teacher practice are “the corporeal, relational, temporal, situational, and actional kinds of knowledge that cannot always be translated back or captured in conceptualizations and theoretical representations” (p. 220).

Reed’s description of the whole class discussions captured how the subject matter came alive:

We had some great class discussions because we could springboard between the adults and the children and [many of] the kids could speak quite well verbally. You could really bring some neat subject material to life….A lot of the kids were fairly good at oral comprehension [although] reading was more of a challenge for them. Just listening to people talk about certain subjects and [hearing] teachers responding to opinions and questions, they were able to gain from that too….The discussions that we had, I think that was an excellent overall outcome too. (June 28th)
This notion of “springboarding” neatly represents the pathic understandings that contributed to this third stage.

The Collaborating Stage meant that we would readily ask one another, “What do you think?” as we reviewed a lesson, altered a homework assignment, assessed a student’s oral report, or planned an upcoming unit. When we realized that the Ancient Civilizations Unit would be completed, leaving us with almost two weeks (including the last week of school which had four days), we considered our options. There was no question of not undertaking another unit; the question was, “What should that be?” We settled on archaeology as the summative unit.

What was significant was that it did not matter whose idea it was to have the kids do the set-up and construct the grid, catalogue the artefacts, bury them, and map the coordinates. What was truly salient was that the planning was, in fact, a joint undertaking.

(Journal entry, June 15th)

Thinking about the Archaeology Unit, Reed noted,

The archaeology dig was a neat thing for us to have the kids actually set it up the way they did. And that was a learning experience, too, actually going out and actually setting it up, which was previously all set up by student teachers of mine. So that was good. (June 28th)

The Collaborating Stage was built on mutual respect and a mutual commitment to maximize every instructional minute, be it in whole class or small group format. Intense instruction in content-rich lessons created a momentum that was generative and self-
propelling. The situated, context-specific, and emergent nature of pathic understanding helped to anchor the intricacies, events, and minutiae of daily classroom life.

*Had I not spent that time observing, had I not planted myself firmly in the classroom for most of the day on the days when the class had Social Studies, had I not done the baseline reading assessments on the kids, it is far less likely that our collaboration could have developed as it did and far less likely that we could have so completely embraced an enriched social studies curriculum. I am reminded of Rafe Esquith’s (2003) book, *There Are No Shortcuts*, and his vivid portrayal of his unbelievably high achieving fifth graders in an inner city school in Los Angeles. There are no shortcuts!*

*(Journal entry, April 27th)*

There was resounding agreement that the collaborative experience was successful:

- “I’m very satisfied and very, very thrilled that we have been able to establish that working relationship” (Janine, June 27th);
- “I really notice how well the teachers collaborate with one another and just agree and are so open” (Antony, March 21st);
- “We really collaborated well, and I thought it was really enriching for the students to have your input into the program. It’s been a great year for the kids. They really learned” (Reed, June 27th).

But there were unspoken reflections and concerns that did not surface until the end-of-year interviews with Reed and Janine, when questions were raised that probed the collaborative experience.
“Silences in Collaboration”

Johnston (1997) presented the issue of “the silences in collaboration” (p. 119). She was referring to basic teaching beliefs and cautioned that there was a risk attached to reflecting on these beliefs. The logistical challenges involved in shifting the seven Grade 5s from Janine’s class over to Reed’s, settling them down, refocusing the entire class and, at the end of the double period, concluding the lesson and returning them to their own classroom were significant. Janine mentioned that the collaboration “doesn’t come without its problems, in terms of … shuffling the kids over there [to Reed’s classroom]” and then “the number of kids in a small classroom and materials that we don’t have that much of….“ (June 27th). Reed found the logistics even more troubling,

It’s just the kids, the amount of extra; it just added more to it….Some of the individual students have attention difficulties when they’re in a large class setting. It’s a challenge sometimes just to get them all focussed on either a reading lesson or a discussion on a certain topic.” (June 28th)

Because Reed’s classroom was not large, five of the seven of Janine’s Grade 5s—all boys—tended to sit at a large round table in a far corner, the only available space to accommodate them. On an ongoing basis, they were challenging to focus and readily distracted one another. The two girls would generally sit at whatever desk was free during that period.

Moving out of one’s comfort zone by changing one’s teaching practices can be disconcerting, if not daunting. Change requires careful, incremental introduction. If changes are demonstrably successful, then further change can follow. Reed reviewed the different strategies we taught to improve retention of material and focus, the higher level
of reading achieved because of the newspaper articles, the highlighting of main ideas and summarizing that we practiced so the students became attuned to text features, and how they understood how to structure a research project. He reflected how the students learned, through the projects that we had them complete, “not only the material but how to organize their time,…how to organize a table of contents and a bibliography and take a topic and break it into sub-topics” (June 28th).

Janine pointed out how she had incorporated some of the approaches that I had initiated with the Grade 5s into her own Grade 4/5 classroom, as the winter semester progressed. These included highlighting, identifying text structures, practicing summarizing strategies, using post-it notes to prepare for a test, and presenting information in varied formats, essentially the process of extracting information. She elaborated, “the information gathering…through looking at diagrams, timelines, different presentations of material. I think they’re going to be really, really well informed for next year when it comes to bigger assignments in terms of gathering information. She addressed the modeling that we did during

our shared reading experiences [which] were extremely effective. Students were given the opportunity to read out loud and fill in the gaps. It really helped, I think, the kids with tracking. Also…ensuring that when you’re reading you need to read slowly and [modeling] the think alouds that were involved [with] the teacher explicitly saying, “I’m thinking about this, why do you think that…encouraging discussion through what you’re reading.” (June 27th)

Nor was I exempt from the silences in collaboration. Initially begrudging the time involved, I became acutely aware of the value of the oral presentations that the students
were required to do for the Canadian Government and Ancient Civilizations Units. Although these took time away from my plan for the parallel lessons, my expectations had to be tempered. My challenges often involved boundary issues—taking care to introduce resources judiciously, to find the zone of proximal development for students and, in some ways, for the teachers. All the while, remaining respectful of successful classroom practices and the ongoing classroom dynamic was critical. As well as being a coteacher and researcher, I was a guest in the class.

Silences in collaboration shielded these types of reflective comments and summary assessments until the end-of-year interviews when questions were directly asked that probed the collaborative experience. Silences in collaboration also illustrated how, although more dialogue would have been desirable, it was not the operative criterion to enact collaboration. John-Steiner (2000) suggests that mutual appropriation is a hallmark of collaborative work, where “we learn from each other by teaching what we know” (p. 3). However, not only do we teach what we know, we learn to teach in other ways by being responsive to one another and to the intensity, immediacy, and lived experiences that are shared. Negotiation was continually being enacted through our respective and responsive teaching moves, not through the planning process per se. In Schön’s (1983) words, “The know-how is in the action” (p. 50).

**Summary of the Collaborative Enterprise**

The collaborative enterprise that Reed, Janine, and I experienced can be described as shared purpose, negotiated pedagogy, and mutuality, which required trust and accountability. The collaborative relationship was charted using Gately and Gately’s (2001) Developmental Stages of Coteaching, infused with the “delicacy of distinction”
(Geertz, 1973, p. 24). Although we were in agreement that the collaboration was a highly successful partnership, there were silences in collaboration. The last part of this chapter addressed those silences that prevented some concerns and reflective comments from being aired. The notion of collaboration as engaging in mutual appropriation was introduced as a stepping stone to extend understanding of how our collaboration was enacted, principally through our teaching moves rather than through our planning process. Ultimately the measure of a collaborative enterprise must be the quality of student learning. Against the backdrop of our collaborative undertaking, the stage is now set to introduce the children who were the participants in the small group instructional intervention.
CHAPTER FIVE

VIGNETTES OF THE CHILDREN:

INTRODUCING THE STRUGGLING READERS

Comprehension difficulties are complex and may relate to inadequate vocabulary
or conceptual knowledge, weak reasoning or inferential skills, or an inability to
apply active comprehension strategies....Of course, the older and further behind
the student, the more ground he or she will have to cover, impacting the intensity
and duration of necessary intervention.

(Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, & Scammacca, 2008, p. 63)

Introduction

This chapter introduces each of the six children who received intensive, targeted
instruction in a small-group setting. They were withdrawn from their regular classroom at
the outset of the Social Studies double period and returned to the classroom during the
last 5-10 minutes of the class, so they would not miss the ending of the lesson,
concluding comments, directions about placing readings and other materials in the Social
Studies duotang and assigned homework. In each of the eight small-group sessions, the
instruction that the children received paralleled the whole class instruction. The lesson
plans were identical. A more typical model sees students who are withdrawn for support
in language or mathematics missing the regular classroom lesson and thereby falling
further behind in that subject.

Each child’s in-class behaviour and performance are contextualized and baseline
assessment results are provided. Five of the six children in the group had Individual
Education Plans (IEPs), and recommendations from those plans are included. Although
particular aspects of their reading deficits differed, all of them struggled with comprehension and comprehension-monitoring. Therefore, the chapter concludes by summarizing the major consistencies across the group.

The Children

The children were selected by purposeful sampling. All experienced reading difficulties, which were evident in classroom teacher assessment, their written work and oral presentations, homework assignments and projects, the naturalistic observations that I conducted over five weeks in the fall, regular classroom interactions, conferencing between the teacher and myself, and baseline assessments. Criteria for the study and the small group intervention did not require formal identification as exceptional learners. As mentioned, five of the six children in the group had Individual Education Plans. I would now like to introduce you to Katie, Cody, Annie, Charlie, Krysta, and Billy.

Katie

Katie’s impish grin and dimple are immediately engaging. When she grins, her blue eyes dance. She has dirty-blond, shoulder-length hair, is of medium height and somewhat stocky build which she puts to good advantage in sports. She is a strong runner, competes in school track and field events and enjoys basketball, volleyball, and soccer, all sports where she does very well. In gym, she participates fully and is often one of the first to be selected for teams.

As successful as Katie is athletically, academically she consistently experiences little, if any, success. She has enormous difficulty remaining focused, loses her place during whole class reading, has challenges following instructions because she does not attend to them, is distracted by her peers, often drops objects off of her desk as diversion
so she can get up to retrieve them. Although she will put her hand up to answer questions, once called on she rarely has the answer and, more often than not, has forgotten the question. During in-class lessons, she squirms, fidgets, explores the subterranean contents of her desk, rests her arm on her desk and lays her head down, only to lift it up seconds later. In short, she generally will go to great lengths to do anything but pay attention to the lesson-at-hand. She is rarely able to sit through an entire in-class lesson without at least one trip to the washroom, more if she can manage to evade the teacher’s watchful eye. In class, she is seated at a desk in the front row, immediately opposite the chalkboard. Although the teacher’s intent is laudable, that location does little to maintain her focus. Instead, she swivels repeatedly, usually spending more time looking towards the back of the classroom than the front.

In small groups, such as literature circles, her inattention and impulsivity are consistent with her behaviour in the classroom. She makes repeated trips to the washroom, will be voluble asking to participate but will have lost her place once it is her turn to read, and requires constant reminders about tracking while others in the group are reading aloud. On one occasion, when her group was in the hallway outside of their classroom, Katie was sitting on a milk crate, half-heartedly listening to a classmate read. She suddenly jumped up, quickly inverted the milk crate, promptly sat down in it, and became stuck! Although the event was novel, the impetuous behaviour was not atypical. Needless to say, whatever momentum the five members of the literature circle had achieved was completely derailed.

Katie’s academic performance is poor because she rarely completes an assignment, sometimes does not hand work in, and often confuses instructions, given her
inattentiveness. Her work habits are poor, organization non-existent (her agenda keeps disappearing), and her duotangs are always missing pages of handouts and worksheets.

Katie shows poor comprehension while reading, frequent guessing of unfamiliar words, relying on sounding out of initial letters and ignoring the subsequent letters, and poor sight word recognition. Her IEP (informal)\(^1\) describes Katie as reading below grade level in spite of extensive remediation since Grade 3 (Early Literacy Instructor and Student Support Teacher remedial groups).

Katie’s Reading Attitude Inventory was informative. She indicated that she liked chapter books but had no favourite book. Although she said that she liked to read adventure stories, she could not name any specific story. She indicated that she liked informational books about rocks and minerals but really liked the pictures. If someone was having difficulty reading, she said that she would help them by saying the word aloud, as long as she knew it. She thought that her teacher would sound a word out to help someone who was having difficulty. In response to a question asking what she would like to do better as a reader, she answered: “I don’t think so. I was going to make my own book, but I don’t want to anymore.” When asked if she thought that she was a good reader, she responded, “No, because I don’t like hard words.” The picture that emerged was of a disaffected reader whose principal strategies were sounding out words and reading ahead “until the sentence stops and see what it means.” When asked what

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\(^1\) Ontario has both formal and informal Individual Education Plans, designed to support exceptional learners’ particular needs while capitalizing on their individual strengths. In both formal and informal, accommodations or modifications are detailed as are instructional approaches to assist the student in meeting curriculum expectations. Increasingly, informal IEPs are being developed, following recommendations from *The Special Education Transformation Report* (Bennett & Wynne, 2006) and *Education for All* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). Formal IEPs are developed as a result of identification and placement decisions made by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). Informal IEPs do not attach a label, based on the categories of exceptionalities that are specified in the Education Act of Ontario. Informal IEPs can be developed with far less delay and few bureaucratic procedures (see Hutchinson, 2010). Both, however, are considered binding documents.
else she could do when encountering an unfamiliar word, she said, “Play with my
friends.” Inattention and lack of focus appeared to be significant challenges, compounded
by seeming disinterest in improving as a reader.

On the baseline assessment, Katie’s performance was highest on the Informal
Phonics Survey (93%). On the Z-test component of the Informal Phonics Survey, she also
performed well (86%). The Z-test consisted of a list of one syllable nonsense words (a list
of rimes with the same onset, “Z”). However, word identification and word attack were
problematic. (Using the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised, word identification
is a read-aloud of a set of 106 real words, including easier one syllable words and more
difficult polysyllabic words, while word attack is a read-aloud of 45 nonsense words,
ranging from one syllable to polysyllabic.) The Instructional Level Profile (Woodcock
Reading Mastery Tests-Revised) put Katie at the Grade 3 equivalent for word
identification and Grade 2.5 for word attack. The comprehension passage that she read
was at a Grade 3 level, with fluency at a level 2 (out of 4) on the Reading Fluency Scale
Rubric. Her rate was slow and choppy with minimal expression. Overall, her recall on
the passage was satisfactory and she was able to answer the question that required
inferential comprehension appropriately, using full sentences.

Cody

Cody is tall, with a shock of brown hair that falls down to his eyes, blue eyes, and
a ready smile. Midway through the school year, he had braces and seemed quite self-
conscious initially, as his smile was less forthcoming. He is athletic and excels in all team
sports, as well as track and field. He is one of the first to be chosen for teams. He eagerly
looks forward to gym and always participates fully.
The same level of engagement is not apparent in the classroom, however. He often needs to be prompted to begin a task or to continue working. He is frequently engaged in conversation with his friends and always ready and willing to respond to them. He uses these friendships to divert his attention from the task-at-hand. Although eager to succeed and excel in sports, Cody’s aim in the classroom is to get through the work. “Getting through” translates into speed. Thoroughness and accuracy are not part of the mix. Without clear direction and specific step-by-step instruction, he is easily deflected. His IEP (informal) identifies his need for directions about the pace of an activity; for example “question-by-question prompting to help focus the student’s attention.”

His IEP also describes his needs in the area of literacy. Although Cody received remedial assistance one-on-one throughout the primary grades, he continues to read below grade level. His IEP recommends, “In writing, he needs encouragement to expand his answers and to explain his thinking fully.” Brevity has become Cody’s answer to his challenges with comprehension. He has also interpreted “reading” as directly equated with speed, rather than comprehension. He has learned to decode but does not read for meaning. Fluency has supplanted comprehension. Consequently, his written work suffers as does his commitment.

Although his IEP suggests additional time for any independent assessment task, to a maximum of twice the given time, this does not effectively address his fundamental challenges of focus and comprehension. These challenges compound one another: without focus and attentiveness, comprehension is compromised; without comprehension, frustration mounts leading to greater distractibility.
Cody’s Reading Attitude Inventory revealed that he, like Katie, said that he liked to read chapter books but had no favourites. He said that he liked adventure stories but could name none. As for whether there were any kinds of informational books that he liked to read, his answer was simply, “No.” When asked how many minutes a day he read for pleasure, he was forthcoming, “I barely read, so…” and trailed off. Interestingly he could identify some strategies that he used when he came to a word that he did not understand. These included: looking at the pictures, sounding it out, breaking it into parts, and he advised keep on going and “you can figure it out, and that’s it.” He reiterated looking at the pictures, breaking the word up, and pronouncing it as ways to help someone who was having difficulty reading. He thought that his teacher would help and might place the student with a student teacher. There was nothing that he wanted to improve as a reader. When asked whether he thought that he was a good reader, he replied: “Not that good, ‘cuz I don’t read fast enough and I don’t know enough words.” What was telling was his equation of speed with skill and his acknowledgment that he did not know enough words.

Cody did very well on the Informal Phonics Survey (97%) and on the Z-test (97%). On the Instructional Level Profile, Cody’s word identification was at grade level and his word attack was also at a grade level. However comprehension was problematic. On a Grade 5 comprehension passage, he struggled to answer the comprehension questions, had to repeatedly cue the text to find the answers to questions requiring recall, but was unable to do so efficiently. When reading aloud, he read in three-word phrase groups, making his reading choppy and expressionless. On the Reading Fluency Scale
Rubric, he was at a level 3. Clearly, he read for speed, not comprehension, was hardly enamoured with reading, and simply wanted to be finished as quickly as possible.

Annie

Annie is tall and slight, with long dark hair that is often in a ponytail. She has big blue eyes and a gentle smile that is not readily forthcoming. However, once it does appear, her face lights up. She is very quiet, shy with her peers, and rarely speaks in class during whole-class lessons. Annie particularly enjoys art and devotes time and considerable effort to drawing and illustrating assignments. She spends far less time on the written components, which are a struggle for her. Because art is a subject where she can achieve some success and complete the requisite task, she tends to allocate too much time to art and therefore ends up lagging well behind her classmates in finishing her work.

Annie’s IEP addresses her distractibility and need for consistent adult support including rereading of questions, scribing on occasion, one-to-one help with phonemic awareness activities, and more time to complete assignments. Annie is identified as having attention deficit disorder but was not on any medication as her parents were pursuing other alternatives. Annie’s reading challenges included phonological processing, fluency, sight word vocabulary, and comprehension. She read slowly and painstakingly and also wrote slowly and painstakingly. Her IEP recommended the use of prompts about the pace of the task, prompts to draw her attention to the task, a quiet workplace, working within an individual or small-group setting, and preferential seating, as well as additional time on independent assessment tasks. A scribe was also recommended for any test-taking.
The IEP recommendations for Annie were very difficult to implement in a large, complex class with a very energetic complement of children. The physical space was cramped and not readily conducive to small-group configurations. There were many children with high needs who also required similar prompts and sequenced instruction, leaving insufficient time to deliver ongoing and sustained cues and reminders to all of them. Ironically, but not surprisingly, because Annie was a quiet child and not hyperactive, she was overshadowed by some of the more vocal and more overtly distractible children.

Interestingly, Annie approached her work with an intensity that belied her attention deficit. She knew, of course, that it took her significantly longer than many of her peers to complete seatwork tasks; therefore, she generally appeared anxious to get started, aware that she was behind from the outset. Although distractible, she was able to redirect her attention, particularly if the task at-hand involved artwork.

Of note, midway through the winter term, Annie became very engaged with poetry after a short poetry unit on poetic styles and form. Because the writing expectations were not extensive, she discovered that she could complete a poem without the usual struggles she experienced writing. Her excitement was palpable. She began to carry a small notebook in which she wrote her poems and drew illustrations for them. She took great pride in reading aloud her poem(s) and showing me her drawings when I asked her whether she had written any at home the previous evening.

Annie’s Reading Attitude Inventory reveals that she has had support for reading at home. When asked how she learned to read, she replied: “My mom reads books all the time, so she taught me how and school did too.” Her reading preferences were short
stories, Robert Munsch, and the Berenstein bears. Her favourite books were all of the Robert Munsch stories. Annie is aware of her reading challenges; hence books that are at grade level are relatively inaccessible to her, if she were to attempt to read them independently. Annie, in contrast to Katie and Cody, did read for pleasure. She said that she read for about 20 minutes a day, sometimes longer, if she were to read before going to sleep. When encountering unfamiliar words, her strategies were limited, confined to asking what the word means or skipping it and going on to the next sentence. When asked if she ever did anything else, she answered: “Picture books—I look at the pictures. But I don’t really read picture books, except at bedtime.” If someone were having difficulty, she would help by sounding out words and putting her fingers on each section and then going faster and faster, which is what she described her dad as doing. Clearly Annie received more support and encouragement for reading at home than any of the other children. This helps to explain why, given her significant reading deficits, she seems to maintain a positive attitude towards reading and would like to improve as a reader by “trying to get words right.” She indicated that she often makes mistakes on little words and gets them wrong “by accident, like ‘when’ for ‘what.’” Her self-assessment as to whether she thought that she was a good reader was honest, “No, not that much. I don’t really read a lot.” With Annie, her reading struggles clearly impacted what she read and how much she read.

On the Informal Phonics Survey, Annie performed better on the Z-test (88%) than on the Informal Phonics Survey (85%). This was probably due to the format on the Z-test, one syllable nonsense words with the same initial onset, “z,” followed by a rime. Her self-assessment was borne out as she had some difficulty with one-syllable word
identification on the Phonics Survey, saying “lid” for “led,” “lamp” for “lap,” “stick” for “slick,” “part” for “port,” and “sure” for “sue.” On the Woodcock measures, word identification placed Annie at Grade 3 equivalent and word attack at Grade 2 equivalent. On a Grade 3 comprehension passage, Annie was able to recall what she had read and well able to answer the comprehension questions by cueing effectively. Although she read in primarily three-word phrases with frequent pauses, almost haltingly, she did appear to engage with what she was reading.

Charlie

Charlie is a likeable boy with an easy smile and affable disposition. He is of medium height, has a large frame and a chunky build. He is sociable and described on his IEP (informal) as friendly and helpful, generally getting along well with his peers. He participates in gym, but, unlike Cody, is not athletic and has some challenges with gross motor skills, particularly coordination and balance. He was late to have a preference in handedness, for which the school referred him to occupational therapy. Academically Charlie is not a strong student. His IEP addresses his particular struggles with new concepts, stating that he requires one-on-one assistance for novel material. He also needs additional explanations and additional time to complete tasks. Numeracy, as well as literacy, is challenging for him and significant repetition is necessary for Charlie to remember how to use concepts and under what circumstances. Both fluency and comprehension are problematic. Reading is a struggle. Charlie reads slowly and struggles with meaning-making. Because of these challenges, Charlie is easily distracted and always ready to follow the lead of any of the boys in the class who become off task.
The recommendations in Charlie’s IEP were, as with the other children’s, difficult to implement within the regular classroom. He, too, required repeated prompts to draw his attention to the task and prompts about pacing, including question-by-question prompting to help him focus his attention. Other suggestions included additional time for independent assessment tasks including verbatim scribing, and environmental accommodations related to preferential seating, opportunities for individual or small-group settings, and a quiet workplace. Although potentially beneficial, each of these is difficult to implement in a small classroom with a large number of voluble and energetic students, including many exceptional learners with IEPs. Without additional support, implementation is inevitably compromised.

Charlie’s Reading Attitude Inventory revealed that he liked to read comics and his favourite books were the *Star Wars, Last of the Jedi* series. He also mentioned that he liked to read the books in the *Narnia* series. There were no informational books that he read. As with the other children, his strategic repertoire was limited. Charlie identified sounding out unfamiliar words, skipping the word, and “going back again” as the strategies that he would use. If someone were having difficulty reading, he would help by covering up part of the word, letting the individual say that part aloud, then doing the same with the middle and ending of the word, and then “they would say it the real way.” He thought that his teacher would help that person by doing what his kindergarten teacher had done, helping with one-syllable words or having the student stay after school for additional help. Charlie had aspirations to be a better reader and said that he would like to read “bigger books, like Grade 8 books or something like that.” When asked if he thought
that he was a good reader, he replied, “Yes, I know most of the words now and I only need help with a few words, not a lot.”

In contrast to Annie, Charlie did much better on the Informal Phonics Survey (89%) than on the Z-test (75%). On the Z-test, despite the same onset throughout, he substituted the s-sound for the z-sound on several words. On the Instructional Level Profile for the Woodcock Tests, there was a significant disparity between his word identification and word attack scores. On word identification, Charlie was almost at grade level; however, word attack results placed him just below Grade 3 equivalent. On the comprehension passage (Grade 4), Charlie could generally recall what he read but needed some prompts to answer the comprehension questions. On the Reading Fluency Scale rubric, he was at a level 3, reading in primarily three-word phrases, quite choppy, with little expression. Although he articulates well, his speed is compromised by the rate at which he reads, his need to pause to decode words with which he is unfamiliar, and the accompanying processing time.

Krysta

Krysta is of medium height, dark brown shoulder-length hair, and dancing brown eyes. She has a ready and engaging smile that invites response. Where Annie is quiet and withdrawn, Krysta is talkative and sociable. She tends to always have a story of some sort to tell which she relates with relish, be it about her sibling, her mother’s working environment (Corrections Canada), her grandparents who often look after her after school and with whom she has a close relationship, or upcoming weekend plans. Annie and Krysta are friends and their differences appear to be highly complementary. Although usually reticent, Annie does not appear to be overwhelmed by Krysta’s exuberance. And
Krysta does not dominate Annie, but seems able to draw her out and is generous with compliments for Annie’s artistic abilities.

Because of Krysta’s forthcoming and buoyant nature and her energy and good humour, her academic struggles tended to be masked. She had no IEP, although she had been earmarked by her classroom teacher as reading at a level 2 or 2+, below the provincial expectation of level 3. Her energy sometimes worked to her disadvantage as it turned into distractibility when she encountered material or tasks that she found difficult or not engaging. At that point, she would generally turn to her neighbour (usually Annie), and engage in conversation. Sometimes she would ask for help from the classroom teacher. On other occasions, she would not use the class time allotted for seatwork productively and would work more and more slowly, finally just resorting to avoidance by doodling, haphazardly flipping through the textbook if it was math seatwork, or clockwatching. Additional noise in the classroom, such as students conversing while doing assigned tasks, proved problematic for Krysta and contributed to her difficulties with concentration and focus.

Krysta fit the profile of a student whose ability and potential were not manifested in her academic performance. Described by her classroom teacher as “bright,” she was disadvantaged by her reading deficits. These were compounded by her distractibility which, in turn, could be attributed to frustration and difficulty completing assigned tasks. Although not identified, Krysta quite possibly had a learning disability.

The types of accommodations, like prompting and refocusing, repetition of instructions, use of a quiet space, and more time for independent assessment tasks that were recommended for many of the other children who were on IEPs would have been
helpful for Krysta. However, the implementation issues already identified would similarly prove difficult to counter.

In contrast to the other children, Krysta said that she liked to read chapter books and identified *Are you there God? It’s me, Margaret* by Judy Blume as her favourite book because “It’s for older girls and about puberty in a funny way.” She indicated that she also liked to read fantasy because “it’s make-believe and you can think whatever you want.” When it came to informational books, however, Krysta expressed no interest whatsoever because “They’re boring.” Like Annie, Krysta read before going to sleep, sometimes for an “hour or so because my parents forget I’m in there!” Despite her interest in narrative reading, Krysta’s strategies when encountering unfamiliar words were similar to the other children’s. She would skip the word and then revisit it, sound it out, or sometimes just “read [it] very fast and don’t really read it properly.” When asked what her teacher would do, she quickly responded: “Sound it out,” but then qualified her answer saying that she had “no clue, [because] people in our class are really good readers, so he doesn’t really have to help them.” She aspired to be a better reader and wanted to be able “to read something and then explain what happened and not have to read in my head because when I read out loud my tongue doesn’t work.” Krysta thought that she was a good reader because she was reading *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and “it is big.” For Krysta and Charlie, their assessment of a good reader was being able to read bigger books.

On the Informal Phonics Survey, Krysta’s performance matched Katie’s, 93% on the Informal Phonics Survey and 86% on the Z-test. On the Woodcock measures, word attack skills were particularly weak, early Grade 2 level, while word identification was
Grade 4 equivalent. On the Grade 4 comprehension passage, Krysta was able to provide an accurate retelling and able to answer the comprehension questions. She readily answered the interpretive question about the reading. When asked if there were anything else that she wished to say about what she had read, she responded: “I almost feel that I want to cry.” She clearly engaged with what she had been reading about a little girl with a physical disability and mobility impairments. Krysta read with more prosody than the other children and had some expression. She was also able to self-correct three times as she read aloud. Her comprehension was probably enhanced because she became emotionally involved in the passage. Although there were words that caused her to stop reading and work at decoding, she was able to carry on and able to sustain her interest and understanding.

Billy

Billy is slight, shorter than many of the boys in the class, with very long light brown hair which he uses to advantage in a variety of ways: as a curtain to hide behind, as something to play with and occupy his hands, or to swing about for dramatic effect. Billy’s IEP describes him as having a good sense of humour and a good imagination. For Billy, the social aspects of school are, by far, the most appealing. To this end, he will seize any opportunity to garner attention by speaking out, joking about, or playing the role of the class clown. Billy has received remedial help from the Early Literacy teacher in previous years because he was reading approximately one year below grade level.

His IEP identifies his distractibility, impulsivity, and difficulty remaining focused on the task at hand. Billy was tested and was described by the clinical consultant who conducted the WISC as highly impulsive, leaping in to answer questions while they were
being explained. There was some parental resistance to an identification of attention
deficit hyperactivity disorder. However, Billy’s parents did consent to completing a
Conner’s Rating Scale and were going to consult their family physician. No further
information was provided to the teacher. Based on his test results, Billy did not meet the
board criteria for an identification of a learning disability. In class, mathematics was
Billy’s strongest subject. He consistently performed better at mathematics than in
language and language-related subjects.

Billy’s IEP had recommendations similar to those of the other children in the
small group. Pacing, prompting, drawing his attention to the task, repeated instructions,
additional time, preferential seating, and a quiet workplace were suggested
accommodations. Targeted learning expectations for him focused on reading and writing
and included work on structure of text, grammatical relationships, and closer attention
paid to parts of speech, punctuation, and spelling.

Billy’s Reading Attitude Inventory indicated that he did like to read jokes, but he
did “not really like to read a lot” and had no favourite book. If he had to read a story, he
would choose something that had “swords and shields and stuff.” He had no recollection
about how he learned to read, “Mostly, after awhile, I just got better and better.” He
indicated that he would approach unfamiliar words by sounding them out or continuing to
read because “something comes into my head and just fits into the sentence.” He had no
ideas how he would help someone having difficulty reading because “I’m not a teacher.”
Therefore he would “just tell them the word.” He had no suggestions for improving his
own reading and thought that he was “pretty fine with my reading. I like my pace. I’m
pretty good.” Overall he thought that he was a fair reader but better when he was alone, since he was “probably under a lot less stress.”

Billy did very well on the Informal Phonics Survey (98%) and reasonably well on the Z-test (91%). On the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests, there was a significant disparity between his word identification and word attack results. Word identification was at a mid Grade 5 equivalent while word attack was almost at Grade 3 equivalent. On the comprehension passage (Grade 5 because of his word identification score), he was able to retell the passage, answer the comprehension questions, and provide an efficient summary of the passage. On the Reading Fluency Scale Rubric, he was a level 3, reading in short bursts of three or four word phrases. Like Cody, Billy aimed for speed; therefore his rate was quick but not always accurate. He was able to self-correct, however, about 50% of his errors. His expression was impacted by his speed.

**Summary**

Although each of the children met the criteria to receive intensive, targeted instruction within a small group, the particular characteristics of their reading deficits were varied. This underscores the need for more detailed assessments that provide a fuller picture of the challenges experienced by children who struggle with various aspects of reading. Many board-mandated assessments provide limited information and are restricted to only one aspect of reading. Within a small group context, instruction can be tailored and flexibly differentiated in multiple ways to meet the varied needs of the children.

There were major consistencies across the group, however. The children were easily distracted and required redirection, had a preference for narrative over expository
text, and struggled with comprehension. Their strategic repertoires were limited, confined
principally to looking at the pictures, sounding words out and looking at the component
parts, and sometimes skipping words and reading ahead. None of the children referred to
any of the text-based strategies that we had begun to teach during whole class lessons. All
were struggling readers. Their word recognition was limited, word attack skills were
weak, oral reading was dysfluent, and comprehension was compromised. The one area
where they experienced less difficulty was phonemic awareness and phonological
processing. This did not compensate for their significant reading deficits, however.

The next chapter introduces the reader to the children within the context of the
small group instruction. Each of the eight sessions is detailed providing an in situ and in-
the-moment picture of the children and the instructional interventions. As mentioned
previously, the lessons paralleled the instruction that the whole class received during the
same scheduled social studies double period.
CHAPTER SIX

THE LANDSCAPE OF THE PARALLEL LESSONS

FOR THE SMALL GROUP

“Hey, it’s my turn!”

(Participant in the small group)

Over the past 30 years, we have taught or conducted research in classrooms with students with disabilities representing the full gamut of grades. Our experiences reveal that accelerating reading growth for older students with severe reading disabilities is the most challenging task we have encountered.

(Denton & Vaughn, 2008, p. 61)

This chapter describes the landscape of the parallel lessons, providing further explication of the comprehension challenges confronting the children and detailing the instructional interventions to support them. It is an intimate portrayal of a learning community that reached out, as Greene (1978) enjoins, “to involve…those who are uncertain and who have not yet found their own words” (p. 79). She goes on to suggest that a learning community should both encompass the classroom and, “at once, transcend it” (p. 79). The parallel lessons were designed with this admittedly lofty goal in mind.

The chapter initially introduces the time frame for the small-group sessions. These are then framed in terms of their structure and organization and contextualized, focusing on embedded instruction, participation and motivation, mediated engagement, and situational interest. The reader is taken inside each of the sessions where the challenges and successes are identified and considered. Each session is presented using the same descriptive framework: context, agenda, meta-agenda, observations, and reflections.
Time Frame

A series of eight small group instructional sessions were conducted with the children whom the reader met in the preceding chapter. These sessions extended over a ten-week period, from the end of February to mid-May. Each session paralleled the lesson that Reed and Janine were teaching to the rest of the class. For the most part, both teachers were present. On a few occasions, Reed taught the lessons as Janine was either ill or had a commitment at the board office. When the children in the small group were withdrawn from the class, we went to another classroom that was available, following afternoon recess.

The Small-Group Parallel Lessons

Data from transcripts of the parallel lessons were triangulated with fieldnotes and journal entries. Additional data sources included baseline assessments and students’ written work.

Structure and Organization

A series of 8 parallel lessons were taught over a 10-week period, with 7 lessons concentrated within 5 ½ weeks. Considerable flexibility was necessary as plans were subject to change contingent on unanticipated events, such as special assemblies, Reed’s absence for dental appointments or meetings at the board office, and last-minute changes to Janine’s class schedule, as well as scheduled events such as students’ independent work on projects, individual oral presentations to the whole class, and unit tests. In consultation, the classroom teachers and I decided whether the lesson would be best taught to the whole group or whether withdrawing the small group for parallel instruction would be a preferred option. Each of the eight sessions followed a similar format, given
the children’s needs for structure and consistency. Although the particular content varied and activities were content-dependent, the overall organization remained the same. Each session began with the children very quickly introducing themselves by saying their name. As the sessions were audiotaped, this introduction gave them voice literally and figuratively. This was significant as none of the children was a frequent contributor to class discussions. Krysta provided an interesting retrospective comment on the size of the group and the opportunity that it afforded,

What I like best about smaller groups is that when you have a question you can just put your hand up and easily get your answer. Like when you’re in a bigger group there’s more people putting their hand up, and sometimes I put my hand up for a long time and I never get like called on… it makes it [a] little easier with a smaller group. (Individual interview, June 29)

Following the individual introductions, I quickly presented the agenda, so the children knew what we would be doing and explained that the rest of the class was following the same agenda. We would incorporate prior knowledge, often referring to the previous class or session, and briefly recap. We would then launch into the designated reading for that day’s lesson. The readings varied and included newspaper articles, materials on the House of Commons and the Senate obtained through the local MP’s office, a photocopied set of students’ notes, “Government, Elections, and Other Such Stuff,” from a prepared unit on Canadian Government and the electoral process (Rainbow Horizons Publishing Inc.) that Reed had used previously. Other sources included excerpts from books on the Canadian government, from key websites such as the Government of Canada site, http://www.canada.gc.ca/home.html, the Elections
Canada site, [http://www.elections.ca/home.asp](http://www.elections.ca/home.asp), and the Governor General’s website, [http://www.gg.ca/heraldry/emb/03/index_e.asp](http://www.gg.ca/heraldry/emb/03/index_e.asp), as well as selections from the social studies textbook. The intent was to give the children practice reading aloud while intensively exploring the text itself. Although this intensive exploration had been modeled repeatedly in class, the individual and collective difficulties experienced by the children in the small group demanded more targeted intervention. Krista summed up her preference for small group interactions rather neatly,

> Because it feels like you have a lot more pressure for some reason when there’s more people around you, and when you’re in a smaller group and there’s less people it’s just easier….Yeah, because there’s people whispering at each other [in the whole class], and like the teacher is saying different things, but you just have one teacher when you’re in one [smaller] room…. (Individual interview, June 29)

*Embedded Instruction*

Overlaying each of the lessons was an emphasis on text structure, text search, or text summary. The children received multiple opportunities to practice identifying key features of text, searching for and retrieving information, and constructing summaries. The lessons were built on content-area text and each lesson incorporated word analysis and word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Each of these emerged “in-the-moment” while the children took turns reading aloud. Providing this opportunity for read-alouds was essential since none of the participants read widely outside of school, with the concomitant effect that they missed opportunities for practice and for learning from what they read (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988, cited in Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, & Scammaca, 2008).
Further, their respective struggles were a result of difficulties with more than one component of reading, in keeping with Torgesen et al. (2007), who describe composite struggles for older poor readers. These span both word level difficulties related to identifying unfamiliar words or to lack of fluency and comprehension difficulties resulting from limited vocabulary or conceptual knowledge. Additionally, these children also experience problems in reasoning or inferential skills compounded by their weak knowledge of comprehension strategies and an inability to apply them (Roberts et al., 2008).

**Participation and Motivation**

Each of the children participated fully and was eager to read aloud, often loudly jockeying for post position or reminding one another, “Hey, it’s my turn!” Without exception, no one had any qualms reading aloud in front of their peers, despite their individual challenges. In part, this can be attributed to their in-class experiences with literature circles, which were flexible groupings, often organized as relatively homogeneous ability groups, where each group had a different novel to read that was geared to their reading ability. During our small-group sessions, the students were not necessarily forgiving of one another’s miscues or patient as they listened to halting decoding of unfamiliar words, laborious struggles with fluency, or hesitant encoding of new and conceptually challenging material. However, their respective struggles did noticeably temper their comments. They would sometimes chide one another to “hurry up” or sometimes would jump in spontaneously as a fellow group member was doing battle trying to decode an unfamiliar word.
Guthrie and Humenick (2004) suggest that when students are motivated they will be intent on understanding content as fully as possible and therefore will commit to processing information more completely and deeply. The more that students can accumulate an understanding of a topic, the more their confidence will be fuelled, which, in turn, can arouse “new curiosities, while providing a platform for understanding the content of new materials. This content emphasis encourages students to adopt mastery goals for reading activities and to read with purpose, rather than to merely complete assignments” (Guthrie & Humenick, p. 334). Therefore, one of my challenges throughout the small-group sessions was to be clear about purpose, specify content goals, and establish the framework for successful reading experiences within the group. This meant that I conveyed my expectation that each of them would fully comprehend the designated text, that they would not gloss over or ignore unfamiliar words, and that there would be an open forum to monitor comprehension through questioning and discussion.

Only once did one of the children indicate an unwillingness to participate in reading aloud. During the seventh session, we were reading about the differences between the federal and provincial levels of government. I asked Katie to read since she had read less than anyone else during that session. Initially she said, “Okay, I’ll read,” but then changed her mind after she lost her place. I pointed out where she should begin, and Krysta encouraged her, “Read, Katie.” However, she still refused, “I don’t want to read.” My response was quick, “It doesn’t matter. You read.” Although Annie asked her why she didn’t want to read, I did not allow any time for Katie to answer, directing her to “Read number one.” She read it! Because the group could derail themselves so quickly given their distractibility, impulsivity, and activity, allowing any time for excuses,
embellishment, or rationalization meant losing valuable instructional time and affording an opportunity for off-task behaviours.

One measure of the children’s willingness to participate and level of motivation could be seen as they took on the role of overseer and spontaneously began to monitor one another’s more disruptive behaviour. This took place from the initial session onwards. Of note, the role was shared among the girls and boys and was not restricted to one child. The girls, usually Krysta, but sometimes Katie, would chide the boys and tell them, “Shhhh” or “Stop laughing.” On the many occasions when Katie lost her place and began reading a new page, she was quickly reminded by the other children that the preceding page was not finished, “We haven’t read the whole page yet.” She responded, “Yes, we have,” only to have a chorus tell her, “No, we haven’t!” What the children were identifying was Katie’s distractibility, inattentiveness, and selective focus that were evident in both whole class and small group contexts. During the second session, Cody told the group, “Everyone, be quiet!” which freed me to focus on the curriculum and point out how his comment meshed with the government unit that we were studying, “I think we’re going to have to appoint a sergeant-at-arms, that’s Cody, just like in the House of Commons and the Senate.”

The issue of context is central to the thrust and momentum of each session. Sarason (1996, 1998, 2004) has argued that creating contexts for productive learning requires that conditions of learning change for both students and teachers. He contends that “productive learning literally produces new knowledge and attitudes about self and subject matter, it alters in some way the relation between what is inside and outside, the subjective and the objective” (1998, p. 93). He argues that this alteration is unlikely to
occur unless it is accompanied by challenge. He goes on to set what he describes as his “own, very provisional definition of challenge,” which arouses curiosity, [then] questions are provoked, those questions are articulated, there is give-and-take, and the students see themselves and the problem in a new way that arouses new questions and interest in the spirit of the more you know, the more you need to know. (1998, pp. 92-93)

Sarason describes this process as comprising the psychological-pedagogical curriculum. A curriculum like this captures the learners, engages them, and provokes their interest in a fashion that is both iterative and cumulative. With the small group, challenge was a multi-faceted, multi-layered, and complex issue. If the demands were too intense, then the cognitive load could overwhelm. Self-efficacy, self-perception, and self-esteem were similarly interwoven. If the children’s confidence faltered, if they felt too overwhelmed, embarrassed or uncomfortable, then they could become unwilling participants. They had to be challenged and experience some measure of success in meeting challenge. The psychological and pedagogical were indeed interlocked.

This interlock was further played out in considerations of how the curriculum aligned with the needs and abilities of the children in the small group compared to the needs and abilities of the whole class. Guthrie and Humenick (2004), using Schraw and Dennison (1994), contend that students will be more motivated and will remember more new material when their purposes for reading are well aligned with the text being read and the accompanying tasks they are expected to perform. For stronger students with well-established content learning goals, there is a reinforcing loop that operates: their motivation is increased as they experience success, thereby motivating them to continue
working to attend to and remember what they are learning. In so doing, their self-efficacy is heightened, as is self-confidence. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) describe these relatively active readers and high achievers as persistent in reading difficult texts and effortful in resolving conflicts and integrating text with prior knowledge. For weaker students, the loop is negatively reinforcing: lack of success leads to decreased motivation which, in turn, contributes to decreased effort, leading to compromised self-efficacy and diminished self-confidence. To counter this, not only did the children need to feel supported, need to believe that they could read the selected text, need to commit to doing so, but they also needed to become as engaged as possible. Providing this support and promoting engagement were pivotal components if a context of productive learning were to be created and challenge interwoven.

Mediated Engagement

Pintrich, Marx, and Boyle’s (1993) model of mediated engagement helps to anchor the centrality of engagement and its connection to context and outcomes. Rather than context directly affecting student outcomes, they suggest that the effects of context are contingent upon the level of student engagement. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) build on this and apply it to reading, describing engagement as a mediator for instructional processes. In other words, instruction impacts outcomes via engagement. As students become increasingly engaged, they should experience gains in achievement, knowledge, and practices. This does not occur in short order, however, but requires time. “Engaged reading and learning take time. They do not immediately arise in a limited task or situation. Sustained experience and perception of motivation-enhancing contexts are necessary for reader engagement” (Guthrie & Wigfield, p. 417). This cautionary note
underscores the need for patience and perseverance and the complexity of the engagement process. However well-intentioned we are, Guthrie and Wigfield remind us that the teaching outcomes we desire, like the ability to comprehend text, to use the knowledge acquired from text, and to develop sustainable reading practices, do not occur automatically in response to instruction (p. 417).

*Situational Interest*

Given the dynamics of the group, the significant needs of each of the children, their compromised classroom success, and their varied levels of motivation, I had to capitalize aggressively on their situational interest. This is interest that is often temporary, arising spontaneously as a result of outside factors that can include task instructions and engaging texts (Shearer & Ruddell, 2008). Because it can be evoked (see Hidi, 2001), it becomes a vehicle to promote engagement. Certainly, initially, I had the advantage of novelty. The children were selected to participate through purposeful sampling but did not know that Reed and I had conferred on group composition. Two factors contributed to exploiting situational interest. The first can be attributed to the fact that I instantiated myself in the classroom as a teacher, not as someone who made random appearances. The second can be linked to the approach that Reed took by way of introduction to my withdrawing the children. Prior to each of the parallel instructional sessions, he would ask: “Who would like to go with Mrs. Martin?” By way of response, the class was filled with upraised waving arms and choruses of “me!” “No, me!” and “No, me; I haven’t had a turn yet.” Midway through the small-group sessions, I capitalized on this eagerness and selected one student to join the regular participants. In each of the subsequent sessions, I continued to select a different student from the regular class. This enhanced the status of
the children in the group and normalized the withdrawal.

Hidi (2001) distinguishes situational interest from individual interest. Where the former results from something in the immediate environment and may or may not have a long-term effect on individual knowledge and values, the latter is longer-lasting, developing over time, and is related to increased knowledge and value (Hidi, 2001). However, they are not mutually exclusive. Hidi (2001) points to three areas of overlap: (1) both result in a psychological state of interest involving increased attention and cognitive functioning and persistence and are accompanied by an affective component, (2) both are content-specific and emerge from the interaction between the individual and aspects of the environment, and (3) they may each interact with the other (p. 193). Where individual interest is understood as a relatively stable predisposition, situational interest is staged. In the initial stage, interest is triggered; and in the second, subsequent stage, interest is maintained. Once elicited, however, both facilitate cognitive functioning and learning (Hidi, 2001; Hidi, 1990). Once triggered, maintaining the situational interest of all of the children in the group throughout the small-group sessions became critical. Using Krapp (1999), Hidi (2001) suggests that interest can influence the type of learning that occurs, motivating readers to go beyond surface structure of texts to focus on the main ideas and their underlying meaning. I held the goal that, for at least some of the children, situational interest would ultimately become individual if the stages of situational interest could be well supported through opportunities for scaffolded, successful learning experiences.

The Individual Small-group Sessions

Loughran (2006) suggests that “professional learning is not developed through
simply gaining more knowledge, rather professional learning is enhanced by one becoming more perceptive to the complexities, possibilities and nuances of teaching contexts” (p. 136). Each of the sessions dramatically illustrated how complex and nuanced the context was and how possibilities were both realized and tempered. The same descriptive framework will be applied to each of the eight sessions. This will detail the context, agenda and tasks, the meta-agenda, observations, and reflections. Each session, as mentioned, paralleled the lesson being taught to the whole class by Reed and, usually, Janine. Sometimes it was not possible to complete an entire lesson as planned because of the children’s need for review, practice, and reinforcement. Time was an ongoing constraint and I was keenly aware of the need to maximize every moment. The challenges this posed are also reflected in the descriptions that follow. (See Table 1 on the following page for an overview of the parallel lessons, highlighting how instruction was differentiated and which intervention strategies were targeted for explicit instruction.)

Session One

**Context.** The preceding whole class lesson had introduced Michaëlle Jean and the role of the Governor General. In that class, we showed photographs of the Governor General from Maclean’s magazine, briefly identified some of her responsibilities and explained that Rideau Hall was where she lived, and had the class read aloud excerpts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session, Date, and Topic</th>
<th>Students Present</th>
<th>Differentiation and Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1, February 28th</td>
<td>Cody, Charlie, Katie, Annie, Krysta  &lt;br&gt; <em>Variable student:</em> Billy</td>
<td>• Guided practice for prior knowledge, text preview, text structure, text search, and text summary  &lt;br&gt; • Prompts, discussion with responsive elaboration  &lt;br&gt; • Independent written practice with immediate feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governor General: Roles and Responsibilities</td>
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<td>#2, April 6th</td>
<td>Cody, Charlie, Katie, Annie, Krysta  &lt;br&gt; <em>Variable student:</em> Billy</td>
<td>• Guided practice for identifying important information  &lt;br&gt; • Read-alouds while tracking text  &lt;br&gt; • Restating and summarizing chunked passages  &lt;br&gt; • Word recognition strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Senate: Role and Function ; Bill Passage</td>
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<td>#3, April 11th</td>
<td>Cody, Charlie, Katie, Annie, Krysta  &lt;br&gt; <em>Variable student:</em> Billy</td>
<td>• Explicit review of strategies for text search, structure, summarizing  &lt;br&gt; • Guided practice with modeled self-talk  &lt;br&gt; • Responsive elaboration to read-alouds  &lt;br&gt; • Independent written practice with immediate feedback and discussion, followed by further independent practice, feedback, discussion</td>
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<td>The Senate</td>
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<td>#4, April 18th</td>
<td>Cody, Charlie, Katie, Annie, Krysta  &lt;br&gt; <em>Variable student:</em> Billy</td>
<td>• Review word recognition strategies and comprehension-monitoring strategies  &lt;br&gt; • Partner reading—taking turns as reader and listener  &lt;br&gt; • Practice identifying main ideas, restating main ideas, and summarizing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overview of the Judicial Branch of the Government and the Court System</td>
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<td>#5, April 20th</td>
<td>Cody, Charlie, Katie, Annie, Krysta  &lt;br&gt; <em>Variable student:</em> Christopher</td>
<td>• Review and preview text, including table of contents, index, glossary  &lt;br&gt; • Word recognition strategies  &lt;br&gt; • Guided practice for text features, text search  &lt;br&gt; • Read-alouds with comprehension-monitoring  &lt;br&gt; • Summarizing</td>
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<td>The Court System</td>
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<td>#6, April 25th</td>
<td>Cody, Charlie, Katie, Annie, Krysta  &lt;br&gt; <em>Variable student:</em> Marly</td>
<td>• Partner reading  &lt;br&gt; • Recording main ideas w/ partner  &lt;br&gt; • Written summary w/ partner  &lt;br&gt; • Directed practice regarding text features, text search</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Constitution</td>
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<td>#7, April 27th</td>
<td>Cody, Charlie, Katie, Annie, Krysta  &lt;br&gt; <em>Variable student:</em> Maddy</td>
<td>• Guided practice for prior knowledge, review of strategies  &lt;br&gt; • Summary of previous readings  &lt;br&gt; • Fast-paced read-alouds, chunked text  &lt;br&gt; • Independent practice re. text search and summary  &lt;br&gt; • Guided discussion with responsive elaboration</td>
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<td>The Constitution</td>
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<td>#8, May 11th</td>
<td>Cody, Charlie  &lt;br&gt; <em>Variable student:</em> Evan</td>
<td>• Review of organizational questions  &lt;br&gt; • Text search: skimming for key topics and main ideas  &lt;br&gt; • Guided practice for topics for project  &lt;br&gt; • Independent practice writing project outline  &lt;br&gt; • Discussion with responsive elaboration and immediate feedback  &lt;br&gt; • Independent review and editing of outline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for independent research project on Ancient Civilizations</td>
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from the article, “RIDEAU HALL, OOH LA LA,” (Deziel, 2005). We also introduced the purpose of a coat of arms and handed out a description and picture of the Personal Coat of Arms of the Governor General, printed from the Governor General’s website. We asked for volunteers to read aloud the description and then encouraged discussion about the significance of the symbols on her coat of arms. At the conclusion of the lesson, we had the children consider what symbols they would choose if they were to create a personal coat of arms that represented themselves and their family. This proved to be a lively and engaging discussion.

*Agenda.* The reading for the initial pull-out session built on the preceding class’ introduction to the Governor General. The reading was taken from a social studies newsletter on current events, *What in the World*, geared to a Grade 5/6 audience. This was not as challenging to read as the *Maclean’s* article had been and was far shorter. A set of 7 comprehension questions followed the article, with additional questions for further discussion and extension. Therefore the whole class could read the article, highlight key ideas, identify significant text features, and complete the comprehension questions individually or as a class. If time permitted, the discussion could then be extended by raising the additional extension questions.

For the small group, the agenda was comparable and included four tasks: (1) reading the article and comprehending it; (2) identifying the key features of the layout of the text, including the headings in bold, vocabulary listed at the bottom of the page, and a boxed column with shaded background on “The history and role of the Governor General;” (3) highlighting key ideas and understanding why they should be highlighted;
and (4) completing the comprehension questions. This seemed a very full agenda with little likelihood that the extension questions could be tackled.

Meta-agenda. The overarching implicit meta-agenda that extended across all sessions was to enable and enhance learning; simply put, better students are better learners. To effect this, I needed to be clear about my expectations, to set goals that were challenging but achievable, to provide sufficient opportunities for practice, repetition, and review, and to ensure that everyone had equal opportunity to participate. Additional components of my implicit agenda included assessing the overall group dynamics and accurately “reading” the group. Perry’s (1988) construction of the “different worlds” in the same classroom is helpful in representing the inherent challenge attached.

Of all the pedagogic tasks teacher face, getting inside students’ heads is one of the trickiest. It is also one of the most crucial. When we start to see ourselves through student’s eyes, we become aware of what Perry (1988) calls the “different worlds” in the same classroom. We learn that students perceive the same actions and experience the same activities in vastly different ways. If we know something about the symbolic meanings that our actions have for students, we are better able to shape our behaviour so that desired effects are achieved. (Brookfield, 1995, p. 92)

Pintrich, Marx, and Boyle (1993) similarly address “different worlds” by considering the varied goals that students have which can be sharply divergent from their teacher’s. They caution against assuming that students approach their classroom learning with a rational goal of making sense of the information and coordinating it with their prior
conceptions...Students may have many social goals in the classroom context besides learning—such as, making friends, finding a boyfriend or girlfriend, or impressing their peers (see Wentzel, 1991)—which can short circuit any in-depth intellectual engagement. (Pintrich et al., p. 173)

The learning challenges experienced by each of the children, in concert with their well-developed ways of avoiding engagement with learning, meant that their goals were not necessarily aligned with mine. Cody would race through readings and tasks with a goal of completion rather than thoroughness. Katie would seize on any object and every opportunity to distract herself from what she was asked to do. Charlie’s distractibility was aggravated by his difficulties with persistence and follow through. Krysta was consumed by performance anxiety. Annie’s inattention was compounded by her reading struggles and accompanying difficulty completing tasks. And Billy wanted endless attention and would go to great lengths to ensure that it came his way. Therefore I also needed to be vigilant about the “different worlds” the children were bringing to the sessions while creating a learning environment with new goals for the children. They had to be willing to expend the effort needed to achieve these goals and to commit to doing so.

Observations. Meshing my meta-agenda with the children’s exuberance was the first challenge. Given the composition of the group, I quickly recognized the need to generate sufficient momentum to keep the children focused and moving ahead, while stopping frequently to ensure that they understood what was being read. They were more than willing to participate, often peppering me with requests: “Can I read something?” “What can I read?” “Can I read where it says ‘commander-in-chief’?” “I can finish [reading] it really fast!” However, creating a different context with different expectations,
in contrast to their usual less successful classroom experiences, was my most immediate concern. To achieve this, we stopped after each short paragraph and I asked for a summary of the paragraph. Once summarized, I asked, “Is there anything in that paragraph that you think we should highlight?” We continued in this fashion and, although the boys were louder than the girls in their responses, each of the children responded and each continued to ask to read next. To solve these repeated and noisy enjoiinders, we started to “go round in turn.” Reminding them that they wouldn’t be recorded properly if they all spoke at once was helpful. Nonetheless, multiple reminders were required as the “heat of the moment” often prevailed.

To keep the children on-task also required frequent, briskly paced comprehension questions tied to the paragraph that had just been read. For example, targeted questions asked them to pull out what was important in the paragraph, why certain dates were significant, what those dates were, how many Governor Generals preceded Michaëlle Jean, where she visited in Manitoba and why those sites had been selected. I saw that, despite the considerable in-class practice, the children needed to query and talk about what they thought should be highlighted, and, in some cases, argue their case. This “air-time” was what they infrequently received during the whole group lessons. They needed direction to seek key words that were in bold, “And what does that mean if it’s in bold?” and prompts to look more closely at the page itself where vocabulary was listed, “Did you notice what’s on the bottom of the page?” Seemingly surprised, Cody remarked, “Oh, it tells you what the words mean!”

Roles emerged quickly in the group, generally in keeping with their usual modus operandi. Krysta became the conscience, asking for quiet before she began to read and, as
the boys began to digress when the issue of domestic violence was raised in the course of the reading, she reminded them, “We don’t have time for stories.” Cody was the speed demon, wanting to rush through the readings and the highlighting process, “Can I just highlight the whole thing?” Katie was the distractor, grabbing objects, like a calculator, seemingly out of thin air, and fiddling with them. And, true to form, Billy was the clown. Annie was the most serious, the most attentive, and worked the hardest at tracking text as we read. They had been taught to use their finger to track and, where the other children needed to be reminded, Annie did not.

As we worked through the short answer comprehension questions which required written answers, the students continued to require prompting, “Remember, what is it that you need to do to pull out information from here in order to answer the questions? “Who have we just been reading about?” Prompting included pointed reminders, “Katie, you weren’t paying attention,” as well as encouragement that was reinforcing and specific, “Very good. You’ve all identified ‘Haiti’ as the country where the Governor General was born. Excellent. And Annie’s answered the question with a complete sentence, ‘She is from Haiti.’” When Charlie suggested, “I think we should highlight ‘discrimination,’” Annie responded, “It’s a hard word.” Reinforcing and cueing them, I acknowledged, “It’s a hard word. It’s an important word, and it’s in bold.” Almost immediately, multiple voices said, “I got it!” As we pushed on, the children realized that they would not be able to listen to the audiotape of themselves at all unless the questions were completed. (Each session was audiotaped and I had told the children that they would be able to listen to some of the recording if we met our goals for the lesson.) This seemed to propel them and they began answering my questions in unison, which then set them up to write the
answers down. Most wrote phrases, with the exception of Annie who began to write complete sentences. As the session drew to a close, Krysta spoke for all of them when she said, “We’re so anxious!” [to listen to the tape]. As they listened to a few minutes of it, there were squeals, laughter, and quite heady excitement, “That’s me!” “Ooh, ooh, that’s me!” As I shepherded them back to the classroom, they continued to exclaim and mimic some of what they had heard of themselves on tape.

Reflections. Russell (1997) uses the concepts of the content turn and the pedagogical turn to describe some of the complexities inherent in teacher education. The concepts are robust and are also relevant to school teaching. They reflect the concurrent agendas of attending to subject matter while attending to its presentation.

As I distilled the session, the content turn was nicely aligned to the needs and abilities of the children. However, I had both underestimated and overestimated the pedagogical turn. I had underestimated how excited the children would be to participate in the small group. I had underestimated how vigorously they would have to be refocused and redirected and reminded and rewarded through reinforcement of appropriate behaviour. I had overestimated the saliency of the in-class practice identifying key words, main ideas, topic sentences, and summarizing. And, despite my experience during their English period when I regularly led a literature circle with many of the same members, I had seriously overestimated their listening skills. The crucible of practice is a sobering teacher.

Session Two

Context. There was an interval of five weeks between the first and second session. During the intervening time, there were two unit tests, a written summary of a newspaper
article on the Speaker of the House, two independent projects (a research report on a Canadian Prime Minister and an Election Campaign Manager project, for which some class time was allotted). Each student delivered an individual oral presentation as one component of the Election Campaign Manager project. These presentations required 2 ½ weeks of class time. The spring break week also fell during this period. Lessons taught to the whole class during this interval included readings that served to set up the projects, modeling of text search procedures, guided practice with text structure and text summary, and review for the tests.

We followed the same selection process for the group as before. Reed asked the whole class, “Who would like to go with Mrs. M.?” And, as previously, there was a flurry of arm-waving. I withdrew the same children and took advantage of the initial ground rules: full participation, commitment to the task, respect for one another’s efforts, and listening to selections from the audiotape only if their behaviour warranted it.

Prior to withdrawing the six children, Reed led a fast-paced review for their upcoming test the following week. This included guided practice highlighting key terms from readings in their “Student Notes” package (part of the “Government, Elections and Other Such Stuff,” Rainbow Horizons Publishing) that we had read previously as a whole class.

**Agenda.** The reading built on the introduction that the class had had to the federal government, including reading about the Governor General, House of Commons, Senate, Supreme Court, and the Civil Service. It focused on a series of six questions and answers about the Senate and was part of an educational package for teachers, prepared by, and
available through the local M.P. Because the review for the test took almost half of the allotted class time, the agenda was tailored and the session necessarily abbreviated.

Meta-agenda

The overarching goals of enabling learning and understanding with the intent of having the children become more aware, purposeful, and strategic readers held firm. In addition, I wanted to extend their opportunities for identifying main ideas, key words and concepts, while providing multiple opportunities for practice, review, and repetition. The notion of purposeful reading was also threaded throughout. Included in this was developing the ability to identify problematic words, phrases, or concepts and draw on comprehension-monitoring strategies appropriately and effectively. To this end, I used two driving questions: “What can we do to identify important information?” and “How do you know that the information is important?”

Observations. As before, the children were enthusiastic about participating and eager to read, but this willingness had to be channelled. Otherwise they would interrupt one another, asking “Can I read the next page?” or protesting, “Hey, I’m not done reading! I only got to read this much! [pointing to a paragraph]” They required frequent reminders about waiting for their turn. A running commentary was also required where I singled out appropriate behaviour; for example, “I like the way that Krysta puts her hand up;” and “It’s Annie’s turn because I said Annie was much quieter than you, Billy.” Given their individual and collective issues with distractibility, reminders were also needed to encourage tracking. Using their index finger to mark each word helped to slow them down sufficiently so that they would look at the words more closely, rather than glossing over words with which they were unfamiliar. For all of the children, their default
was to skip over words that they did not know and not make any attempt to decode the word or reread the sentence.

Given that there were six questions followed by the respective answers, the initial plan was to have each child read one question and the subsequent answer. However it very quickly became apparent that most were struggling to hold their focus throughout an entire paragraph. Therefore I would interject and ask them to rephrase what they had read, using their own words. This allowed for more participation and pushed them to listen to whoever was reading and attend more closely to the text.

Reflections. The pre-eminent challenge continued to be maintaining the group’s focus while channelling their exuberance into directed activity. Perhaps because our time was more limited and preceded by a concentrated review for the upcoming unit test, and perhaps because it was the very last part of the last period of the day, the children seemed to veer off course at the slightest provocation. Yet they came up with the plan to have each child read one question and the accompanying answer. Cody suggested, “I’ve got an idea, since there’s six pages….,” and Krysta quickly said, “Um and there’s six people, so...” Out of 6 questions and answers, however, we only completed two. (The large class did not complete all of the questions, either.)

The children were able to easily answer the first driving question, “What can we do to identify important information?” The second question, “How do you know the information is important?” needed to be pursued more explicitly.

As I thought about the session, I realized that the children were unable to perceive all of the text on a page. Perhaps it is selective attention and they feel overwhelmed by the text (although none of the six pages was dense and the
margins were wide). Possibly they think that text other than what is in the paragraph itself can be skipped over. Yet there have been many opportunities throughout the unit when the class read excerpts from books, newspapers, and pamphlets where the fonts have been variable and we explicitly looked at features of text.

Although choppy, the approach of “start reading, stop reading, and summarize in your own words” with smaller chunks of text proved far more effective both for attention and for retention. It also takes longer! I am learning to contain my ambitious agenda and afford more time.

(Journal entry, post session #2, April 6th)

If the children were to grasp the substance of what they were reading and recognize how they were accomplishing that, then they needed more time. They needed time to identify unfamiliar or difficult words, to discuss concepts, and to restate what they had read in their own words (see Carnine, 1994; Roberts et al., 2008). I had to direct their attention to the sentence at the bottom of the first page that was in a smaller font. The line was accompanied by a sketch of Sir John A. Macdonald. After Billy read, “Canada’s first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, called the Senate a place of sober second thought,” I asked if anyone knew the meaning of “sober.” A very animated discussion ensued, beginning with Katie’s comment, “It’s a bad word.” The phrase, “sober second thought” also required considerable dissection before we could begin to address whether the phrase should be highlighted. Enormous effort must be expended for meaning-making and self-monitoring to occur in tandem.
Even though our time was limited and even as we were running out of time, the children continued to clamour to read. And, despite the challenges to keep them contained and focused, they continued to ask what words meant and to query which phrases and sentences should be highlighted. As Billy read, “Before a bill can become law, it goes through three stages, called ‘readings,’ in both Houses. The bill is debated, fine-tuned and then voted on by each House,” he stopped and asked, “fine-tuned, what does that mean?” That was the penultimate line read during that day’s session. Engagement is multilayered.

Session Three

Context. Given that the reading on the Senate was unfinished, Reed, Janine, and I decided to continue with it. The students in the whole class had also generated considerable discussion, prompting many questions about the Senate and its role and function. We agreed that more practice was needed identifying key words, main ideas, and topic sentences, discussing why these should be highlighted, highlighting accordingly, and practicing summarizing.

Further reflection on the preceding small-group session the week before led me to make two major changes. I decided that I would control the seating rather than allowing the children to seat themselves at the large round table. And the degree of modeling and guided practice had to be intensified.

Given the children’s experience in literature circles where they self-selected where they sat and whom they sat next to, it seemed reasonable to follow suit in our small group. I have since changed my mind on this. Their exuberance is double-edged—it is intensified by virtue of being a part of the group, thereby
making it easier for them to veer off-course; yet it also is reinforcing in terms of engagement. Overall I have to push harder at the overlay; i.e. clarifying further the purpose or “the why” of what we are doing and exposing “the how,” namely how to go about extracting meaning.

(Journal entry, post session #2, April 6th)

Agenda. Rather than moving immediately into the unfinished sections of the reading begun the last session, revisiting what we had previously read was necessary, more particularly, revisiting what we had identified and highlighted as the most important information. Particular strategies that were targeted included clarification about the need to read everything on a page, stopping at unfamiliar words, deploying decoding strategies when these words were encountered, and utilizing contextual cues. Explicitly reviewing why attention needed to be paid to information at the bottom of each page was also necessary while pointing out that “usually in articles that you read when the font is smaller, it means that something is less important, but that’s not true here. Both of those two lines at the bottom [of the page] are really important and you should highlight everything there….Can you tell me why?”

Ongoing practice was required for the children to digest what they were reading, select what was most important, and be able to justify what they had selected. As well, more practice was needed if they were to slow themselves down sufficiently to see everything that was on a page, including text, graphics, captions under pictures, etc. Their ability to look more closely at what was on the page had to be improved and their skill at attending to each feature of the text had to be sharpened.
Meta-agenda. The interconnections between and among purpose, meaning-making, comprehension-monitoring, and metacognition needed to be repeatedly and vigorously established. Other considerations included sustaining interest and engagement while maintaining focus and continually working within the zone of proximal development. The dance between the content turn and the pedagogical turn was ongoing.

Observations. Changing the seating arrangement by matter-of-factly saying their names and pointing to a seat helped to minimize the boys’ physical contact with one another, which had impeded the flow of the first two sessions. Capitalizing on the children’s eagerness to read proved an effective means to control their behaviour. They would lose their turn if they were not paying attention, were disruptive, or were excessively silly. As well, they would lose what they considered to be preferential seating, i.e., proximity to their same sex friends. Although they still needed reminders about these expectations, a notable change was their spontaneous response when reminded, “Sorry.” The combination of shortening what they were being asked to read and taking it in turn helped to lessen the cacophony of “Can I read?” and comparisons, “He’s read more than I have.” As well, praising those children who put their hand up and rewarding them by allowing them to answer questions or to read aloud proved more effective than repeated reminders about behaviour.

At the outset of the session, drawing on their prior knowledge helped them to remember what had previously been read and appeared to draw them into the current reading more easily. Explicitly reviewing what we had introduced in the preceding session about font size and key phrases, rereading “the little lines that we had highlighted,” and questioning, “Is that important?” helped the children to focus their
attention. The pacing had to be brisk enough to keep them focused with sufficient time for processing and “self-talk.” Within the regular classroom, it is unlikely that Charlie, for example, would have queried, “Why do they [Senators] vote on the Bill?” and, in the middle of my explanation, interjected, “But it’s a piece of paper!” He had not grasped the notion of symbolic representation and needed a richer description and more detail about the importance of bills, how they become laws, and what the substance of those laws is.

Reflections. The challenge of conceptual understanding for children who struggle with reading comprehension was vividly revealed throughout this session. When directly asked if they knew what a word was or what a phrase or sentence meant, they were invariably honest and openly acknowledged what they did not know or understand. This could be attributed to the size of the group, their “buy-in” to full participation, their sense that there was no shame in not knowing the answer and that their reading challenges were not unique.

Previously, I had thought that the pacing was sufficiently brisk to maintain focus. This session pushed me to see how much the pace had to be stepped up and how frequently questions had to pepper the reading. The questions themselves had to be clipped, specific, targeted, and, above all, explicit. They had to push the children to read and reread segments to pull out all of the requisite information.

By providing explanations for why a passage should be highlighted, I modeled how they could approach deciding independently what the topic sentences or main ideas were. For example, I would direct their attention: “If we go up to the top [of the page] and if we highlighted ‘the Senate is made up of women and men from all over Canada
with many different backgrounds,’ then we wouldn’t necessarily have to highlight that
next paragraph because that describes specifically all of the [senators’] different
backgrounds.” Throughout the session, the children had opportunities to practice
independently deciding what information was most important, followed by a group
discussion where they presented their reasons. This degree of concurrent interaction with
the text and with their peers was not generally afforded them within their regular
classroom.

What was becoming increasingly clear was the extent of these children’s
challenges and the degree to which these could—and did—impede their learning. The
importance of elaboration was also underscored. The information presented in the reading
was new to the children; therefore, when I elaborated on a passage that they had just read
aloud, this appeared to help them to make connections and to work harder at
remembering what they were reading. As the group began to demonstrate more sustained
attention to what they were reading, they also began to take more initiative in refocusing
one another. When Cody asked if he should read “this whole thing?,” Charlie
immediately responded, “No, just read the answer.” They became more aware of time,
one once they realized that we would not listen to any of the audiotape unless they had used
the time that we had appropriately and productively and, as 3:00 p.m. approached, Katie
said, “It’s three o’clock,” to which Krysta immediately responded, “It’s two forty-seven.”

The children began to ask more relevant questions in response to the reading.
Billy asked, “What’s a clerk?” And, when I answered that the clerk sits and keeps notes,
recording decisions that are made, Katie commented, “That’s strange. They have
computers.” This was the first time that Katie demonstrated this degree of engagement.
Shortly thereafter, Katie was one of the first to answer my question about what else was really important on the page that we had just read and correctly identified the information “at the very bottom about the mace.” Charlie’s interest was captured and he wanted to know, “What do they use the mace for?”

As we turned to the last page of the reading, Cody exclaimed, “We’re on the last page!” as if surprised that we had made it that far. Charlie echoed, almost as if he was telling anyone who hadn’t heard Cody, “We’re on the last page everybody.” Stepping-stones to comprehension-monitoring included enabling the children to complete the reading, to practice highlighting key points, to learn new vocabulary, to reread, and to shape summaries. This required a highly structured context, explicit instruction, targeted questions, ongoing reinforcement and practice closely attending to text. In concert, these worked to support situational interest. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) point to the time needed if engaged reading and learning are to take place. They point to sustained experience and perception of motivation-enhancing contexts as necessary conditions for reader engagement.

**Session Four**

*Context.* Immediately preceding this session, we showed the whole class a short video on the Senate, accompanied by a large and colourful poster of the Senate chamber. They had already seen a similar video on the House of Commons. This served to consolidate what we had presented on the legislative branch of the government and helped to prepare the class for their upcoming field trip to Ottawa to see the Houses of Parliament, attend Question Period in the House of Commons, and meet Peter Milliken, Kingston and the Islands MP and the Speaker of the House.
To introduce the judicial branch of the government, we decided to use the textbook, *Discovering Canada’s Government* (Francis, 2001). To this point, we had used the textbook infrequently. For the initial part of the unit that focused on the electoral process and the “Student Vote” events, the textbook was not up-to-date. In planning the unit, my intent was to provide an enriched curriculum that included current resources, like newspaper and magazine articles and election pamphlets, to engage all of the children. In addition, I hoped that the novelty of using these types of documents would act as a fillip for the students who struggled and expose them to media with which they probably were unfamiliar.

Using the textbook at this juncture would serve several purposes related to text structure, text search, and text summary. The chapter was relatively short, four pages; the layout was relatively clear with subheadings in bold, in a larger font, and capitalized; photographs and diagrams were accompanied by captions that were italicized and printed in red, rather than black; and key vocabulary stood out because it was bolded. Identifying these features would consolidate what we had earlier taught and practiced, both in the whole class and in small-group sessions while providing the semblance of novelty since we had read so little of the class text.

*Agenda.* Building on the willingness of the children to read and wanting to intensify their exposure to reading aloud, I introduced partner reading. The large in-class group, however, would follow the usual format where the children volunteered to read or, if time was short, Reed would choose a student to read aloud. Prior to the partner reading, we reviewed word recognition strategies and comprehension-monitoring strategies. I reminded the children that in an earlier session we had identified what they could do
when they encountered unfamiliar words and asked if they remembered what these were. Expanding on these, I again prompted them to recall what they could do to retain the information extracted from their reading. To set up the partner reading, the children were instructed to read one paragraph aloud to their partner and then reverse the roles where the listener would then become the reader and the reader the listener.

**Meta-agenda.** Assessing the children’s strategic repertoire was critical. They needed to recognize the “fix-up” strategies upon which they could draw if they were to have any success at decoding unfamiliar words and encoding text that they were reading. Determining whether or not these strategies needed to be retaught was essential. The provision of multiple opportunities for practice beyond what occurred in the regular classroom was ongoing. The social dynamics of the group required continued attention to sustain focus, support positive interactions, and promote cooperative learning.

**Observations.** When asked to identify “what we can do when we come to words that we don’t know,” Cody and Katie were the first to respond. Cody listed “look at the picture,” “read on and sound it—break it into parts;” and then said, “There’s nothing else.” He is the child who raced through tasks, usually completing them but rarely with detail. He took the same approach with reading—reading very quickly, but fluently. Because of his ability to decode, he appeared to comprehend far more than he actually did. Therefore his comment, “There’s nothing else,” was in keeping with how he generally approached schoolwork and reading. Katie used her experience in literature circles to add, “If someone knows, you pass to them.” Although not a strategy to support independent meaning-making, the fact that she added something to the list that we were generating was significant. As well, she was paying attention from the outset of the
session and had not needed any prompts to refocus. This, too, was significant as she was usually the slow-starter of the group.

Following up on the strategies that Cody identified, I prompted, “Did you say you could skip over it?” He said, “Yeah.” I pursued, “And then re-read and go back?” At which point, Krysta excitedly jumped in, “Oh! Oh! Try and say it out.” I acknowledged, “Exactly.” To which Cody rather superciliously said, “That’s what I said.” Krysta, however, hung on and countered, “You didn’t say ‘sound it out.’” At which point, Cody let it go, “Whatever.” This interchange, albeit brief, showed the children listening more closely to one another, remembering what had been said, and able to respond appropriately and challenge accordingly. It also demonstrates how prompts had to be ongoing, how important responsive elaboration was, how restating was required, and how sufficient time had to be provided for processing to occur in a meaningful way.

The need to scaffold, to build on what preceded and establish a clear sequence was also underscored. To maintain pacing, sometimes questions were directed to the whole group; whereas other times, I singled out a particular child. Following up on the strategies identified by Cody, and qualified by Krysta, I asked Billy, “What can we do to remember what we read?” Briefly reviewing and restating, “So now you’ve got a whole lot of things you know that you can do when you’re reading if you come to a word that you don’t know. What can we do to remember what we read?” Of note, Billy did not answer immediately; so, wasting no time, Cody leapt in, “Highlight.” The other children quickly followed suit, listing: “highlight,” “underline it,” “colour it,” “write it down on a piece of paper,” and “write it down on a computer.” When Billy said, “look it up in a dictionary,” Cody rebuked, “She said, ‘Remember it,’” nicely monitoring that we had
moved on from word identification strategies. Katie followed up, “Write it down on the chalkboard.” And, as earlier, not an original response, but a response that was appropriate and did build on the information retention strategies that were our focus.

As in the previous sessions, there was always a tension between pushing hard enough to challenge but not frustrate and holding the group’s attention long enough to do so, while containing off-task and off-track comments and behaviours. When I asked, “What could you do besides write it down?” Billy answered with his first meaningful contribution of the day, “You can put it in your brain!” With that, I could introduce the strategy of repetition and verbalization, “One way to put it in your brain is to say it out loud. You can repeat it to yourself out loud, that helps.” Pushing them to identify additional strategies, I asked, “Anything else?” and prompted, “What does it mean to restate something?” Cody quickly jumped in, “Keep on reading the sentence.” Of note, Krysta and Charlie, as well as Cody, defined “restating” as “say[ing] it again;” “keep on saying it in your head,” “over and over and over and over and over.” When Charlie made the connection between rereading and studying for tests, Cody, Billy, and Annie agreed that they, too, would “keep reading it in your mind.” Cody described, “You read it once and then an hour later you read it again, and read it again, and read it again.” In the absence of a strategic repertoire, the children took a more unilateral approach, steadfastly holding onto a particular strategy, like rereading, irrespective of the outcome.

With this group, short, clear, and clipped responses were required. As it became apparent that the children could not distinguish between rereading and restating, I clarified: “If you restate, you put it in your own words. So if you restate, it’s not just saying exactly the same, but you put it in your words to remember it.” Following the
model introduced in the previous session of shortening what the children were asked to read and taking the reading in turn provided ample opportunity for practicing restating.

*Reflections.* At several junctures throughout this session, the children surprised me with their comments and questions that showed they were paying close attention both to what I was saying and to their peers. They engaged in an exuberant discussion where they restated, summarized, and elaborated on a paragraph describing consequences of people disobedying laws. When I asked, “Why do we have a court system?” Katie provided what was, for her, a remarkably full answer: “So if somebody does something against the law, then they can bring them to court and decide if they should go to jail or not.” Listening intently, Annie immediately followed up by reminding everyone, “And don’t forget you have to have a lawyer.”

The introduction of partner reading carried its own set of challenges. I had underestimated the novelty factor. Most of their experience reading aloud was in small group or whole class experiences, not in pairs. Charlie and Katie were less than enthused at working together. Katie wanted “to be by myself.” However after being told, “You don’t have that option right now” and instructed twice to “start reading,” she did. There were some logistic issues as the group transitioned into pairs. Annie and Krysta asked if they could sit in one corner of the room because the “guys are too loud.” Cody told them that “You are too” and asked if he and Billy could move into another corner. Before they began, I designated the roles of reader and listener. After each paragraph, they would switch roles, the reader becoming the listener and vice versa. When Cody asked if they were to switch partners, I mistakenly said, “yes.” I caught myself and corrected, and he countered, “I asked you if we switch partners and you said, ‘yes’.” That degree of
attention took me aback and was a cautionary reminder that engagement and attention come in different guises.

Session Five

Context. With the whole class, Reed handed back the last Social Studies test (cloze) and the Rubric with the final tally of the component parts of the Election Campaign Manager Project. Prior to the lesson itself, we distributed a short homework assignment that I had constructed to complement the day’s reading on The Court System and reinforce text structure and text search strategies. It was straightforward and provided practice identifying key words, using the glossary to define them, and writing a sentence incorporating the word. This prefaced the reading from the class text and served as an advance organizer. Since neither Reed nor I had managed to complete the chapter on The Court System in the preceding lesson the week before, we agreed to simply continue working through the reading. We anticipated that this would take some time, given the combination of complex concepts and, in all likelihood, unfamiliar key words.

Serendipity intervened regarding the composition of the small group. When it came time to withdraw the group, Billy was not there. Due to an incident during afternoon recess, he was outside in the schoolyard looking for a lost object with another classmate. Given our ongoing time constraints, I instead chose another student from the class, rather than sending someone out to bring Billy in and delay the start of our small-group session. The student whom I selected was a very competent reader who performed well academically. With the introduction of a stronger student, I hoped that he could perhaps act as a role model, contribute positively to the social interactions, and counter any possible stigma associated with withdrawing the same students each session. To date,
stigma did not appear to be an issue as the children continued to eagerly wave their hands when Reed asked for participants willing to come with me. Of course, introducing a new group member carried with it the risk of disrupting the dynamic that we had established thus far.

**Agenda.** To tap the children’s prior knowledge and assess what they remembered from the previous reading, they were initially asked to summarize what they had read in our last session. Recognition of features of text structure and text search strategies was the principal focus, including practice using the glossary and restating definitions in their own words. Modeling how to use the assignment as an advance organizer to anticipate key words and practice text search strategies to locate them was also an agenda item.

**Meta-agenda.** To ensure that comprehension-monitoring was taking place, there had to be sufficient time for elaboration on the readings and explication of unfamiliar vocabulary. Word identification strategies needed to be practiced so the children would be able to use them comfortably, confidently, and independently. As in previous sessions, ongoing attention was required to support full participation and maintain engagement and focus. The effects of adding a new group member who did not have the reading challenges experienced by the other group members also demanded careful monitoring, as did determining whether there were any consequences associated with Billy’s absence from the group.

**Observations.** The importance of adhering to the opening routine was immediately evident when I began, “First of all, let’s just…” and Cody interjected, “We have to say our names.” Katie immediately followed up by directing, “We are going to start with what’s his name,” referring to Christopher, our new addition. Once everyone,
myself included, had identified ourselves, I could begin by asking for a summary of what we had read previously. Annie, generally the quietest, was the first to respond, “About the justice system,” and pushed through the instant chorus of competing voices, “How they have a trial and about the jury.” Cody, Katie, and Charlie rapidly added that without a government, “it would have been chaos,” and “then people would have broken out of jail and do all bad things.” Krysta elaborated by telling us about her grandfather who had been a corrections officer when there was a “big riot at the jail.” The others would have eagerly pursued her rendition; but I redirected by asking if they remembered “where we had stopped.” They all erupted and began answering at the same time and arguing over the last word read that day. Reminding them to respond, “one at a time,” I asked Christopher to begin reading.

Having the children read relatively short segments followed by brief explanations of vocabulary that I thought might be unfamiliar sustained their attention. Interspersing their read-alouds with open-ended questions; such as, “How long does it take for someone to become a lawyer?” and “What do you think you would choose—a trial by judge or a trial by jury?” worked to generate interest and some provocative commentary. Cody asked, “Wouldn’t it suck if you go to jail for the rest of your life?” Katie thought that going to jail for a long time meant that “you would have to live in this cave.” Christopher responded, “No, it’s not like that.” And Charlie thought, “If you get put in solitaire [sic], your arms are like behind you.”

When I lost track of who had read and who had not, Annie set me straight, “Katie has read [but] Cody hasn’t read.” Increasingly, I could rely on them to monitor who had read, what had been read, and whose turn it was to read. For a change of pace, we turned
our attention to a diagram of a typical courtroom. Again short, clipped questions about
the roles of the court stenographer and court clerk helped to hold their attention.
Christopher was able to answer that the court stenographer “writes down everything
everyone says.” I fleshed this out, “Absolutely everything and that’s a really hard job
because they have to be really alert and they have to be able…” when Charlie interjected,
“What do they do?” I restated, “They have to take down every single word, and what they
take down is called a transcript.” Krysta asked, “Even if they swear?” and Cody asked,
“Do they write it down?” Katie’s question, “If it’s a bad word, it’s underlined in red?”
generated a great deal of laughter. Providing multiple opportunities to ask their questions
and have them answered was critical to promoting engagement. The group began to show
what was, for them, remarkable perseverance and more sustained focus.

The “start-stop-question-explicate” approach revealed how much could be
misunderstood or simply missed, despite the intensity of the small group experience, the
pacing of the lesson, and the ongoing effort to maintain focus and redirect attention when
it veered off course. Charlie read a short, five sentence paragraph about the criminal trial
process that concluded with a definition of perjury. I followed up by asking, “What does
‘perjury’ mean? If you perjure yourself, what does that mean?” Answers included: “Kill
yourself?” “Murder yourself, it means.” When I tried to redirect them back to the
passage, “We just read it. What does it say?,” Cody said, “I don’t know” and Katie asked,
“What was it?” Annie put her hand up and answered, “You’re not allowed to lie in
court.” When I praised her for excellent listening and attending, Krysta commented, “She
always listens while she’s here,” which was a telling and astute observation. Once the
read-aloud was completed, we reviewed why there were 13 words in bold in the chapter
and what this meant. When I asked what they could do if they did not understand a word, Annie quickly answered that the word could be found in the glossary, confirming the accuracy of Krysta’s observation.

Reflections. The need to model, the need to prompt the children to go back to the text or back to the diagram or back to a photograph was ongoing. Cueing by revisiting what was read did not appear to happen automatically for them. For many, when asked a question about what they had just read, their default continued to be either a wild guess or an “I don’t know” answer. Taking care to determine what the children had not grasped is as important, if not more so, than assessing what they had understood. Depth of understanding cannot rest on assumptions; it must be confirmed.

I continue to be surprised at the level of engagement that they are displaying, reminders to “settle down” notwithstanding. As they practiced looking up some of the key words in the glossary, Krysta exclaimed, “Where’s ‘verdict?’ Oh, good God, I’m dead!” She becomes so completely engrossed in what she is doing and her natural exuberance comes to the fore. When Charlie said that he could not find “verdict” either in the chapter or in the glossary, several children chimed in to direct his efforts.

(Journal entry, April 20th)

Although the children appeared to veer off track at various points during the lesson, their excursions were closely tied to what we had been discussing. The topic served as a springboard for elaborations that were usually tied to their own experiences. Making these connections promoted recall and made the material more meaningful and personally relevant for them. It also served to provide a brief respite from the intensity of
decoding, encoding, and comprehension-monitoring. For example, Krysta’s comment about her mom having to “sometimes go to court” [because of her job] prompted a chained conversation about swearing on the Bible and reference to a scene from the movie, “Legally Blind,” where one of the characters “swears on the Holy Bible and I can’t remember what they say. They say like, ‘I promise to swear…,’ but then they lied.” This led to a further reference to perjury and then to lawsuits and their ceiling, “You can’t sue…for like fifty thousand million dollars.” I needed to allow sufficient time for them to make the connections, while not losing too much time as a result or having the discussion spin off course.

Session Six

Context. In consultation with Reed and Janine, we agreed that the class needed more practice with text structure, text search, and text summary strategies. We wanted to scaffold what we had been doing and incorporate some opportunities for the children to practice more independently the tasks of attending to text features, extracting main ideas, and creating summaries. The chapter in the textbook on the Constitution was not long, only three pages; however, it was dense. Following an introduction, it was organized into three sections: the BNA Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and Human Rights. Initially we considered using a T-chart to organize the main ideas, but ultimately we rejected it on the grounds that many of the students would spend too long trying to complete the chart because it required comparisons between two sets of information presented in two columns, with the crossbar of the “T” as heading level.

Deciding to capitalize on the tripartite organization of the chapter, we settled on giving the children an opportunity to focus on one section only. Reed would introduce the
chapter and we would follow the usual in-class format of asking for volunteers to read-
 aloud the opening section. He would then divide the class into small groups, a total of 6,
 with each group focusing on a section. I would withdraw my small group and put them
 into three pairs, each pair focusing on one section. The task of the in-class small groups
 and my pairs would be to read their respective section, identify the key points and record
 them on chart paper, and then write a brief summary at the bottom of the paper. As in the
 preceding sessions, we continued to focus on strategies for interacting with content-area
 text while providing more intense opportunities for practice, review, and consolidation.
 Anchoring the social collaboration component explicitly within the lesson would
 contribute to novelty and, we anticipated, would support engagement.

 In the preceding session, the dynamics of the small group did change as a result of
 substituting Christopher for Billy. This appeared to be very successful since I could tap
 Christopher’s reading ability to jumpstart the session and, similarly, to conclude the
 reading when time was running out. I therefore decided to continue this approach and
 selected another strong reader, this time a female, Marly. I was hopeful that, like
 Christopher, she could act as a role model and as a counter to any possible stigmatization
 of the group.

 Serendipity had again intervened as Billy was absent from school. Given the
 effectiveness of incorporating a new member into the group who was a skilled reader, I
 conferred with Reed and we agreed that Billy would no longer participate in the small
 group. An even number of children provided more options for grouping arrangements.
 Compared to the other children, Billy’s level of situational interest was low and his
ongoing, seemingly purposeful efforts to distract the other children were counterproductive.

*Agenda.* In preceding sessions, the group required ongoing practice identifying key structural features of content-area text and articulating their significance. Neither finding main ideas nor summarizing came easily to them. Looking for the main ideas in a dedicated section of the text, writing these down, and then crafting a summary of the section and writing it out would provide needed practice while appearing novel to the students.

*Meta-agenda.* Before moving the children into pairs to begin their task, determining what they remembered about looking for main ideas and the purpose of summaries was essential. Also critical was motivating them to engage with what they were asked to do and to produce a relatively finished product within the allotted time. We were rejoining the whole class to present what each of the in-class groups and my pairs had written about their respective sections. Incorporating both reading and writing had the potential to help them to organize and frame their ideas. Writing down their thoughts could also push them to revisit the text, since, preceding sessions had shown, they did not automatically do that when asked to find the main idea or summarize. The process of social collaboration could also support conceptual understanding and using appropriate strategies.

*Observations.* As an opening activity, I asked the children to identify what the “big headings” were. This was telling since they needed to be prompted to read the entire heading. Krysta, for example, said “BNA heading.” When asked directly, “What’s the next word?” she quickly answered, “Act.” Katie demonstrated how she reads the initial
part of a phrase or sentence but does not attend closely to the remainder. When asked to read the titles of the other two sections of the chapter, she first read “Human rights and character of rights.” When I told her to read the first word of the heading, she answered, “chapters.” Instructing her to “Look at it again,” she correctly read: “Charter, Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Human Rights.” When we did the initial introduction to the lesson in the whole class, we identified the headings and pointed them out. Each was in bold and in uppercase. Again, this was a sobering reminder of how explicit one needs to be and how easy it is to assume that the children had listened and understood. Directed practice and repetition are critical, as are frequent reminders like “Do you remember last class?” “Can you tell me what we did when...?”

We moved from identifying and reading the headings to articulating their importance. To make Marly feel part of the group and knowing that she, like Christopher, would have no difficulty with the question, I asked her, “Why should we look at the headings? Why is it worth sounding them out?” Her answer was instantaneous, “Because then you know what you’re reading about and what’s important to read about.” Leaving nothing to chance, I asked if everybody had heard it. Katie said, “No.” Turning to Annie, I asked her to repeat what Marly had said and she easily replied, “To say what we’re reading about.”

After reviewing the directions for the paired activity, I asked, “What’s a summary?” Charlie was confused because glossaries and summaries could both be “at the back.” Once I clarified that a glossary had definitions and could be at the back of a book or at the end of a chapter and a summary usually comes at the end of a chapter, the children began a rapid fire sequence of responses. Without prompting, these included: “It
[summary] tells you what it’s about;” “It tells you about the story.” And Marly provided the most elaborated description, “If you’re reading a second book and like put a summary of the first book in the beginning in case you didn’t read the first book.”

As we were reviewing the headings, the children had their textbooks in front of them (except for Katie who could rarely locate her copy and had to share with another student). I praised Cody for his participation and contributions, “You’re really doing extremely well today. You’ve raised your hand; you’re paying attention; you’ve pointed things out. Well done!” He followed by asking, “What is that guy doing?” He had been looking at the photographs in the chapter and was referring to one of Craig Kielburger at the age of twelve speaking to a group of East Asian children. I turned the question back to the children, “How are we going to find out what that guy’s doing?” Charlie answered immediately, “Read this.” As reward for his prompt reply, I asked him to read the lengthy caption. I provided a brief commentary on the recent Human Rights Award that Kielburger, now 25 years old, had recently received from the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations and a brief explanation of the work of the organization he founded to prevent the exploitation of children and stop child labour. What followed were some intense comments, prompted by Charlie’s question, “Why do people do that [exploit children]?” Ford and Forman (2006) suggest that engagement requires evidence that students are sufficiently active, i.e. involved in classroom activities, evidence that they are responding to one another and that they demonstrate interest in the curriculum. The evidence was ample.

Reviewing the instructions for the paired activity, I assigned Annie and Krysta the section on the BNA Act, prefacing that that section was “really, really important…and all
about how our country got started.” Cody and Charlie, their interest piqued by Craig Kielburger’s work, asked if they could do the section on Human Rights. When I confirmed they could indeed work on that, Cody said, “Thank you.” Katie and Marly were paired to work on the section about the Charter of Rights and Freedom, in the hopes that Marly would be able to keep Katie focused. Initially, at least, Katie displayed a level of engagement not always manifest. When I answered her question about what “human rights” meant with regard to the Charter, she commented, “Oh, that sounds really important.”

Cody and Charlie quickly sorted out that they would each read aloud one paragraph of the section for which they were responsible. As Charlie listened to Cody reading about prejudice, he remembered reading Underground to Canada and seeing a play about Harriet Tubman, “that person that stopped the slavery.” When Charlie read “‘Human Rights Communism’ instead of “Human Rights Commission,” he stopped and asked for help. When I explained what “commission” meant, he immediately made a connection to Kielburger’s work and asked if his organization dealt with violations of human rights. He asked, “What did he do when he was a kid? Did he start the organization?” I reminded him that Kielburger was 12 when he, along with six of his friends, founded it. Charlie and Cody then embarked on a discussion about what grade he would have been in at the time. Cutting that short, I moved them on to identifying the main ideas from their reading. Charlie asked for clarification on what key points meant, “Key words or something?” Once he realized that more than key words were required, he asked if they should “bring the book down [on the floor] or something?” Explaining that they would need to refer back to the book to write down the main ideas and then their
summary, they began an earnest discussion about the key points. This interchange was a reminder of the importance of clarification. There had to be sufficient opportunity for the children to ask questions and to make connections with previous experiences. This was nascent metacognition at work.

Katie and Marly began well, reading through their section, and beginning to discuss what they considered to be some of the most important basic rights laid out in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Marly took the lead, asking Katie: “What do you think are some of the key points in this section?” Pushing her to “pick four” out of the bulleted list, there was some discussion over who would write what down, Katie getting caught up in “telling the microphone.” When Marly was writing on the chart paper, she found it very difficult to hold Katie’s attention. Katie variously sang, “ching, chang, chung” repeatedly, wanted to press the buttons on the tape recorder, and, at one point, simply wandered off, ostensibly looking for whiteout. When Marly turned the task of writing down the main ideas to Katie, she had no idea which one to work on and had to be shown. Very quickly, she veered off track again, singing and tapping along, leaving Marly no option but to pick up the marker and carry on writing. Pairing a strong student with a weaker one does not remove all challenges.

Annie and Krysta had worked their way through their read-aloud on the BNA Act and were carefully writing down the main ideas they had identified. As they reread what they had written, they realized “that doesn’t make sense” and made the necessary correction. Proudly, Annie said, “See, we’re trying to mix them up into our own words.” And Krysta asked, “Are we doing really well?” They had no difficulty taking turns writing out key points, and nicely reinforced one another, “Oh, that’s a good idea,” and
smoothly negotiated whether they should include the date the Constitution came into effect. They helped one another spell out words and were affirming of one another when, for example, Annie decided to “just spell PM because we’re running out of room.” They were effortful and successful at comprehension-monitoring and took care to produce a finished product that they were excited to display.

Reflections. The paired activity gave the children more autonomy than they had had and pushed them to repeatedly interact with the text and to practice comprehension-monitoring strategies like rereading, restating, and using context cues and word identification skills to decode unfamiliar words and encode difficult concepts (see Klingner, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2007). With the addition of the written component, the children were responsible for a finished product that would be displayed in the classroom, along with those done by the other in-class groups. Each of the pairs managed to write out key points for their section and a summary, not the most elaborate but a summary nonetheless. Although the time constraints created some pressure, the children, Katie excepted, remained remarkably on task.

As in previous sessions, the imperatives of clarity, repetition, and practice were dramatically revealed. So, too, was the need to explicitly allow for connections to prior knowledge and previous experience. Making these connections seemed to validate what the children knew and had experienced and reinforced participation and commitment. For self-efficacy to develop, affirmation was critical.

For the first time, Billy’s absence from the group was openly noted. Krysta observed, “It’s a lot quieter here without Billy. Ha, ha!! That’s what the teacher always says when Billy’s sick.” Integrating a new member into the group appeared to be
relatively less disruptive and more productive than having Billy present. By seemingly opening up membership into the group, the “regulars” were not stigmatized and even gained some status by virtue of being regulars.

The paired activity incorporated writing, as well as identifying text features, main ideas, and summarizing. It was a complex task, yet embraced enthusiastically by the children. However, there were decided differences between the lists developed by the small group participants and those completed by in-class groups.

When we returned to the classroom, we added my small group’s three chart paper lists of main ideas and summaries to those already taped to the chalkboard. Janine was absolutely masterful in linking the key points, pointing out where groups had similar answers and where they diverged. She neatly reviewed the criteria for a “good summary,” which included: important information, key words, clear sentences, and put in your own words. She then quickly pulled out from each summary examples of each of the criteria—such a tidy demonstration and reinforcement for each group. Of course, not all groups did equally well, but her approach helped each to see what they had done well and where they could improve what they had written. That being said, I did despair. The qualitative differences between my pairs and the small in-class groups were significant. It seemed that, despite so much work, we had not traveled very far. Of course, I know that gains are relative and small steps are cumulative; but despite where we’ve been, there are so many miles to go.

(Journal entry, post session #6, April 25th)
Session Seven

Context. The class handed in their last Social Studies Assignment for this unit, based on their reading of The Court System. They had had to use the glossary, identify key words, and write sentences to demonstrate comprehension. The third and summative test for the Canadian Government Unit was the following week. As described in Chapter Four, Reed and I considered options for this test. The amount of content drove the decision to have an open-book test. We also replayed the test formats that we had used. Were too much writing required, some of the children would be compromised. Reed suggested an open-book test, which would be a new experience for the class. Therefore Reed would explain what an open-book test was and would emphasize the importance of test preparation, study habits, their experience with identifying important information, highlighting main ideas, and summarizing. In response to a question from one of the students, Janine confirmed that “absolutely!” using post-it notes would be a very effective way to flag important information.

This test was based on their “Student Notes” package (Rainbow Horizons Publishing) which included sections on Systems of Government, the Federal Government, the Governor General, the Senate, the House of Commons, Political Parties and Representation, How a Bill Becomes a Law, the Supreme Court, the Civil Service, the Constitution, Provincial Governments, Electing a Government, and Citizenship and related readings. To prepare the class, Reed walked them through their Student Notes, identifying specifically what they needed to know, giving them time to highlight the requisite words or passages. There were a few sections remaining that we had not completed reading, so that was the task for this lesson. Whatever reading was not
completed in this afternoon’s class would be taken up next class, along with any questions about the forthcoming test, with the test scheduled for the subsequent Social Studies period.

As in the preceding two sessions, I selected a different student to join us. Maddy was in Janine’s Gr. 4/5 class and was one of the seven Gr. 5s in the combined Social Studies class. Maddy was very quiet, neither the strongest reader nor a particularly strong student. However I thought she could benefit from the more intense instruction in the small group and, like Annie, make a positive contribution by modeling attentiveness and concentration. As well, she and Krysta were friends.

*Agenda.* Preparing for the upcoming unit test required careful reading of the text and close attention to extracting salient information. Therefore the text structure and text search strategies previously introduced could again be practiced, as well as the comprehension and comprehension-monitoring strategies. Prior knowledge would be tapped since the initial reading for this session was about the Constitution, which was the topic for the previous session, albeit from a different source. Previewing what we would be reading was critical as there were several topics, some of which had a number of acronyms attached.

*Meta-agenda.* Ongoing was the need to support full participation and maintain engagement and focus. The effects of adding a group member who was not as able as either Christopher or Marly but who had the potential to make a positive contribution had to be considered. The children’s facility and comfort with the text structure and text search strategies had to be assessed while providing sufficient opportunity, as before, for practice.
Observations. Overall, the children were more excitable and harder to focus in this session. This applied both to the whole class and to the small group. Whether it was the upcoming test the following week or, more likely, the effect of warmer weather at recess, the children returned to class noisy and hot. Our small group took longer than usual finding the page where we would begin reading. Cody and Charlie argued over who would use a yellow highlighter and who would use green. And Krysta found her science worksheet, “Ice Cube Meltdown,” lodged inside her Student Notes, and wondered, “How’d that get back there?” I used to full effect the threat to stop audiotaping which served to quickly refocus all of them and prompted Katie to ask, “Can I read first?” Before she began, I had the children recall what sections they had read and summarized last class. They had no difficulty with this. I explicitly connected what they had done previously with what they were about to read on the Constitution, presenting the current reading as a brief summary, in itself, of what we had read in their textbook.

Pushing them to identify key points required the same type of short, clipped, clear questions, delivered at a brisk pace, as in preceding sessions. If the children were slow to answer, I would single one of them out and address the question directly to that child. In this case, I tested the waters with Maddy, using her as I had used Christopher and Marly. She delivered, identifying the most important information from the topic sentence, which everyone then highlighted. Counterbalancing their penchant for highlighting with judicious selection of appropriate text was an ongoing challenge. As I modeled why only "Federal Government Responsibilities” needed to be highlighted and not the detailed list of what those responsibilities were, Krysta commented, “But it helps to highlight.” I suggested that she just liked highlighting and she rather sheepishly said, “Yeah.”
Again revealed was the absence of contextual knowledge and the instances where, unless challenged, the children would “read” words but did not know the meaning of them. They were used to simply skipping over them and “reading” on. They were not used to rereading and trying to use context cues to make meaning. However, once introduced to the meaning of unfamiliar words or concepts, they would pursue and question until they did understand. For example, as they read down a list of provincial responsibilities, I had them stop at “natural resources” and asked them to tell me what these were. Their responses varied from “taking care of endangered species, animals” to “conservation areas” where “you can’t hunt. They have a big sign that says ‘No Hunting.’” As I explained that forests, coal, and oil were examples of natural resources, Charlie questioned, “In California, oranges, are they a resource? I thought about that.” When I explained that because they were planted they were not a natural resource, he replied, “Okay, I get it now.” He followed up immediately by asking if he could carry on reading, “Please, can I read still?”

The children were becoming quite vigilant monitoring how much one another read. When I told Maddy to read, Cody immediately told me that “She’s already read.” Praising her contributions, I explained that “she’s doing so well; therefore she gets to read more.” He had no further comment, given he had not been doing particularly well and had left his Student Notes package behind in his desk in the classroom. As we reviewed some of the key rights described in the Charter, I had the children read, in turn, one of the rights on the list. This picked up the pace and gave the children who had been less focused, like Cody and Katie, a chance to read while pushing them to attend.
There were the unexpected instances when their reactions to what we were reading were quite surprising. As Annie worked her way through “the right to be treated equally in the eyes of the law without discrimination based on age, sex, race, ethnic origin, mental or physical disability, she struggled with “discrimination.” Having sorted that out and ensured that everyone understood the meaning, I finished the remainder for her, clarifying that “sex” referred to “whether you’re male or female.” Katie’s eyes opened very wide and she exclaimed, “Oh! You said a bad word.” When Cody countered, “That’s not a bad word,” Katie held firm, “It’s a disgusting word.” Despite my elaboration that the reference was to gender and despite Charlie’s support, “Mrs. M. just said it wasn’t a bad word,” Katie was unrelenting. She stated, “I’m not writing that word on the test because I highlighted a bad word.” We moved on.

Again I saw how readily the children would respond to a question, forgoing accuracy for participation. Of course, without cueing and referring back to the text, their answers were almost invariably incorrect. Charlie, like Katie, did this repeatedly. He had to be directed three times to reread and revisit what he had just read aloud before he was successful. My series of prompts were quick, taking only a few seconds, but the practice was critical. This continued prompting and redirection did yield some transfer of rereading strategies as we continued to work through the highlighting process. Cody showed signs of monitoring as he asked, “Do we highlight anything important so far?” when we were comparing federal and provincial responsibilities. When I turned his question back to him, he was able to correctly identify key words. As I modeled, I also worked to lessen the extent that I directed what should or should not be highlighted,
leaving them to negotiate with one another. Reminders about the purpose and utility of topic sentences were ongoing, however.

Small successes were important and celebrated. Cody had to be pushed as he struggled to decode “constituencies.” He had to be pushed to “Look at it. Look at it and break it down into parts” and encouraged to sound it out. When he was successful, he let out a whoop and exclaimed, “‘Constituencies,’ I got that!” Krysta was excited when she defined “constituencies” correctly, saying “I just guessed that” which provided an entry point to strategic guesses, anchored in text and not simply random.

I was continually reminded how important it was to challenge my own assumptions and not take for granted their prior knowledge. The next month the class was going to Ottawa to see the Parliament Buildings and meet with our local MP. Their reading distinguished between the federal legislature located in Ottawa and provincial legislatures located in each province. When I asked where, in Ontario, those buildings were located, blank looks prevailed. The question, “What’s the biggest city in Ontario?” generated answers that included: “I don’t know”; “Quebec”; and “Ottawa”. Cody finally came up with “Toronto.”

Both Annie and Maddy displayed remarkable consistency in their attentiveness and concentration. Despite what sometimes seemed to be a flurry of questions when some of the children needed more clarification, lost their place, or were unsure what to highlight, Annie and Maddy were able to answer questions that required scanning text, rereading, and remembering what information they were seeking. One very complicated passage was filled with acronyms for elected provincial and federal members of
parliament. I described it as “alphabet soup.” Neither Annie nor Maddy had difficulty extracting the appropriate acronym and identifying what it represented.

As the session drew to a close, Katie, in her usual timekeeping role, asked what the time was. When I told the children that we had time to read one more page and then would rejoin the class, they were reluctant to return to the classroom. Krysta said, “Oh, I don’t want to go.” Cody added, “Who cares about going back?” And Charlie complimented Katie, “She’s been good today.” With those comments as a preamble, we had time to read one more page. With each child reading one sentence, we moved through the page smoothly and without interruption—a milestone.

Reflections. Although sometimes carried away, the children continued to be thoroughly engaged by and committed to highlighting text. They were animated as we discussed the process, appeared to understand its utility, and recognized that they should be judicious in what they selected. They continued to require considerable practice, however, and needed confirmation that they were making appropriate selections. All understood that “it helps me to highlight” and “helps me to remember.”

Despite their experiences in literature circles and reminders by Reed about normative behaviour in those groups, the dynamics of social collaboration required concerted attention. If reading is to become a social endeavour, then it must include collaborative practices within a community. These are comprised of social goals that encompass helping one another and cooperating with a teacher (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The children were becoming better able to monitor one another’s participation, cooperation, and attention, and better able to redirect, “We’re not supposed to highlight all that.” This is not to say that they were necessarily tactful. Charlie, for example,
castigated Cody for not listening, saying, “He’s deaf.” And, when Maddy was slower to answer a question, Cody needed to be reminded not to be judgmental and accusatory, “She doesn’t get it. She was lying.” Yet they did encourage one another, occasionally offer compliments, and, by virtue of participating fully, helped to sustain momentum and support commitment and persistence.

Session Eight

Context. As we had now completed the Social Studies unit on the Canadian Government, the next unit was Ancient Civilizations. This unit was organized differently as it was built around the students selecting an ancient civilization and completing an independent research-based project on their civilization of choice. The initial Social Studies unit of the school year was Ancient Egypt, so the class already had some experience with researching an ancient civilization and completing a project that involved written work, artwork, and an oral presentation. Reed described how, in that unit, “we had looked at the religion; we looked at the architecture and their form of writing and schooling and [events of] daily life; and they knew a timeline because we built a timeline earlier.” The class had had additional experience researching information when they completed their independently written Prime Minister Report during the Government unit. This report also required a formal bibliography, which was the class’ inaugural experience with reference lists which, in turn, had provided a fine opportunity to explain plagiarism and its consequences.

During the preceding class, which was the introductory lesson for the Ancient Civilizations Unit, Reed had done a brainstorming activity with the class about the “Daily Life of the Ancient Romans.” This was intended to raise questions and model the range
of possible topics that the students could choose to explore about their civilization of choice. The questions were built from the “5 w’s” (“who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why”) and also included the “how” question. (Due to my teaching commitments at the Faculty, I was unable to be at the school for that class.)

Since the students would be working independently on their projects and, as mentioned, they had previous experience completing research projects, only two classes were allotted to set-up the unit. The children had a relatively short time in which to complete the three components: a booklet, a visual representation (either an artefact or a poster on Bristol board), and a short oral presentation highlighting points of interest and an explanation of their artefact or poster. The booklets were due at the end of the month, in two and one half weeks, and the presentations were scheduled to begin in approximately three weeks, assuming no unexpected events or scheduling conflicts arose.

Almost all of the girls in the class were away at a track and field event, including Katie, Krysta, and Annie, my three regulars. I did not want to lose the opportunity to provide more intensive set-up for the project for Cody and Charlie, who would, I thought, benefit from targeted instruction. Therefore I decided to add another boy, a strong reader and competent student, to act as ballast. Like Cody, Evan was athletic and both were on various school teams. I did not think that Charlie would be disadvantaged by this, since he and Cody could, quite possibly, take the lead in showing Evan how our group proceeded. Evan was part of the dominant boys’ group in the class; Cody was also a member; and Charlie was generally included in this group.

_It was a spur of the moment decision today—had to take advantage of a perfect opportunity to pull the group, even though our numbers were reduced and the_
girls were away participating in the meet. Had to add another boy—gender
dynamics being what they are in Grade 5!! Thought that adding two more would
have been too many. Cody and Charlie had to have the “upper hand,” by dint of
experience. Their familiarity with what we did and how we did it could counter
the relationship that Cody and Evan had because of their involvement in sports.
Of course, there was a novelty factor because the girls were not there and I knew
that Krysta and Annie’s presence was always a nice counterpoint to the high-
spirited boys. I didn’t know that the track meet was going to be held this week.
But last week we only had one social studies class—on Tuesday, but I was
teaching, and the second one was cancelled because of early dismissal day. So
it’s been two weeks since I’ve been here. A real challenge keeping apace with the
schedule!!

(Journal entry, May 11th)

Agenda. The tasks centred on developing organizational questions for their
independent projects. Although Reed had developed, with the whole class, questions on
Ancient Rome, the questions were quite generic and could apply to any of the ancient
civilizations. So the boys had to initially decide on which civilization they would
research. The instructions were clear that once they had decided on their civilization of
choice, they would not be allowed to make a change. I hoped to ratchet the questions up a
level and see whether they could formulate more complex, higher-order questions that
would provoke discussion. To prompt this, I planned to have the boys read aloud from
their social studies textbook for this unit, Discovering Early Civilizations (Smith &
Pelech, 2002).
Meta-agenda. Because of the unique composition of the group compared to the preceding sessions where we had mixed gender, the social dynamics merited particular attention. As always, ongoing attention had to be directed towards supporting full participation while maintaining engagement and focus. For this unit, we had a different textbook. How this would impact Cody and Charlie’s ability to attend to the salient text features was noteworthy. Also of interest was whether they would be able to use the textbook as a prompt to formulate their own questions. We had not had much practice with skimming text. This, too, was a skill embedded in today’s session. And, as always, sufficient opportunities for practice were imperative.

Observations. I briefly set up the lesson by referring to the last class when Reed brainstormed the set of questions about Ancient Rome. Interestingly, the boys immediately began peppering responses when I initially asked what they thought was really important about each of the civilizations that they had chosen. I had told them that once we had a series of questions we would then explore the textbook to see if we could find the answers. Meanwhile they each had a copy of the textbook in front of them and I encouraged them to skim it to help them identify important topics. The boys were moving along nicely and, with some prompts, were coming up with questions about religion, systems of government, whether a civilization had a number system and form of mathematical representation, at which point we were summarily interrupted by one of the other boys in the class. He was looking for a small group of students whom the student teacher had taken to the gym, which was the only free space available, to work on their questions. Ostensibly minor distractions invariably require major efforts to refocus the group. Once the “lost” student realized that we were taping the session, he did not want to
leave. Cody, resuming his sergeant-at-arms role adopted in an earlier session, told him, “Get out of here.” He left.

As I think back on today’s session, the interruption was actually brief. And, probably because our numbers were reduced, it did not take very long to redirect the boys and have them refocused on generating topics that they would be interested in pursuing. It probably felt longer because I am always trying to squeeze out every possible moment of instructional time, knowing how much practice, repetition, and review is necessary if there is to be any hope of maintenance.

I am always bemused by my “ace in the hole” for redirecting the kids—they so love being taped that saying that I will stop recording them hastens them along beautifully!

(Journal entry, May 11th)

The boys continued to fire questions about the writing system, artwork, location of the capital city, size of the army, and where the king or pharaoh lived. Pushing them to consider what was important about “main cities,” they came up with numbers of people who lived there, what people ate, their style of dress, and how doctors treated the sick. Charlie grasped that I wanted them to organize the topics using broader headings and proudly stated, “I know where that can all go under.” I followed up by asking him where it could go, to which he answered, “Daily life.” Cody affirmed, “We did not know that.”

When we were once again interrupted by one of the group who had been in the gym telling us that “You guys can have the gym [now], if you want,” the boys leapt at the opportunity, blithely thinking they could have free time in the gym. Again, Cody
directed, “Okay, everyone back on organizing stuff,” and we were back on track. Once they focused, they attended closely to what they were seeing in the textbook. Charlie became quite taken with “that triangle thing” which visually displayed the social structure of Mesopotamia with the lugal (king) at the apex and slaves at the base. Evan noticed another triangle again representing social structure for Ancient Egypt. Pushing them to look at the “big headings” in bold for their civilization of choice, Cody managed to also find “that triangle thing.” Almost despite themselves, they became caught up in what they were doing: “Oh! Here, can I show you something really interesting in this book? Right there. That’s so interesting; look at the crops. Yeah, farming.” Charlie picked up on this, adding, “What do they do to eat?” Pushing them to think about what happens when many people congregate and live in cities and how this impacts food supply and division of labour, Evan added, “What were their jobs?”

When I asked them why climate was important and what was determined by climate, Charlie stated that he did not know what “determine” meant. Based on observations within the whole class setting, Charlie would, in all likelihood, not even attempt to ask his question within that venue. The need to prompt was continuous as they could so quickly distract one another by a tug here and a push there, and, of course, the inevitable silly, but grade appropriate, comment. The challenge was to sustain their focus, but, with relatively modest redirection, their interest in the task and topic propelled them forward. The textbook itself met Armbruster’s (1984) criteria for considerate text and Weaver and Kintsch’s (1991) for global coherence, in that the layout for each civilization was similar with ample use of text boxes, larger fonts, clear headings, time lines, maps, photographs, and drawings.
Continuing to press the boys to make broader connections among the ancient civilizations, I pursued the importance of climate and used their answers to develop the topic further. The following interchange is representative of how the scaffolding was constructed. Targeting Cody as he was veering off, I asked him why climate was so important. He answered: “Because you know it could be burning or it could be snowing, and they could be like eating snow. And so then they would have a cold climate.” Following up, I asked what would happen to their growing season if they had a really, really cold climate. Would it be long or short? They chorused, “Short.” Continuing, I asked them to think about what else was shaped by climate. This prompted a flurry of responses about temperature, about using a compass and using the sun as a directional marker. When they realized that all of the ancient civilizations were located in warm climates, they recognized that there would be a longer growing season and more food could be produced.

Pushing them to skim the text to see what other broad headings we may not have identified, they saw the heading, “Society and Culture,” but, when asked, only Evan could say that it referred to “beliefs and afterlife.” Again it was necessary to elaborate and respond to their questions about what culture was to ensure that each of the boys grasped the concept and could explain it. Cody became quite caught up in the table that showed Precipitation in Nubia, which he read aloud. However, when asked what “precipitation” meant, he could not answer. As usual, Cody could “read” the words, but he could not comprehend their meaning and, unless challenged, generally would not ask what they meant.

As we worked to organize all of the topics that the boys had generated in outline
format, using headings and subheadings, Evan had continued to skim the textbook and
found on one of the pages on China a photograph of a person having acupuncture. This
generated very animated conversation—“Thirty needles in the butt does not look
comfortable!” and many questions about the procedure and rationale. Cody turned the
discussion back to the task at-hand by suggesting that acupuncture could be considered as
science under the broader heading of knowledge and achievements. Using a large piece
of paper for the outline, we cross-referenced the list of topics that I had scribed as the
boys developed their ideas. Once we had fashioned an outline, the boys took out
individual pieces of paper to write out their questions under each of the headings.
Counting down the remaining five minutes helped to focus them and chivvy them along.
Despite what had seemed like a circuitous path, they were able to very quickly respond to
my injunction to “write down all of your important questions” under the appropriate
heading. Cody summed up, “Important? Oh, what is their history, what is their climate;
what is their religion, and what is [sic] their weapons?” Cody and Charlie began writing
well before Evan, who needed to be prodded. Charlie showed a bit of one-upmanship
when he said to Evan, “I’m on my third paragraph.” Evan came up with an additional
question, “How did it [the civilization] end?” Prompting continued as I asked them,
“What are you missing?” When I linked crops to the civilization’s system of agriculture,
Charlie immediately asked, “What’s agriculture?”

By this point, each was writing and starting to count out loud the number of topics
they had listed under the various headings. They began to compete and worked more
quickly to add to their outlines. Continuing to take advantage of every opportunity for
responsive elaboration and positively reinforcing their responses along the way, I asked...
why knowledge and beliefs were so important. Charlie quickly answered, “Cause it’s what they learned, what they thought,” and Cody followed up by asking, “What was their sports?” Reminding them that they left out system of education, Evan assumed that all civilizations would have school. When I pointed out that some cultures did have formal schooling, they began asking questions about how children would learn and who would teach them. Significant was the fact that we had reached the end of the period and the boys had not raced out of the room but continued to ask questions and to add to their outlines.

Reflections. Although the composition of this session and dynamics were different without the girls and with reduced numbers, certain features were constant. Highlighted was the importance of providing multiple opportunities for interaction so the children could ask questions of me and of one another. As in previous sessions, there was a need for questions to be fast-paced, clear, and concise. Not losing the thread of the questions and revisiting a topic more than once was also necessary for comprehension and consolidation of ideas. Letting the children freely skim through the textbook served to pique their interest in more than one civilization and to raise questions far more spontaneously than in their regular classroom. For children for whom distractibility is ongoing and focus is problematic, this was helpful to maintain engagement.

Adding a written component so each could come away with an outline in-hand for their independent research project was helpful for several reasons. There was the obvious “take-away” factor in that they now had produced an outline from which to work. Further, the act of writing served to redirect the boys at a point in the session when their attention would possibly have wandered beyond the point of relatively easy redirection.
As they wrote and began to compete to see who had more topics listed under the major headings, they, unknowingly, developed a more complete outline. This was healthy competition and a serendipitous outcome.

The need for and value of responsive elaboration was also demonstrated. Wood, Pressley, and Winne (1990) suggest that learning gains are associated with spontaneous generation of precise elaborations. Building on this and on Pressley’s earlier work with adults on elaborative interrogation, they conducted two experiments with children in Grades 4-8. Findings supported elaborative interrogation as the only condition to facilitate significantly the acquisition of facts. Without answering why questions, they argue that children do not have an opportunity to “think through” the relationships connected to the facts and are not, therefore, making complete use of their knowledge base to understand what they have been asked to learn. This production deficiency (Flavell, 1970) helps to explain why unembellished facts need to be anchored, contextualized, and explored. Therefore, tethering why questions to factual information can help to facilitate learning. For children whose learning is compromised by their reading difficulties, the opportunity to engage with text, to ask questions, to hear answers, to revisit those questions and answers, and to engage with their peers while doing so is of paramount importance.

As in all of the sessions, redirection and refocusing had to be ongoing. Yet, as each session proceeded, although the need remained, the time required to redirect became shorter and shorter. My expectations for full participation were understood well by each of the children. Given the intensity of the interventions, the ages of the children, their respective challenges with attention and with reading, it was hardly surprising that
redirection was necessary. What was perhaps more surprising was the commitment that they displayed individually and collectively as, together, we took full advantage of the available instructional time.

**Summary**

This chapter has explored the landscape of the parallel lessons and allowed the reader an insider’s view of the comprehension challenges confronting the children, the instructional interventions necessary to support their needs, and the resulting learning community that was created. We have seen the need for intensity, consistency, and repeated practice and review. We have seen that progress takes place incrementally and gains are realized as participation is encouraged, motivation is captured, engagement is actively promoted, and situational interest is generated. Operationally, these are not independent of one another but synchronous. We have seen the efficacy of embedding text structure, text search, and text summary strategies into content-area lessons. Throughout the sessions, word analysis and word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension were incorporated “in the moment” through read-alouds and related activities. Noteworthy was the children’s eagerness to participate, growing sense of commitment to the tasks at hand, and burgeoning self-efficacy.

The next chapter bookends this one and is the final results chapter. It allows the reader to hear the children’s voices as they reflect on their experience in the small group. It also provides post-assessment results for those children. Additionally, the reader hears the voices of the other children in the class who were surveyed about their social studies experience over the course of the year and asked to provide an assessment of the quality of their learning.
CHAPTER SEVEN

A RETROSPECTIVE: LISTENING TO THE CHILDREN’S VOICES AND AUTHORIZING THEIR PERSPECTIVES

“You have to like what your [sic] learning about.”

(Gr. 5 student’s addendum on her survey)

Students immersed in interesting texts are not consumed with anxiety about whether they are reading better or worse than their classmates and are not fearful of looking foolish. Teachers who provide conceptual themes, real-world connections to texts, a variety of topics and genre within the classroom, and tasks that allow students to expand their knowledge and experience from reading are enhancing students’ intrinsic motivations for reading. These motivations propel students toward excellence in the skills of comprehension and toward high amounts of reading, which also increase comprehension.

(Guthrie & Humenick, 2004, p. 334)

This chapter initially revisits the children in the small group and considers their assessment of their pull-out experience, based on individual interviews conducted on the last day of school. Their descriptions of their interactions with expository text reflect intensity and a sense of purpose, generally not seen in their classroom performances. Each of the children commented favourably on the instructional milieu, particularly the small size of the pull-out sessions. They were able to identify explicitly strategies that reflected comprehension-monitoring. Their posttest assessment results are presented and attendant improvements in comprehension identified. Results from the survey administered to the whole class are then introduced and themes and highlights presented.
The survey was based on the class’ experiences in social studies from December through June and asked for their appraisal of the quality of their learning.

Cook-Sather (2002) argues that the perspectives of those most directly affected by educational policy and practice are those who are least often consulted. She contends that student perspectives must be authorized if educational practice is to be improved. Further, if teachers listen to and learn from their students, they can then begin to see the world from their students’ perspectives (Clark, 1995; Finders, 1997; Heshusius, 1995) and, in so doing, make their teaching more accessible (Commeyras, 1995; Dahl, 1995; Lincoln, 1995). Using Giroux (1992), who maintains that “students have been silenced all their lives” (p. 158), Cook-Sather asserts that students’ views on education are singular and invaluable and both adults and students could benefit by listening carefully.

Nuthall (2005) also recognizes the significance of acknowledging how different students’ perceptions can be from teachers’ perceptions of the classroom. In an interpretive account of his own learning over four decades of classroom research, he provides an insightful look at cultural patterns of interaction in schools and classrooms. He contends that teachers must develop ways of managing a class of 25 to 35 students with varying knowledge, skills, interests, and motivations. To this end, ritualized routines of teacher-student interactions have evolved and both teachers and students have learned what to expect from each other.

Within these ritualized patterns, students learn how to manage their own private and social agendas. They learn how and when the teacher will notice them and how to give the appearance of active involvement. They get upset and anxious if the teacher is keeping more than a passing eye on them, as the teacher will get
upset if the students do not respond in culturally expected ways (Hughes, 1973).

(Nuthall, p. 903)

Cook-Sather’s concern that those most directly affected are least often consulted
and Nuthall’s contention that ritualized routines can obscure and possibly distort
teacher’s perceptions about their students’ learning prompted me to interview the
children who regularly participated in the small group and to survey the entire class.

Context for the Individual Interviews

The individual interviews took place on the last day of school, in the morning and
early afternoon, immediately following lunch recess and just before the class’ end-of-the-
year party. The collective excitement was at fever pitch as the children were making
arrangements for the party which was to be a surprise for their classroom teacher. I was
included in the planning, however, and was asked to help them orchestrate events to
ready the classroom at lunchtime, as the children had French immediately after lunch and
the party was to begin thereafter. Their teacher was out of the school at lunchtime and,
upon his return, would be going directly to the gym to teach physical education to the
kindergarten class, so the classroom was ours to ready. Given these circumstances, I was
delighted that the children were so willing to be interviewed. Knowing that I would be
recording the interviews was also an inducement. My assurances that the interviews
would not be lengthy and no one would miss the party allayed the expressed concerns of
Katie and Cody. I had prepared a set of five questions and anticipated that the semi-
structured interviews would last approximately 10 to 15 minutes. These interviews were
conducted with the five regular members of the group. Billy, who had participated in the
first four sessions, was not at school the last three days of the final week. Time
constraints did not allow for interviews with the four other children who had participated in the small-group sessions.

**The Children’s Perspectives**

Overall, the children emphasized the value of repeated opportunities to read, to track what they were reading, to explain and ask for explanations, and to discuss, which then led to greater understanding. Krysta’s comment was representative, “When we talked as a group and when we went around the circle and one of them had a chance to read it, because it made it easier for me to read it and to understand it.” They also mentioned how they liked the writing that was incorporated and were able to describe a variety of writing experiences that we had undertaken. Cody described how “We would read a book and we would answer questions after…and, once we read one page, we went over the words.” He continued, “And we wrote stuff about the book, like in short form.” When I prompted, “taking notes,” he said, “Yeah, that’s it.” He highlighted how note taking, answering questions and “writing sentences down to remember them” helped him to understand and to recall what he had read. Cody particularly liked that “we didn’t have to read the whole book to ourselves; we could share and pass on…[but we could] read a lot.” As the child for whom reading had meant finishing as quickly as possible, with comprehension frequently compromised, this was a decided step forward. As the interview drew to a close, he indicated that he might even read something in the summertime, possibly one of the books in the *Captain Underpants* series. In his initial *Reading Attitude Inventory*, his response to whether he read for pleasure was, “I barely read, so….”
Transcripts of the individual interviews were analyzed and triangulated with fieldnotes and journal entries. The three emergent themes included intensity and a sense of purpose, instructional milieu, and embedded instruction.

**Intensity and a Sense of Purpose**

The children’s descriptions of their interactions with expository text were characterized by intensity and a sense of purpose, often lacking in their classroom performances. Annie spoke of how they had “to search in the story that we had or the paper that we had, and then we had to write it down, because you had questions and then we had to find the answers. We wrote the answers down.” She addressed how “It was easier for me to hear what was going on” which, she elaborated, made it easier to focus, to be less distracted, and to remember more. Charlie similarly relished the opportunity for explanation, “like after the paragraph [we talked] about all that’s going on and after each paragraph or a sentence even, and…we’d stick it in our notes…I liked when we were reading out of the books, yeah, reading out loud—we practiced that…I just liked doing that.” Much to my surprise, Charlie vividly recalled one of our early sessions when we read the *Maclean’s* article about the Governor General, which he thought “was a little hard because it was a little black, so I couldn’t read it that well.” He was referring to the quality of the photocopy which was “a little black” as the photocopier was not performing well on that day.

And the ever-so-distractible Katie spoke of taking turns so that “we could read…[which] was very fun cuz…if you didn’t know a word some people put their hands up and helped you out.” She went on to talk about how that helped her to remember what we had read, as did the practice of making predictions based on the title and previewing
text. She also mentioned the opportunity the small group afforded for “someone telling us what it’s about if you’re away one day.” The importance of clarity and continuity were brought to the fore in Katie’s comments. For children with more intense reading challenges, compounded by attention deficits, vigorously attending to the text and actively supporting meaning-making were essential. Also critical were reviews of previous lessons and explicitly drawing connections between preceding lessons and the lesson of the day.

Instructional Milieu

The children specified how the instructional milieu impacted their learning. They singled out the size of the group, which appeared to be significant for all of them. Krysta mentioned,

When you have a question, you can just put your hand up and easily get your answer. Like when you’re in a bigger group, there’s more people putting their hand up, and sometimes I put my hand up for a long time and I never get [called on]…It makes it a little easier with a smaller group.

She also thought that “It’s easier to remember things when you’re not half asleep.” In the whole class setting, one of her coping mechanisms was simply to stop paying attention. Without the support that she required, without dedicated attention, without the needed redirection, and when the task at hand was at her frustration level, Krysta opted to withdraw and restrict her efforts and participation. And Katie spoke at length about wishing there were more opportunities for working in smaller groups. Recognizing that logistics can pose problems, she recommended that if a small group like the one that we had would not be possible, then the class should be divided in half. That way “we’d get a
lot more work done…And it’ll be fast.” Charlie expressed similar views: “I liked reading in the group cuz it was individual and there was just a few of us and not the whole class.”

Cody, as mentioned above, preferred reading aloud to silent reading and liked that they could share, pass on to the next person, and have the opportunity to read a lot. Cody’s comprehension was much improved in this setting as he had the chance to listen and to read and to raise questions along the way. Because we took it in turn, the children were able to read aloud, but could “pass on” if the text became too challenging for them. And I had learned that what they read had to be in manageable chunks and those chunks were variable—sometimes single paragraphs, sometimes multiple paragraphs, and, if the pace had to be accelerated, sometimes single sentences. Annie succinctly described how she liked the people in the group and “the stuff we read” and “the group stuff” that we did because “It helped us to learn, and it was fun.”

Embedded Instruction

From an instructional standpoint, the children were able to identify several aspects of text structure, text search, and text summary that overlaid the parallel lessons and the whole class lessons. They spoke of highlighting text and focusing on text features such as font sizes and words that were in bold or italicized or underlined. They identified how they could use the glossary and the index and appeared pleased that they had learned many new words. They spoke of note-taking strategies like using sticky notes, writing down highlighted text, and highlighting their own notes as well as strategies that we had identified to remember information from the readings. Each of them referred to their experiences writing summaries and, in particular, the partner work that they had done
where they used chart paper to summarize a designated section of a chapter in the Grade 5 Canadian government textbook.

Charlie no longer seemed daunted by learning new words and described how “when we saw a word in bold and looked it up [to see] what the word meant…when we read the bold that helped me read, so I learned new words…and those might be tricky words.” Krysta similarly described how they learned many new words by looking at those that were in bold and then “we looked them up in the glossary and we learned what they meant. She also thought that highlighting “important things for tests and stuff” helped her to study “because you know what to look at and you know what words are and sentences [that] are going to be on the test. It helps you remember.”

Katie singled out how working together on the same reading and highlighting key ideas helped her to remember. This was a notably insightful comment, given the continuous challenges that she experienced trying to focus and pay attention to the task-at-hand. Annie also found highlighting and “reading the fonts so we could remember what we were talking about” to be helpful because “It trained me to focus on the most important word that we needed to focus on.” She recognized the efficacy of this training when she was rereading and studying for a test, “It would catch my eye and you’d remember them again without having to read the whole thing.” And she sounded confident that she could now do this independently.

The children were in accord about the value of “the chart thing” that “we did when…we had this huge sheet of paper and copied down stuff from the books, but we did it in our own words.” Charlie and Krysta were referring to Session Six when the children were paired and each pair was given a designated section to read and summarize from the
chapter on the Constitution in their social studies textbook. Their summaries were written on large sheets of chart paper. Katie described how she liked “when we had to do those poster things…because it was really fun to do with a partner.” Clearly the experience resonated with her and her recollection was positive. This was somewhat ironic as Katie had been paired with a very strong student whose patience she managed to try because it was so difficult to keep her centred on completing the summary before we had to return to the classroom.

Children’s Recommendations

When I asked the children if there was anything that they thought we should have done differently or should have changed, both Krysta and Katie advocated for doing more in small groups like ours. Recognizing that that might not be feasible the majority of the time, Katie suggested an alternative of moving to bigger groups, “like half in our class and half down there” [the classroom that we used]. Not only would more work be accomplished, in her opinion, but “we’ll make more charts!” She thought that more opportunities for partner reading could be incorporated and that would be helpful because “if I made a mistake, my partner can help me out.”

Krysta described the multiple distractions of the whole class setting and the pressure that she felt because she had trouble listening, focusing, and knowing where she should direct her attention. She said that she liked being “just in a quiet group.” This perception is interesting and relative, as the group was hardly quiet as the participants jockeyed to read, comment, and ask questions. In a poignant comment, she described how she
told my mom it would really help me if I could get all my work done for the whole year in like one night if I was just in a dark little room with only a flashlight and nothing was around me, and I just had my work and no sounds whatsoever, because it’s so distracting when everything’s around you.

Like Katie, Krysta recommended more opportunities for “all the teachers [to] go with smaller groups.” Being realistic, she tempered her recommendation, “but not for the whole time because some people work better not in a smaller group.” The performance anxiety which she experienced was compounded by her distractibility and probable learning disability. There was no doubt of her commitment and desire to learn. What continually challenged her and frustrated her was the difficulty that she experienced trying to learn. Therefore she was sensitive to the multiple ways in which learning could take place and thought that “people would understand a little bit better” if they could be placed in groups of varying sizes, contingent on whether they became more distracted in a smaller or larger group.

“It was really good.”

The final question that I posed was open-ended and asked if there was anything else that they would like to say. It was at this point that Cody mentioned he might do some reading in the summertime. Annie asked if she could go back upstairs so she would not miss the party; Katie said that she really liked the student vote for the prime minister; and Charlie spoke of how much he enjoyed all the reading that we did, “reading out of the books…and reading out loud, we practiced that. I just liked doing that.” Krysta, however, reflected on the entire academic year and thought that “this was one of the hardest years ever; but with more teachers, it was a little bit better.” In the whole class
setting, she found that “with other teachers you get different explanations so you understand it a bit better.” She continued, “I like that it’s fun. Because if it’s not fun, [like] with math it’s not very fun, so I don’t do that well at it because I hate it. I don’t pay attention very much in that because it’s so boring and it’s so hard for me.” She explained that in social studies “we got to do a little bit of art stuff and projects and digging, and it was actually all interesting and like real.” She summed up, “It was really good.”

**The Children’s Posttest Assessment Results**

The posttest used the same instruments as the initial baseline assessments, with the exception of the *Reading Attitude Inventory*. These included the Informal Phonics Survey, the Instructional Level Profile (Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised) for word identification and word attack, a comprehension passage from the Bader Reading and Language Inventory, and the Fluency Scale Rubric. (See Tables 2, 3, 4, 5 that show the quantitative pretest and posttest results for the small group and the pretest and posttest results for the whole class, including the small group. These speak to the range of abilities in the class.) The posttests were conducted in June, during the final weeks of the school year. Also included was a brief writing sample where the students were asked to write a couple of sentences answering the question, “What did you really like or not like in any of the social studies units this year?”

(See the following tables for the pretest and posttest results for the small group and the pretest and posttest results for the whole class.)
Table 2 Pretest Results for the Small Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE-TEST N = 5</th>
<th>Informal phonics survey (74)</th>
<th>Pseudo word (36)</th>
<th>Word identification (106)</th>
<th>Word Attack (45)</th>
<th>Comprehension passage</th>
<th>Fluency (4 levels)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>3.42053</td>
<td>2.86356</td>
<td>10.2323</td>
<td>5.84808</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>63-72 (9) b</td>
<td>27-36 (9) b</td>
<td>55-79 (24) b</td>
<td>23-28 (5) b</td>
<td>Gr. 3-Gr.5</td>
<td>Level 2-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. a Highest possible score.

b Range of scores in data.

Table 3 Posttest Results for the Small Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>69.48</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>30.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>.54772</td>
<td>1.7885</td>
<td>9.8387</td>
<td>5.61249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>69-70 (1) b</td>
<td>31-35 (4) b</td>
<td>59-80 (21) b</td>
<td>21-36 (15) b</td>
<td>Gr. 4-Gr.6</td>
<td>Level 2-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. a Highest possible score.

b Range of scores in data.
### Table 4 Pretest Results for the Whole Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE-TEST N = 25</th>
<th>Informal phonics survey (74) a</th>
<th>Pseudo word (36) a</th>
<th>Word identification (106) a</th>
<th>Word Attack (45) a</th>
<th>Comprehension passage</th>
<th>Fluency (4 levels)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>34.12</td>
<td>80.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
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<td>2.18556</td>
<td>9.39805</td>
<td>4.78992</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>63-74 (11) b</td>
<td>27-36 (9) b</td>
<td>55-98 (43) b</td>
<td>23-42 (19) b</td>
<td>Gr. 3-Gr.11/12</td>
<td>Level 2-Level 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* N = 25, based on the number of consents received. In total, 27 consents were returned; however, two children moved and changed schools while the baseline assessments were conducted.

*Note.* a Highest possible score.

*Note.* b Range of scores in data.

### Table 5 Posttests Results for the Whole Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST-TEST N = 15</th>
<th>Informal phonics survey (74) a</th>
<th>Pseudo word (36) a</th>
<th>Word identification (106) a</th>
<th>Word Attack (45) a</th>
<th>Comprehension passage</th>
<th>Fluency (4 levels)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<td>34.07</td>
<td>80.93</td>
<td>33.6</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
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<td>1.86956</td>
<td>12.02062</td>
<td>6.3561</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>69-74 (5) b</td>
<td>31-36 (5) b</td>
<td>59-102 (43) b</td>
<td>21-43 (22) b</td>
<td>Gr. 4-Gr.11/12</td>
<td>Level 2-Level 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* N = 15 as a representative sample was used, in the interests of time. The children who were assessed at the end of the academic year spanned the range in the class and included very competent readers, satisfactory readers, and poor readers, including those in the small group.

*Note.* a Highest possible score.

*Note.* b Range of scores in data.
Before detailing the performance of the participants in the small group on the posttest measures, the quantitative results require consideration and raise several issues. Overall for the whole class, including the small group, performance on the Informal Phonics Survey and the Pseudoword Z-test demonstrates phonemic awareness and mastery of the alphabetic principle. This is consistent with the differences drawn by Roberts et al. (2008) between younger and older struggling readers. (Although focusing on students with learning disabilities, their recommendations can be extended to students without formal identification who are struggling readers.) For the small group, there was improvement in these areas that could be attributed to dedicated practice and read-aloud experiences. The word identification and word attack measures, however, may not be sensitive enough to capture changes that were observed in the performance of the children in the small-group sessions. For exceptional learners, like these children, persistence and a willingness to read challenging text and grapple with decoding unfamiliar words and encoding complex sentences tend to precede quantifiable changes on standardized measures. Regarding word attack, these data point to weaker skills in this area for the whole class, as well as the small group. Of interest, word attack skills, for older readers, appear less compromising to overall comprehension than for younger children.

Regarding comprehension, there were improvements for the children in the small group, while the whole class results again underscored the significant range of reading abilities and a ceiling effect for the strongest readers. However, qualitative reporting is more sensitive to represent performance outcomes for the children who participated in the small-group sessions. These results follow, which include observational data on
comprehension and fluency. (See Figure 3 following for a synopsis of the major accomplishments of each individual who regularly participated in the parallel lessons.)

Figure 3. Synopsis of the major accomplishments of the children who regularly participated in the parallel lessons

Katie:
- Improved comprehension.
- Closer attention to text seen by improvements in the number and accuracy of self-corrections.
- Able to recognize and articulate how expository text features promoted recall.

Cody:
- Decrease in speed while reading, thereby improving fluency.
- Closer attention paid to cueing and encoding.
- More confident about note-taking skills and summarizing.

Annie:
- More purposeful, focused, and engaged.
- Improved comprehension.
- Able to self-correct accurately without interrupting encoding.
- Able to identify main ideas, summarize, and easily cue to the text during question and answer interactions.

Charlie:
- Demonstrated greater persistence and follow-through in conceptual understanding.
  Displayed more confidence while reading and improved comprehension.
- Improvements in vocabulary, no longer daunted by unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Improved fluency.
- Readily able to articulate questions and pursue answers with tenacity.

Krysta:
- Decreased performance anxiety.
- Demonstrated greater on-task behaviour and willingness to complete all tasks.
- Improvements in comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary.
Katie

Katie’s performance on the Informal Phonics Survey remained the same (93%); however, she improved from 86% to 97% on the Z-test component of the Phonics Survey that required reading one syllable nonsense words with the same onset, “z.” The baseline Instructional Level Profile put Katie at the Grade 3 equivalent for word identification and Grade 2.5 for word attack. On the posttest Katie made small gains on word identification, Grade 3.5, and word attack, Grade 3. Given that she had made some gains, she read a Grade 4 comprehension passage, with fluency remaining at a level 2 (out of 4). Although she had little prosody and her rate was slow, she understood very well what she was reading and was able to self-correct while reading. She did not need to cue back to the passage to answer the comprehension questions. Her comprehension was very good and her answers to the literal questions were accurate and concise. She had no difficulty recounting the passage and easily answered the question that required inferential comprehension.

Cody

Cody’s performance on the Informal Phonics survey was slightly lower, 95%, as opposed to 97% on the baseline. This could be attributed to carelessness as he raced through it as if it were a time trial. On the Z-test, there was no change, 97% accuracy. He made marginal gains on word identification and marginally declined on word attack, placing him at mid Grade 5 level. Because he had made some gains on word identification and because of the type of content-area reading that we had done over the year, he was given a Grade 6 passage to read. His fluency showed improvement (level 3+) and he had some intonation and expression. His rate was good and he was paying
attention to punctuation, which he had not done in the initial assessment. He appeared not
to be reading solely for speed and with the intent of finishing as quickly as possible. But
comprehension continued to be problematic. He had difficulty with the comprehension
questions and had to revisit the text and cue repeatedly. He required multiple prompts to
answer fact-based questions. However, once prompted, his answers were accurate. He
was able to answer the inferential comprehension question, but his answer was minimal
and lacked detail. He could, however, provide a satisfactory recount.

Annie

Annie showed improvement on the Informal Phonics Survey, 93% compared to
85% on the baseline. On the Z-test component of the Phonics Survey, she scored 86% on
the posttest and 88% on the baseline. On the Woodcock measures, Annie showed gains
on word identification, approaching mid Grade 3 level, but not on word attack, remaining
at Grade 2 equivalent. For reasons similar to those for Cody, namely the gains she had
made on word identification and the readings that we had completed in the small group
and whole class, Annie read a Grade 4 comprehension passage. Her fluency was choppy
and prosody was flat, which placed her at a level 2. Her comprehension, however, was
very good. She remembered what she read, provided an accurate and complete recount,
easily answered the fact-based comprehension questions, and had no difficulty with the
inferential question. She made three self-corrections and these in no way interrupted her
attention to what she was reading or her ability to recall what she had read.

Charlie

Charlie showed gains in all of the assessment measures. On the Informal Phonics
Survey, he improved from 89% to 95%. On the Z-test, he moved from 75% to 88%
accuracy. On the Woodcock Tests, Charlie’s word identification improved, placing him firmly in Grade 5, rather than approaching Grade 5 level. Word attack showed very modest improvement, placing him at Grade 3 equivalent in contrast to earlier results that had him approaching Grade 3 equivalent. Charlie read a Grade 5 comprehension passage, again for similar reasons to passages selected for the other children. Overall, Charlie showed more confidence as he read aloud. Although he did not demonstrate much by way of prosody, he was not flat as he read and did have some expression and intonation. His rate showed improvement and there was some flow, as he read primarily three or four-word phrases, placing him at level 3 on the Fluency Scale. He was able to answer all of the comprehension questions, requiring a prompt to look in the first paragraph for one question. His recall was reasonable and his recount satisfactory. He had no difficulty with the inferential question. Like Annie, Charlie had three self-corrections which did not impede the flow of his read-aloud and did not require him to reread.

Krysta

Like Charlie, Krysta showed gains on the assessment measures, with the exception of the Informal Phonics Survey where she remained at 93%. On the Z-test, she moved from 86% to 92%. She showed improvement on both word identification and word attack measures, moving from Grade 4 equivalent on word identification to early Grade 5 equivalent and from early Grade 2 level on word attack to approaching Grade 3. Again, as with the other children, passage selection (Grade 5) was based on the gains that she had made and the content-area text that we had studied. Krysta read at a good rate with inflection and some expression and attended to punctuation. Although she remained at a level 3 on the Fluency Scale, reading in three- or four-word phrase groups,
comparatively she read more fluently than she had during the initial assessment. She demonstrated good comprehension, easily cueing for the answers to the literal questions. Her recall was excellent and she did not need to cue, answering before she actually looked at the relevant sentence in the paragraph. She provided a sound recount but did need a prompt for the inferential question. With that, she proceeded to answer the question without difficulty. She did insert two prepositions as she read, but these had no impact on meaning. Like Charlie, she appeared more confident as she was reading.

Billy’s posttest assessment results are included since he participated in four of the eight small group pullout sessions. In contrast to the other children, Billy’s gains were limited. On the Informal Phonics Survey, his posttest results were 97% and 98% on the pretest. On the Z-test, he moved from 91% to 93%. On both word identification and word attack, Billy did not show improvement. His pretest results placed him at the mid Grade 5 equivalent on word identification and almost at Grade 3 equivalent on word attack. His posttest results placed his word identification as approaching Grade 5 and his word attack as approaching Grade 2.5. On the comprehension passage, his rate was choppy and lacked prosody. He was able to self-correct three times but made several errors as a result of reading quickly and not looking closely at the word; e.g. “after” rather than “to alter.” On the Fluency Scale, Billy read at a Level 3 on the pretest and a Level 2+ on the posttest, intermittently reading in three or four-word phrase groups. As in the pretest, speed appeared to be his major goal, making his rate quick but not accurate. However, his comprehension was surprisingly strong given his challenges with accurate word identification. He appeared interested in the topic, “Early Tools,” and was able to recount
what he had read, albeit briefly. He answered the inferential question minimally and without detail.

As in the initial baseline assessments, the posttest assessments reveal a complex picture of the components of reading difficulties. They also emphasize the inadequacy of single measure assessments when understanding the particular challenges confronting struggling readers. In addition, for struggling readers at the junior level, small steps must be seen as incremental and cumulative and goals must be set accordingly.

For each of the children, with the exception of Billy who participated in the initial four of the eight sessions, improvements in comprehension and comprehension-monitoring were seen. These areas pose the greatest challenge for older struggling readers. As Roberts et al. (2008) point out, these readers either are unaware of appropriate repair strategies, such as rereading or slowing their reading rate, or unable to monitor their comprehension. They acknowledge the importance of decoding words fluently and understanding meanings of words; however, “the point of the whole enterprise is to understand the meaning of written text” (Roberts et al., p. 66). The posttest assessment measures reveal that the regular participants in the pullout sessions improved their comprehension and demonstrated that they could deploy repair strategies, such as cueing, rereading, adjusting their rate, and attending to context. As well, they were able to remember what they read and draw appropriate inferences. None of the children were daunted by the passage that they read; and, as soon as they were presented with it, they eagerly began reading and remained focused throughout. Each could provide an accurate recount without difficulty, grasped the main idea, and readily articulated it. They were able to answer the inferential question satisfactorily, some with more
elaboration than others, however. Notable was the difference in confidence as the
children read. They read with more authority, worked to decode unfamiliar words and
were generally successful, reread a phrase or sentence as needed, and carried on.

**Survey Results**

We had the advantage of novelty with regard to the Grade 5 Social Studies
curriculum. The children had never participated in the Student Vote Project and had no
experience with the electoral process. The class field trip to Ottawa in May to visit the
Parliament Buildings was also a highly memorable experience and, for almost all of the
class, also a novel experience. Because the students had the opportunity to self-select an
ancient civilization to study, this, too, carried with it novelty and provided incentive. And
the archaeology unit brought the hands-on opportunity to learn about and experience an
archaeological dig. Also each unit varied in what the children were expected to do and
how they were assessed on the accompanying tasks, tests, and projects. Of course novelty
in and of itself does not guarantee interest and engagement. But it can promote students
becoming invested in the topic. This, in turn, carries with it what Snow, Griffin, et al.,
(2005) describe as a “web of benefits” (p. 55). These include the use of protracted
strategies for comprehension, increasing the time on task for strategic processing, and a
willingness to learn new strategies that could lead to more reading achievement in the
future.

The survey results reveal the role that interest and engagement play, identify
instructional supports that buttressed learning, and provide an avenue to determine the
effectiveness of our teaching based on the students’ assessment of their learning. They
also expose the inherent value in listening to students’ voices and embedding them “as
Reed allocated time for me to prepare the class and do a set-up for the survey.

Janine’s students were not there, however, as we did this in the morning after math, not during the regular social studies periods. I arranged with Janine to speak to her seven Gr. 5s later in the day. I had a chance to talk about the survey—what it was, why they needed to be thoughtful when completing it, why they needed to take their time to answer each question as fully as possible, the importance of what they had to say, and how I would use their information. They also were given the opportunity to write their names on the survey or not. (All did write their names, however.) Not sure exactly how long I took doing the set-up—at least 15 minutes, maybe more, and the kids were really attentive and asked some very interesting questions about my teacher!!

Reed very kindly told the kids about the conversation that he and Janine and I had had the previous day, after school. (I had asked them for feedback on the survey and they were incredibly helpful re. layout—line-spacing and formatting—as well as suggesting that there should be a question(s) that related to strategies that we had taught and strategy use.) He told the class that the resources that I had brought in had made a big difference to him and also to them because the government unit was very different from how he had taught it for the last five years since he had been at that school and how he had never done the Student Vote Project before. When he was finished, the kids burst into
spontaneous applause!! I was overwhelmed. This was, of course, a perfect entrée to my set-up for the survey.

(Journal entry, 21st June)

Of the 32 surveys distributed, 31 were completed. (See Appendix G for the survey entitled “How Good Was Your Learning in Social Studies?) One student (Billy) had begun his survey but did not complete it because he was absent three of the last four days of school. Another student missed the last week and a half of school, so he never received a survey. Since the students were working on their archaeology projects during the regular social studies periods, additional time was clawed from other periods over the course of several days. The surveys did require a significant commitment from the children as they were five pages long and asked them to comment on their learning overall in social studies over the course of the semester and then broke this down with questions related to the units on government, ancient civilizations, and archaeology. As well, there were questions about what they could have done to enhance their learning, questions that asked them to identify what they thought they were able to do independently regarding text structure and text search, a question about the relative difficulty of non-fiction compared to fiction, a question about the experience of having three teachers who worked together teaching them, and a final open-ended question. The format of the questions was varied and included short answer, circling or highlighting relevant items from a list, and rank ordering. Highlights from the survey results follow.

The Most Important Idea Learned

When the students were asked what they thought was the most important idea that they had learned in social studies, they overwhelmingly responded that it was learning
about the electoral process and “poleticx.” One student neatly captured the majority view:
“I thought everything was important but the government was the most important because
a new election happens very often. And if I didn’t know how to vote, then where would I
be in eight years?” Another student admitted that the government was the most important
“because it’s about the laws in the country [but] it’s not my favourite subject in all of
them [social studies units].” The children emphasized the importance of knowing how to
vote, recognizing that one should vote; understanding how to go about finding “out more
about different parties and deciding which one you want to support and vote for.”

Self-Assessment and Learning

The children were asked for an overall assessment (very good, good, adequate, or
poor) of their learning in social studies over the course of the whole semester and to
provide a reason for their self-assessment. 91% thought that their learning was either very
good or good. They attributed this to enjoying what they were learning because they
found it interesting, understandable, and well taught. They spoke of how they paid
attention, listened, remembered what they learned, and became engaged in the projects.
Some of the children said that although some of what they learned was easy and some
was hard, they nevertheless “learned a lot.” Several of the children mentioned that what
they learned was new to them; for example. “I learned lots of new things that I never new
[sic], especially in the government systems. I really enjoyed it.” And another student
commented, “I got good marks and I learned more stuf [sic] that I didn’t know.”

Nuthall’s (2005) interpretive account of his learning based on detailed recordings
and observations of teachers and students emphasizes the extreme individuality of student
learning. His data revealed that students’ prior knowledge was student-specific and
generally students “knew at least 40% of what the teachers intended them to learn. Consequently, the students spent a lot of time in activities involving what they already knew and could do” (p. 903). As previously mentioned, novelty worked to our advantage. The survey went some distance in corroborating the importance of interest, engagement, and choice if students are to commit to and become invested in learning.

The teachers were praised because they were “very good and they never let you be lazy.” Another specifically mentioned the organization and structure of the lessons and the use of visuals and the chalkboard: “It was easier to learn things that were layed [sic] out for you and you could see what was happening in a class and didn’t start dozing off. When teaching becomes more of something you see, it’s easier to pay attention than when it’s just oral.” The children appeared to like the newspaper articles that we used, principally during the government unit, but also during the archaeology unit. For example, “I found that when Ms. Martin brought in newspaper articles, it made me more interested because the proof that something was going on in the world—the proof was right there in front of me.”

During the set-up for the survey, we emphasized the importance of answering the questions thoughtfully and honestly and explained that the surveys would not be graded and only I would see them. The survey was structured in such a way that some questions were rephrased, but, because of changes to format, the questions appeared to read differently. This was done to validate and cross-check responses. The class appeared to grasp why they should be forthright and were remarkably candid and, I believe, honest in their responses. “I understood most of the things we learned. But sometimes I would say, ‘nah, not interesting,’ or say, ‘Oh, cool!’ It all depends on the day.” And the student who
had given himself the lowest self-assessment of any in the class, between adequate to poor, stated that his reason was “Because I didn’t really pay attention and wasn’t there.” (This could be both literal, as he missed several classes, and figurative, as he was inattentive and contributed minimally to the whole class discussions.) Yet, when asked on the survey whether he had anything else to add about what he had learned or how he had learned about social studies, he commented, “No, I don’t have anything to say but thank you for teaching us about stuff and making things a lot funner. (Thanks a lot.)”

**Instruction and Learning**

From an instructional standpoint, the survey asked the students to “describe one thing that your teachers did that helped you understand what you think they wanted you to learn.” Some answered more generally citing the projects that they had done, the student vote, and their field trip to Ottawa to the Houses of Parliament. Others were more specific, emphasizing, for example, highlighting “because it mayed [sic] me look at the work and I know it is important” and note taking. Some mentioned individual interactions; such as, “talking one-on-one,” providing “me [with] an example of what to do if I didn’t understand or they talked to me until I understood.” Several mentioned the types of classroom interactions that took place where there were opportunities that “helped me explain my answers more thoroughly and they wrote on the board and Mrs. Martin came in with the newspapers to really help the whole class understand the lesson.” A representative comment about the “hands-on” materials that were incorporated emphasized how the teachers made a chart of the parties and used the parties’ colours and flyers…that way we also learned what the colours for the parties were, who was running
(pm/mp) and what a flyer actually [sic] looked like. Like you may know what something is but would never really know what it was until you saw it.

Others thought that the reviews that we did were helpful, “We read notes a lot—we keeped [sic] going over it.” Linked to this was creating a context where there was ample opportunity to ask for additional explanations that would “explaine [sic] it more if you didn’t understand what they were saying.” Sequencing and chunking were also seen as important, “going through step by step for confusing stuff.”

To draw out the connection between instruction and learning, one of the survey questions asked the students to “Describe one thing that you did that helped you to understand what you were learning.” Many mentioned highlighting and clearly had incorporated it into their repertoire of reading and study strategies. “I pay attention very closely to what the teachers are teaching me and I highlight and take notes to study for my tests.” Another explained how she “highlighted what I didn’t understand and then I went back to the highlighted words and read them over.” Some spoke of working hard “to understand and just think about it until I understand;” while others mentioned paying attention and listening; for example, “I tried to listen to them well and try to keep fokest [sic].” Several students referred to the projects that they had done. Some commented generally, “projects because they make you learn more,” while others were more specific and commented on “doing projects on the prime ministers and Ancient Civilizations really helped because we would get to research stuff.” Another noted, “One thing that helped me understand about electing and running a campain [sic] was when we did the campain [sic] maneger [sic] project.” The Student Vote Project also resonated for some as a powerful learning experience; for example, “When the students got to vote. It made
me realize the pressure that comes with the responsibility of voting. Everyone wants
other people to vote for one party, which completely defies the phrase, ‘free will.’”

When asked to assess what they thought about the experience of having three
teachers who worked together to teach social studies, the students were overwhelmingly
positive. They appreciated the opportunity to hear diverse points of view and the
possibility for more dedicated attention. They noted: “I liked it because it makes [for]
different opinions on things;” “It is nice because they all new [sic] different facts about
each subject, and I felt I learned more;” and “It was better and quicker to get help and
have questions answered.” One student enthusiastically proclaimed, “I learn 3x more and
better!” Another thought that it was “helpful because each teacher had more facts and
opinions than one teacher alone, and that made me more open-minded as an individual.”
This was echoed by the student who thought that “at least one or 2 told us something new
and they can all tell us different answers.” Some thought it was “easier to understand
because I was getting more explanations about the topic,” while others thought that their
questions were answered more quickly. A very able student commented, “I liked having
3 teachers because if a kid asked a really good question and one or two teachers didn’t
know, then maybe the other one would.” This was a perceptive comment because we
modeled asking questions of one another and, on occasion, correcting any misinformation
that one of us may have had, or indicating that we would investigate further and gather
more information and present it in the next class. Pedagogically, we were in agreement
that the children needed to learn that information had to be assessed, accuracy was
important, and asking challenging questions was a worthy undertaking. The sole
dissenting opinion was held by a student who had a learning disability who thought that it was “hard because all have different teaching stils [sic].”

The final survey question was open-ended and asked, “Is there anything else that you would like to say about reading strategies, about social studies topics, about your learning, about what you liked or did not like, about what was really interesting for you, or about being able to choose your own topic to study?” Fourteen children indicated that they did not have anything else that they wished to say; however, 17 children chose to respond. As mentioned earlier, the survey took some time to complete and was five pages long; so I was surprised at the number who elected to answer the question.

Of those who did, several mentioned how much they liked being able to choose their own topic of study for the Ancient Civilization project. The most enthusiastic expressed how much she “LOVED getting to choose my own topic.” One boy was quite candid about why he liked having choice, “I like being able to choose my own topic because you might already know some stuff about it.” Another mentioned choice and also how she had no difficulty when she was doing her research if she came “to a word in a book that I don’t understand, I go and find it in the Glossary and read the defenition [sic] for it.” One of the very able students embraced the strategies that she had learned and the topics studied and the projects completed. She thought that all of these “helped me become more interested in social studies.” And, from a student whose attention often seemed deflected and who was not a regular participant in class discussions, “I would like to say that I’ve learned a lot and I had lots of fun.”

For the children in the small group, three of them included additional comments. Cody, whose written work was rushed and often done to a minimum standard, said that
he had learned how to “write stuff and things down in point form. So when I havto [sic] write a test I know most of the awnsors [sic].” Charlie “liked doing all the projects in the social studies units. I also liked doing the student vote.” And Katie, who required ongoing efforts to maintain her focus and dedicated support if she were to complete any of the tasks associated with the projects, let alone all of them, was particularly voluble,

I liked to do all projects because it was really fun and it was easy and we had a good time doing all those projects and finding lots of information and going on the internet and it helps you find all the stuff that you need to print.

I had scribed her answers on the last three pages of the survey so that she would be able to complete it. This appeared to give her the opportunity to express her thoughts more fully.

To contextualize the survey results, the students were in no way predisposed to expository text. One student who accurately self-assessed himself as a strong reader commented, “Neither is harder…since I’m very good at understanding reading.” Another student also said that fiction and non-fiction were “the same to me.” Two boys found non-fiction easier “because everything is more true than fiction” and fiction can have “slang words and wizards that say all the magic words that are hard to read.” The remainder of the class thought that non-fiction was more difficult. Reasons included longer and “harder wordes [sic],” “strange words and lots of things I don’t understand,” “to sereous [sic],” “not as exiting and adventureist [sic] for the kids,” “boring—like the Mayan people ate avocadoes,” and “You have to understand more and pay attention closely to the words or you could miss something that is really important.” A few
students spoke of the entertainment value of fiction when contrasted to non-fiction where you can “lose interest because there is [sic] usually only facts.”

**Summary**

The individual interviews with the children who participated in the small group instructional intervention and the surveys completed by the entire Grade 5 class show how much children have to say when their voices are authorized. When children are asked, they offer, as Cook-Sather (2002) suggests and the data reveal, insights that can prove valuable to educators. As teachers, we attempt to help our students to think deeply, critically, and metacognitively about their learning. This, in turn, can generate more commitment and greater investment in both what they are learning and how they are going about it. Cook-Sather captures the possible outcome when “students not only feel more engaged but are also inclined to take more responsibility for their education because it is no longer something being done to them but rather something they do” (p. 10). We have seen, through the interviews and survey data, how engaged students can become when their interest is captured, expository text is accessible, and multiple opportunities for interactions with text and with one another are provided. We have also seen how well they can assess the quality of their learning, given the opportunity. For older struggling readers, progress can be slow and gains often occur in small increments. The sensitivity of qualitative reporting provides a finer-grained assessment of respective challenges and achievements for these children.

Guthrie and Scafidi (2004) raise the issue of alignment between learning and instruction and introduce the concept of “natural alignment,” the relationship between “the complexity of the new knowledge to be learned from a text and the complexity of
the cognitive strategies needed to build that knowledge” (p. 246). They suggest that successful teaching attempts to coordinate strategies so students are able to construct a coherent pattern of relationships between and among concepts based on reading. This notion can be extended to include constructing a coherent pattern of relationships based on all aspects of classroom interactions, including discourse, pedagogy, and text-based interactions. Natural alignment can, therefore, also serve as a scaffold for self-efficacy and a bridge to support and promote self-regulation. This is pursued in the Discussion Chapter which follows.

However, the closing words for this chapter must belong to the student who wrote in large print on the top of the first page of her survey, “You have to like what your [sic] learning about.”
CHAPTER EIGHT

LANDSCAPES OF LEARNING:

LINKAGES, INTERFACES, AND REFORMULATIONS

*Given that most reading comprehension interventions are complex and demanding to teach, it is important that these realities be carefully considered in designing professional development and subsequent supports to optimize the chances of successful implementation.... Merely turning the task of figuring out ways to overcome potential implementation barriers to those on the front lines decreases the chances of innovations being successfully adopted.*

(Faggella-Luby & Deshler, 2008, p. 77)

Maxine Greene (1978) sets us the task of being in touch with our landscapes, grounded in our personal histories and lived lives. To do so requires that we are conscious of our evolving experiences and aware of our encounters with the world (Greene, p. 2). Revisiting her notion of the “landscapes of learning,” originally mentioned in the first chapter, reinvokes the metaphor of the multidimensional, complex, and richly textured encounters that comprise the educative experience as a learner or as a teacher-learner. Greene speaks of the need for “wide-awakeness,” of the need to transcend passivity, if learning is to take place and new connections made, new themes uncovered, diverse patterns recognized, and problematizing sanctioned (p. 3). It is these “actualities of experience” that provoke “sense-making” and reflection. Embedding myself in a Grade 5 classroom and living this ethnography meant that I uncovered a landscape different from the one I anticipated and I experienced sense-making in ways that were provocative and challenging. This chapter explores that landscape, using as anchors the
three objectives with which I began this study, namely, (1) to provide a qualitatively finer-grained assessment of the difficulties experienced by older struggling readers as they interact with expository text, (2) to develop and implement a cohesive program of interventions that targets critical requirements of content-area text, including text structure, text search, and text summary, and (3) to establish and describe a collaborative and intensive research partnership with a classroom teacher to design, implement, and evaluate research-grounded interventions for his class. Buttressing each objective, however, are the constructs of authenticity and mindfulness.

**Authenticity**

Authenticity required that the children became invested, to the fullest extent possible, in the curriculum. Authenticity required that the children understood what the real-world applications were. Authenticity required that we believed that what the children were learning would, ultimately, have some degree of personal relevance and meaning. Authenticity required that every effort be made to inculcate the notion that what we were teaching and what they were learning had significant application well beyond the classroom and well beyond the moment. Results from the interview data and the survey data corroborate that the children were able to make these connections between their classroom learning and the real world. Krysta’s summary comments speak to this: “It was actually all interesting and like real. It was really good.”

Authenticity speaks to the conditions that allowed the children to be successful. The context of the parallel lessons provided scaffolded support on tasks that were meaningful to them, relevant to their lives, and consistent with the valued tasks of the regular classroom. In this study, parallel lessons were nested within the context of the
classroom and provided targeted instruction sensitive to the comprehension and comprehension-monitoring challenges experienced by the children in the small group.

Equally telling were the consistent survey responses where the children overwhelmingly agreed that the most important idea that they learned in social studies had to do with government and the electoral process. As invested as the children were, so, too, were we in the intensity of the collaboration. This was implicitly understood, however, rather than explicitly addressed. It manifested itself in our respective commitment to provide ongoing authentic learning opportunities. In so doing, these opportunities translated into an expanded instructional repertoire. The interviews with both Reed and Janine speak to this, as do the descriptive data that show how text search, text structure, and text summary were instantiated into our teaching and into each of the social studies units.

The stage was set, however, by the calibre of the classroom discussion. Hadjioannou (2007) describes authentic classroom discussions as a classroom-based speech genre where issues of interest are pursued through dialogue that articulates ideas and opinions which, in turn, build on participants’ contributions. Consequently, these discussions often have no preordained conclusions. Because of their exploratory nature, Hadjioannou sees authentic discussion as a socially demanding speech genre that requires negotiation or questioning of ideas, querying the contributions of others without offending them, and revealing some personal beliefs and thoughts. In part because of the modeling that Reed, Janine, and I did where we were free to challenge one another and question one another, which we did, and in part because we actively encouraged class participation, allowed time for open-ended questions, and required that exchanges were
respectful, the criteria for authentic discussion were frequently met. The following journal excerpt is representative of the range and depth of discussion and provides a glimpse into the demands of the genre.

_Incredibly intense discussion today—the children surprised me with how far they went and the insight they demonstrated. We began by asking them to think about classroom rules and identify what they were and why they thought we had them. Then we asked them to think about school rules, what they were, and why? Then we asked if they had rules at home for things they were supposed to do or not do. Lots of animated discussion there!! The pivotal question was next: What if we had no classroom rules (BIG cheers!!) and what if we had no school rules (more cheers!). And then we waited. They responded slowly, at first, and then fast and furious....mayhem on the school yard.... no class schedule, then who would know what to do when???. everything would be all mixed up....people wouldn’t listen or just do what they wanted....and, someone asked, “How would Mr. T. know what he should do if there weren’t any kids inside ’cause they were all outside,” Ultimately, they decided it would be a mess. One very strong student mused, “It would be really hard to learn anything, and then what would we do?” Another interjected, “I think the word is ‘chaos,’ and asked, “Is that right?” We concurred.

This discussion served as the springboard that launched us into the read-aloud about systems of government. The children eagerly volunteered to read and continued to fire questions as they made connections between our initial discussion and the readings that introduced them to anarchy, monarchy,
dictatorship, constitutional monarchy, and democracy. Quiet, shy, Veronica queried, “How do dictators like Hitler stay in power when people know they’re doing bad things?” Before we weighed in, we asked the class to respond. They had much to contribute.

(Journal entry, December 22nd)

Certainly there were no preordained conclusions as the discussion seemed to propel itself. Hadjioannou notes that the pedagogical value of authentic classroom discussions is well-established, yet research in classroom interactions repeatedly reveals that these types of interactions are rare.

Mindfulness

Our intent for classroom instruction was to develop a “thoughtful classroom” where the curriculum was probed to uncover the issues lying below the surface and then to lead students on nothing short of an “expedition to mine these gems” (Ritchhart & Perkins, 2000, p. 44). Walker and Soltis (1994) suggest that curriculum must not be separated from the teaching-learning process but seen as knowledge in relation to the learner. To this end, a thoughtful classroom requires a significant degree of investment by all participants, teachers and students alike. Noteworthy is the fact that this class was considered to be the most difficult in the school with a high proportion of identified students, a wide range of abilities, and no additional support. Not only did the boys outnumber the girls, but many exhibited challenging behaviours and were often off-task, highly distractible, and required redirection. This was not a class that readily lent itself to “mining the gems.” The assessment results reveal the range of abilities in the class overall and also the areas of reading processes that were problematic for the children with
the most significant reading deficits. However, the results from the interview data and survey data show that the children were able to recognize what they learned and were able to assess the quality of their learning. In so doing, they demonstrated metacognitive awareness, also a critical contributor to mindfulness. Certainly not every child was equally mindful. One of the most disaffected learners freely admitted that he “didn’t really pay attention.” Regarding each of the units, he stated: “Didn’t really care much for government….Didn’t really pay attention in civilizatians [sic]….Didn’t care mach [sic] for archeology. Found it [a] bit borin [sic].” Yet he identified voting in a general election as the most important idea that he learned in social studies and included a thank you for “teaching us…and making things a lot funner [sic]. (Thanks a lot.)” Although one could query his degree of investment, he reported he learned, almost in spite of himself. A curriculum-based intervention that is intense and authentic has the potential to cultivate a thoughtful classroom, where mindfulness can be distilled.

Mindfulness suffused the tenor of the classroom instruction, steered curriculum development, undergirded the thrust of the small-group sessions, and was integral to the collaborative process. Langer (1989) sees mindfulness as a facilitative state that can lead to greater creativity, flexibility, and use of information, as well as promoting memory and retention. In so doing, it can enable individuals to feel that they have greater control over their lives. Its “subjective ‘feel’ is that of a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness or being in the present” (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, p. 2). Ritchhart and Perkins (2000) suggest that the educational potential of mindfulness is significant and lies not in improving test scores but in dealing with some of the more intractable educational issues, such as transfer of skills and knowledge to new situations, the development of
deep understanding, student motivation and engagement, critical and creative thinking, and developing learners who are more self-directed (p. 29). They go on to argue that if these aims of education are embraced, then so too must mindfulness be embraced as a goal. Transfer is contingent upon ongoing refinement and reorganization of one’s conceptual categories; deep understanding requires that ideas are explored and tested from several perspectives; motivation to learn and an ability to be self-directed and metacognitive require personal control and investment; and critical and creative thinking are contingent upon openness to new ideas and a willingness to move beyond one’s mindset (Ritchart & Perkins, p. 29). Although a difficult construct to define (Langer & Moldoveanu), mindfulness goes some way towards helping to understand what Sarason (1998) means by a context of productive learning.

*Hot Cognitive Economy*

Ritchart and Perkins (2000) introduce the idea of creating a “hot cognitive economy” in the classroom where the cost of high-level thinking, risk taking, and mindfulness is low and the rewards are high (see Perkins, 1992). Such a classroom requires that mindfulness be more than a set of discrete instructional techniques. Mindfulness requires taking hold in ways that “permeate the lives of both students and teachers” (Ritchart & Perkins, p. 29). To this end, three high-leverage practices are suggested to nurture a mindful disposition: These include (1) looking closely, where students are taught to be receptive to new information and willing to explore it, (2) exploring possibilities and perspectives, which, Ritchart and Perkins acknowledge, can be particularly challenging given the egocentrism of youth, and (3) introducing ambiguity, where information is introduced conditionally, rather than absolutely, thereby
encouraging sense-making and engagement on the part of the learner. These practices are well represented in this study and useful in revealing a “hot cognitive economy” in action.

Our instructional practices did leverage to advantage and served to promote mindfulness in this Grade 5 classroom. “Looking closely” was represented by the real-world connections that we drew as new information was presented. Given the upcoming election, the relevance of the Canadian Government Unit was self-evident and supported by the currency of curriculum materials, such as newspaper articles and campaign literature that we used. In the case of the Ancient Civilizations Unit, we initially had the children think about how they conduct their daily lives and identify some of the customs, routines, and practices that they follow. We then tied these to their initial Social Studies unit on Ancient Egypt to develop additional topics. These topic headings were then applied to their civilization of choice, providing structure and organization. The survey results supported how much the children valued selecting which civilization they would study for their independent project. For the majority, choice was motivating and promoted commitment and engagement. Centring the Archaeology Unit was the experiential component of conducting an archaeological dig, which included preparing the site as well as excavating it.

“Possibilities and perspectives” were introduced through the competing party platforms and the notion of promises made by each party, followed up by assessing the relative trustworthiness of those promises. The Campaign Manager Project that the students completed put them in the role of a campaign manager where they had to invent a political party, develop a platform, logo, brochures, campaign button and slogan, create
a month-long campaign itinerary, write a speech that their candidate would read at an all-
candidates’ meeting, and design a newspaper, radio, or television advertisement or write
a letter to the paper expressing their candidates’ concerns about particular issues. For the
Ancient Civilizations Unit, the children were introduced to very different ways of living
and being, given their explorations of their civilization of choice. This pushed them to
consider both possibilities and perspectives as they learned about their civilization. The
Archaeology Unit required that the children adopt the persona of an archaeologist. They
had to take care in preparing the site, demonstrate accuracy in their measurements, and be
methodical as they began to dig for artefacts. For most, these requirements were novel
and demanded a degree of patience and diligence that were not often manifested.

“Ambiguity” allowed the children to arrive at their own decision on party
preference and to vote accordingly. They had to undergo a sense-making process where
they weighed respective platforms, assessed their relative merits, and then made an
informed decision by voting for their party of choice. Subsequent lessons continued to
lead them through political issues, including the legislative and judicial processes. This
allowed for ongoing discussion and consideration of the parliamentary system.
Ambiguity also carried with it complexity and notions of how various pieces of the
political pie fit together. Ritchhart and Perkins (2000) suggest that ambiguity and
complexity can contribute to a conditional understanding of the nature of the world where
knowledge and understanding are in a constant state of flux. As students come to
recognize this, they can be supported by open and active instruction that leads them
towards sense-making and filling in the gaps. If they can become sufficiently engaged in
the process, a greater sense of their own agency as learners can result. Certainly this is
hardly a straightforward process. Necessary are targeted instruction to ensure access to instructional material along with sufficient scaffolding if students are to become comfortable with these notions of complexity and conditionality and aware of how to proceed.

The Ancient Civilizations Unit was less ambiguous than the Government Unit but still required the children to demonstrate understanding of how a civilization functioned, how it was governed, why various customs and traditions were normative, and whether it survived or faltered. These are complex understandings. As the survey results revealed, most of the children became invested in their projects. This can be attributed to the opportunity to choose their civilization and to construct a visual representation, such as a diorama. All of the students had to present their visual to the class and speak about it for 5 minutes or less. By and large, their presentations were enthusiastic and reflected a developing sense of their own agency as they talked about the research that they had done and why they chose to create, for example, a Roman gladiator’s arena, a Chinese pagoda, or an Indian temple. The experiential dimension of the Archaeology Unit presented complexity in the form of attention to detail and attendant consequences of sloppy work and the need for meticulous record keeping. In the whole class readings that we did to prepare for the dig itself, ambiguity and complexity were revealed in the challenges of uncovering, dating, and authenticating artefacts and working with pieces and fragments rather than intact objects.

Ritchhart and Perkins (2000) argue that a mindful disposition is necessary to alter substantially the students’ educational landscape. Our efforts to suffuse mindfulness into the classroom setting and the small group instructional sessions contributed to a
landscape of learning where productive learning became possible. As Sarason (1998) described, “productive learning literally produces new knowledge and attitudes about self and subject matter; it alters in some way the relations between what is inside and outside, the subjective and objective” (p. 93).

**Emergent Picture of Older Struggling Readers**

By promoting authenticity and cultivating mindfulness, we created the backdrop against which the difficulties experienced by the children who received the targeted instruction played out. The methodology of this descriptive and interpretive ethnographic study provided significant opportunity to gain a richly textured understanding of the particular challenges confronting these older poor readers. As seen in the results chapters, the baseline assessments provided more detailed information than the usual classroom assessments about the particular difficulties encountered by these children, as well as information about the range of reading abilities in the class as a whole. Sharing this information with the classroom teacher served two purposes. Firstly, more specific information meant that interventions could be more closely aligned with the students’ needs. Secondly, the information acted as a stepping stone towards developing trust and demonstrating credibility, both essential for a fruitful collaborative relationship.

The picture that emerges of the older struggling reader reveals the critical and pivotal role of comprehension and the extent to which comprehension is compromised by a set of deficits. These include cognitive, motivational, affective, and attributional components (Martin, 1994). This constellation, individually and collectively, operates in conjunction with the classroom dynamic. For older poor readers, the classroom context takes on increasing significance as the social and distributed aspects of learning become
more deeply infused (Greeno, 1997; Greeno et al., 1996; Putnam & Borko, 1997, 2002). As children become older, their reading struggles compound, given the additional demands of reading-to-learn, the decreasing emphasis on narrative text, and the increasing use of more difficult expository text. As their reading difficulties intensify, motivating these children to read becomes more difficult (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). This can be attributed to a spiraling history of failure, the considerable effort necessary to decode and encode text (Roberts, et al., 2008), or to a combination of both.

We have seen how the children in the small group had, over time, developed a variety of default mechanisms that they used advantageously to deal with classroom requirements. Although they had their own defenses, there emerged a pattern of behaviours common to all. They were readily distractible and used their distractibility to counter frustration, feelings of inadequacy, and performance anxiety. They were remarkably accurate in their self-assessments, knowing that their peers outperformed them in reading and reading-related tasks. None of them expressed a preference for expository text over narrative. Because of their comprehension difficulties and their weak comprehension-monitoring processes, their written work was also directly affected. Although Cody excelled in sports, Katie was athletically inclined, Annie had artistic talent, Krysta had exuberance, and Charlie had affability, these abilities and characteristics did not compensate for their lack of academic success.

The interview and survey data from the small-group participants reveal an interesting contrast between their perceptions of their behaviours in class and in the targeted small-group sessions. They spoke of the repeated opportunities that they had within the small group to read aloud, to ask questions, to discuss, and to receive
elaborated responses, and they also mentioned the writing opportunities that included note-taking, summarizing, and answering comprehension questions. Although there were opportunities in the classroom setting to do all of the above reading- and writing-related tasks, those opportunities were necessarily limited by the size of the class. These children were eager to participate within a context where they could do what their peers were doing and achieve some measure of success at tasks at which they had little history of success. They displayed a sense of purpose and intensity in their approach to the various reading and writing experiences that was not usually manifested within the whole-class setting. This points to the need for validation, certainly not exclusive to older students but of increasing importance as the cumulative effects of weak academic performance and lack of success take their toll on self-perceptions and self-appraisals. This validation was built on explicit and immediate feedback that was easily delivered within the small-group setting. I was not the only one providing feedback, however. The group members would willingly correct one another’s read-aloud errors, would often answer questions that arose about word meaning, and were quick to chide those who lost their place because they were not paying attention or asked a question that had already been answered. Swanson and Hoskyn (2001) point to the role of repeated practice opportunities accompanied by explicit feedback if instruction is to be effective for students with learning disabilities. This can be extended to the emergent picture of older struggling readers as well. Explicit feedback serves double duty: validating and confirming what students are doing and clarifying misconceptions as they occur (Swanson & Hoskyn).
When we ask children to read, we are asking that they comprehend what they are reading and that they extract and construct meaning from text. This sense-making process involves acquiring meaning, confirming meaning, and creating meaning (Gambrell, Block, & Pressley, 2002). Skilled reading processes involve constructively responsive and purposeful reading (Fox, 2009), making it an active, participatory, and interactive undertaking. Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) synthesized research on verbal protocols of reading and categorized reading processes into text content, comprehension-monitoring, and evaluation of the text or reading situation. Thus readers’ attention could be directed towards meaning per se, resolving comprehension difficulties, or considering readers’ response to the text and surrounding context. Of course, these are not mutually exclusive. We can begin to see the extraordinary complexity of reading and the considerable expectations levied on readers. The cognitive demands are significant and the cognitive load is weighty.

We know from a considerable body of research that what good readers are able to do, poor readers are unable to do (e.g., Adams, 1990; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Block, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2002; Klingner et al., 2007; Paris et al., 1991; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Snow, et al., 1998). If poor readers’ efforts are directed at extracting meaning and if they lack a strategic repertoire upon which to draw when they encounter difficulties, then affective engagement will also be compromised. As text demands increase, greater effort is required. However, unless students are engaged and interested in extracting meaning, they are unlikely to commit to the task, opportunities for improvement will be lost and progress will be negligible (Roberts et al., 2008). Guthrie
and Davis (2003) contend that essential features of literacy instruction for older readers must include ways to motivate and engage students in reading, given classroom settings that often do not recognize the importance of promoting motivation to read and the prevalence of increasingly difficult expository text. For struggling older readers, these requirements take on even greater importance. These factors directly influenced the instructional model that we adopted and determined when the small-group sessions began.

Because this study was embedded within the classroom and curriculum-driven, time was needed to establish expectations for investment and commitment. As mentioned, authenticity and mindfulness provided the support system to do so. My rationale was that if the curriculum was rich enough, sufficiently interesting, with well-drawn real-world application and some degree of novelty, then curiosity could be piqued and interest stimulated. Further, the collaborative model that we adopted contributed to the thoughtful classroom that we worked to establish. Often, traditional models of special education rely on withdrawing students from the regular classroom, causing them to miss regular classroom activities. Ironically, they then can fall further behind in the subjects missed. My initial plan was to begin the small-group sessions with the parallel lessons at the outset of the Government Unit, to have the sessions extend over the course of that unit, and then to complete the post-assessments using the baseline assessment instruments, at which point the study would be concluded. That initial plan changed dramatically once I entered the school.

Given the considerable reading difficulties experienced by the children who participated regularly in the small-group sessions, it did not seem likely that they could
sustain the same level of authentic discussion that we were able to generate in the whole class setting. In addition, if they could participate as fully as possible in the regular classroom as we introduced election campaign material and prepared for the Student Vote, my hope was that they would become sufficiently involved and engaged to be willing to be effortful in applying themselves by attending to the discussions, the readings and related tasks. If this occurred, then it seemed possible that, to some extent, there could be some transfer to the small-group setting, at least in terms of expectations for effort and application. However, if the children had a sense that they were missing out in some way on what was going on in the regular classroom, given mounting excitement as the election approached, party platforms were compared and debated, campaign materials presented, and the electoral process discussed, then it would be unlikely that they would be motivated to expend the necessary effort and remain committed. As discussed above, motivation and engagement take on greater importance for older readers and, even more so, for struggling older readers.

Once the Student Vote was completed, we began the parallel lessons, nested within the small-group sessions. The children were excited and very willing to participate, as seen in Chapter 6, which detailed the results from those sessions. For children with significant reading difficulties for whom comprehension was indeed compromised, they displayed curiosity, interest, and engagement. They were also energetic, often boisterous and distractible, but throughout they remained eager to participate and willing to read, to ask questions, to answer questions, and to complete writing tasks. Guthrie and Humenick (2004) identify four factors that are critical to improving and expanding older students’ motivation to read: (1) using content goals that
are oriented toward mastery of knowledge, (2) providing a range of choices in reading activities, (3) affording students interesting texts, and (4) ensuring opportunities for social collaboration while reading. This study corroborates the significance of each of these factors and their saliency for older children.

With regard to the Canadian Government Unit, content goals were reflected in the amount of time devoted to the unit, in the ongoing opportunities for rich discussion about party politics and the electoral process, in the Student Vote Project, and in the field trip experience. The Campaign Manager Project had some mandatory components and others where the students had choice. When the children in the small group were asked on the survey what they liked the most in the unit on government, they singled out the Student Vote, the field trip, and the projects because “it felt like you where [sic] a real mp” and because “they help me learn and figur [sic] out my questions so I learn.”

At the outset of the unit, the currency of many of the reading materials contributed to students’ interest. The fact that we did not rely solely on the textbook and did not introduce it until after the Student Vote meant that when we did use it the class already had some grounding in the subject and some foundational knowledge on which to build. One assignment asked the children to read and summarize two newspaper articles and bring them to class. Several children volunteered to read aloud their articles, while others read aloud their summaries. We then created an impromptu bulletin board of the clippings, which the children would visit at recess and lunchtime, proudly pointing out their article.

This ethnography underscores the importance of social collaboration for older students in general and for older poor readers, in particular. Social collaboration was
afforded in a variety of ways, including partner work and interactive discussion, which Goldenberg (1993) describes as instructional conversation. Such conversation is interesting, engaging, highly participatory, provocative, and responsive and has the teacher “weaving individual participants’ comments into a larger tapestry of meaning” (Goldenberg, p. 212). Certainly, once the small-group sessions began, they were highly collaborative, supported by ongoing opportunities for responsive elaboration, on my part and theirs, which further encouraged participation and reinforced commitment.

Consistent with the literature (e.g., Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Ng, Guthrie, Van Meter, McCann, & Alao, 1998), this study demonstrates how these engagement-supporting practices, individually and in concert, must be included within the context of a reading comprehension program for older students. Of course, as Guthrie and Humenick (2004) remark, the development of vocabulary, comprehension, and related writing activities are also essential. A motivated reader is unlikely to “automatically gain these complex cognitive competencies independently. The unmotivated reader, however, is quite unlikely to gain these reading competencies at all” (Guthrie & Humenick, p. 351).

We have seen how the children in the small group became invested in what they were learning, notwithstanding their reading difficulties. For this to occur, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and metacognition were instrumental. As the children gained some competence in deconstructing expository text and expanded their strategic repertoires, they began to monitor their comprehension and to experience sense-making and meaning-making in ways that were novel for them. This, in turn, spurred self-efficacy. In keeping with Bandura’s (1997) definition of self-efficacy, not only did the children have to believe that they were capable of reading and comprehending content-area text, they
had to experience it. We can begin to see a cycle of enhanced comprehension built on a growing repertoire of “fix-it” comprehension strategies that supports the development of metacognition and self-regulation, promoting, in turn, self-efficacy. Experiencing some success at tasks where success had been limited fueled motivation, commitment, and engagement. However, unless learning and instruction are aligned, students are unlikely to develop conceptual understandings where they see patterns of relationships and understand how they are connected (Guthrie & Scafidi, 2004). We have seen how critical engagement-supporting practices were and explored how they were scaffolded. These practices were tied to the instructional approach that, in turn, reflected the alignment between learning and instruction. This “natural alignment” entails configuring the complexity of new text-based knowledge with the complexity of cognitive strategies needed to acquire that knowledge (Guthrie & Scafidi, p. 246).

*Learning and Instruction*

Learning and instruction are inextricably connected. As we embedded text structure, text search, and text summary strategies into the lessons, we were able to provide repeated opportunities for practice and review. Text structure focused on identifying features of content-area text such as titles, headings, sub-headings, illustrations and photographs, labeled diagrams, captions, boxed information, table of contents, index, and glossary. Additional features included layout, font size and bolded and italicized text. Text search involved searching for and retrieving information, identifying key words, topic sentences, main ideas, and inferencing. The act of highlighting helped the children to focus directly on the text and, once highlighted, to quickly see main ideas and reread as necessary. Although they had practiced tracking text
with their finger during their language literature circles, highlighting seemed to maintain attention and focus for longer periods. Text summary required that the children understood the purpose of summaries, their importance, the type of information that should be included, as well as extensive practice in writing them.

By using a variety of resources in addition to the text, we were able to differentiate the readings. Some were easier, some more difficult, but all students had access to them. Easier readings were sometimes read as homework, sometimes aloud, sometimes with a partner, sometimes silently. More difficult readings were generally read aloud as a whole group, at times modeled by Reed, Janine, or myself. The novelty and timeliness of using newspaper articles piqued interest and generally sustained the children’s attention, despite more complex language and syntax. Framing the lessons with the “3 Ps” of purpose, prior knowledge, and preview served as a way of orienting the lessons and an organizational vehicle to gain the students’ attention, help them to focus, invite participation, provoke curiosity, and generate interest. *Purpose* asked them to query why they were reading particular text, which helped them to realize that a rationale existed for what they were doing, beyond the teacher saying, “Do this.” *Prior knowledge* pushed them to ask themselves what they already knew about the topic, building on foundational knowledge and previous readings. *Preview* pushed them to look at the text for features that stood out, such as heading levels, varied fonts, bold or italicized text, pictures, and graphs. The notion of skimming text to anticipate substance and meaning appeared to be novel. Given the demands of expository text, this means of framing worked to scaffold the children’s cognitive involvement.
My earlier work (Martin, 1994) showed how, with scaffolded support and a growing strategic repertoire, metacognition could be developed, self-regulation encouraged, self-efficacy promoted, and self-appraisals refined. However, that case study focused on a good reader and a poor reader at the primary level. Comprehension and comprehension-monitoring strategies were taught one-to-one to the poor reader, which was, overall, a less challenging setting than a small group of older exceptional learners. In this study, capitalizing on social collaboration by providing multiple opportunities for review, practice, questioning, and discussion served to promote mediated engagement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Pintrich et al., 1993). Without this component, it is unlikely that older poor readers will persevere in the capacity-demanding task of sense-making and meaning-making. Worth remembering is Rogoff’s (1995) enjoinder that if learning is understood as an interactive process, then a more appropriate definition is participation in social exchange rather than solely knowledge acquisition.

Targeted instruction focused on developing a strategic repertoire of comprehension and comprehension-monitoring strategies. Having the children in the small group identify some of the comprehension strategies that they used helped them to see that they had options beyond “sounding it out.” When asked, they identified: looking at the pictures, “sounding it,” “break it into parts,” “read on,” “pass on” [to another person to read], “try and say it out.” None of the children identified rereading, reflecting that poorer readers often lose sight of context as they struggle to decode unfamiliar words. Therefore, using guided practice, I modeled how rereading can advance comprehension. Asking the children to identify what strategies they could use to remember what they read pushed them to articulate in their own words the
comprehension-monitoring strategies that we had embedded in both whole class and parallel lessons. They listed: “highlight,” “underline it,” “colour it,” “write it down on a piece of paper,” “write it down on a computer,” “write it down on the chalkboard,” “put it in your brain.” Building on their responses, I introduced repetition, verbalization, restating, and using contextual cues. These, in turn, were linked to the current reading and, again, a guided practice model was followed.

In both whole-class and small-group sessions, we incorporated word study, including word analysis and word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and motivation, in keeping with recommendations advanced by Roberts et al. (2008). They contrast this menu of instruction with the recommendations of The National Reading Panel (NRP) Report (2000) that identified five essential areas for early literacy instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Given the accumulating history of failure for older poor readers accompanied by motivational challenges, Roberts et al. propose adjusting the five areas to include word study and motivation because many older struggling readers demonstrate phonemic awareness and knowledge of phonics, relying on sounding out words. This appraisal was well supported in this study, given the assessment results on the Informal Phonics Survey (McKenna & Stahl, 2003) and the children’s self-reports stating that they relied principally on sounding out unfamiliar words. As seen in the results chapters, instruction in the above areas was embedded within the curriculum and not decontextualized. Given time constraints and increasingly dense curricula, this approach was efficient and effective.
As the study progressed, additional instructional elements were refined. Within the context of the small group, these included initiating a sequence during read-alouds of reading, stopping, and rephrasing a sentence or summarizing a paragraph. Chunking text into smaller segments, single sentences or single paragraphs, helped to maintain a brisk pace and hold attention. This approach meant that challenging text became more accessible. Despite explicit instruction in class and repeated practice identifying and highlighting main ideas and topic sentences, the children in the small group needed recurring and targeted instruction that included time to discuss, disagree, and resolve what were or were not the key ideas. They needed explicit instruction to use the glossary as they encountered unfamiliar words, reminders that they should understand every word that was in bold, and practice rereading once a new word was introduced and they understood its meaning. Reminders to look at everything on a page—text, graphics, captions, etc.—also helped with focus and often led to animated discussion that sparked interest and served as a precursor to reading the text. Identifying strategies that the children used as they decoded and encoded also reinforced their growing repertoires. I polished my questioning, making the pace quicker and the questions more clipped, specific, and direct.

Williams (2006) advocates responding flexibly and opportunistically to student needs for instructive feedback while reading. This underscores the need to be responsive and in-the-moment, while recognizing the situated and distributed nature of cognition. Williams goes on to suggest that providing cognitive strategy instruction in the context of actual classrooms has proven challenging because teachers must grasp both the strategies that they are teaching and the instructional strategies necessary to do so. This study has
gone some distance to reveal how this can be achieved. As discussed, we have seen how critical it is for older struggling readers to develop cognitive competencies in concert with engagement-supporting practices. The children in the small-group intervention showed improvement in aspects of the comprehension process that are most complex, namely, reshaping their self-appraisals about what they were able to do and developing a strategic repertoire that enabled them to be more successful reading and comprehending expository text. As their repertoire expanded, they became more metacognitive and better able to identify particular strategies and appreciate their efficacy. For older struggling readers, outcomes must also be assessed qualitatively since achievement is an incremental process, occurring slowly over time and requiring considerable practice and review.

The intervention component of this study has shown how a coherent program was developed to support older poor readers’ interactions with expository text, while also supporting their classmates who had greater facility in comprehension and comprehension-monitoring. The program was curriculum-driven, targeting the three critical requirements of content-area text: text structure, text search, and text summary. It provided intense, targeted instruction through parallel lessons to children with significant reading deficits. The children were not disadvantaged in any way because the lesson content paralleled whole-class instruction by the classroom teachers. Parallel lessons also meant that it was a joint decision by Reed, Janine, and myself as to which lessons would be taught as whole class and which would be taught as parallel and whole class. Authenticity and mindfulness increased as the collaboration unfolded and we strove to create a thoughtful classroom that would be a context of productive learning.
The Collaborative Enterprise

The descriptive component of this study charted the development of the collaborative enterprise, revealing opportunities that developed and challenges that arose over the course of this ethnography. Seemingly absent in the literature are descriptive studies of collaborative undertakings where the researcher is not simply an observer but embedded in the classroom, an active participant in the lived experiences of the classroom, and using a model of parallel lessons to provide intensive support and differentiated instruction for exceptional learners.

We have seen how the collaborative experience provided professional learning opportunities for Reed, Janine, and myself. Reed spoke to his professional learning as having been enhanced alongside the students’ learning. He recapped strategies that we taught to garner students’ attention and improve their retention of content-area text. He identified how we had increased the students’ reading level through newspaper and magazine articles and related materials. He noted how attuned the class became to text features and text structure and the opportunities provided to practice writing summaries. Additionally, he referred to the class’ growing awareness of the components of research projects, including their organization and format. Janine spoke of her integration of instructional approaches with her Grade 4/5 class, based on pedagogies that were introduced for the Grade 5s in Social Studies. She mentioned highlighting text, identifying text structures, using Post-It notes for test preparation, presenting information in varied formats, including the use of graphic organizers, practicing summarizing strategies, and ongoing modeling through think alouds. I recognized the extreme importance of context and the confluence of factors that influenced the classroom
dynamic. These included the need for knowing intimately the content of classroom lessons, the need to be responsive to the classroom context, the need to be respectful of the classroom agenda and routines established at the outset of the school year, and the imperative of knowing well the varying needs and abilities of the children.

The literature on professional development is instrumental in understanding what collaboration entails and how the collaborative process unfolds. Feiman-Nemser (2001) points to the demands of building and promoting a “new professional culture” that requires skills of inquiry and provides multiple opportunities to develop “habits of critical colleagueship” (p. 1049). She suggests that we lack research that explores how teacher learning influences student learning and how the quality of professional development should be assessed (Borko, Jacobs, Eiteljorg, & Pitman, 2008). This study points to the relationship between teacher learning and student learning and advances the position that professional development must be assessed through student learning. As stated earlier in Chapter Four, ultimately the measure of a collaborative enterprise must be the quality of student learning.

We have seen that changes to teachers’ professional practice must be incremental where success builds on success. As Guskey (1995) notes, “if there is one truism in the vast research literature on change, it is that the magnitude of change persons are asked to make is inversely related to their likelihood of making it” (p. 119). Hawley and Valli (1999) echo Guskey’s recommendation to think big but start small when working towards implementing change. They go on to suggest that, without sufficient time and opportunities to explore new practices, it becomes unlikely that new practices will be incorporated into teachers’ repertoires. Certainly time and opportunities are important
considerations, but they do not go far enough. This study reveals the significance of the nature of the relationship established between and among collaborators. If the status quo is challenged and professional practice is to be altered, there must be a foundation established where purpose is shared, pedagogy is negotiated, and mutuality emerges. As the collaboration was enacted, we became more trusting of one another. Trust had to be earned, however, and carried with it a burden of proof, resting on the quality of student learning. Similarly, for the collaboration to be maintained and sustained, accountability was also a requirement and was contingent on student performance. Trust and accountability became intertwined and mutually reinforcing. These were represented as tensions that confounded the collaborative enterprise. Without them, collaboration would be compromised. As Janine mentioned, the curriculum was dense and time constraints were unforgiving; therefore, playing catch up was not an option.

Collaborative Consultation

Jordan (1994) speaks to the intuitive appeal and pragmatic benefits attached to collaborative consultation. Although referring to staff relationships between classroom teachers and support teachers or consultants with special education backgrounds, her arguments can extend to school-university partnerships as well. She suggests that, in practice, “all is not rosy” and goes on to identify why classroom teachers are “justifiably cautious” if a collaborator is injected into their midst. She pinpoints their divergent knowledge bases and differing instructional methodologies and intervention strategies. She suggests that classroom teachers remark, on occasion, how support teachers “don’t know what it’s like to have thirty children all day long” (p. 96), while special education
teachers may feel as if they lack credibility and are not seen as colleagues with relevant expertise.

Using Johnson, Pugach, and Hammitte (1988), Jordan (1994) lists several factors that can impede an effective collaborative consultative relationship. These include lack of clarity over respective responsibilities, scepticism about resource teachers or consultants’ expertise about regular class pupils, scheduling difficulties, time constraints, and teachers’ relative unpreparedness for the collaborative process. This study has demonstrated how these impediments may be overcome. Shared purpose demonstrated through commitment to authentic curricula, meaningful tasks, and dialogic whole-class instructional conversations is foundational and leads to negotiated pedagogy as instructional approaches are extended. Embedding oneself in the classroom as much as is feasible and sharing teaching responsibilities, while respecting the classroom teacher’s authority, promotes mutuality and works to counter the “credibility gap” (Jordan, p. 96) between ordinary and support teachers. This study showed the value of comprehensive assessments that provided an enhanced representation of children’s reading strengths and weaknesses. The use of parallel lessons provided a concerted, targeted, and intense intervention that benefited students with the most significant reading deficits, while allowing the classroom teachers’ opportunities to pursue a topic in greater depth and detail. Time constraints and scheduling difficulties were a given and had to be negotiated as pragmatically as possible. Teachers’ relative unpreparedness for a collaborative undertaking is hardly surprising. Feiman-Nemser (2001) describes an historically fragmented approach to professional development, which “consists of discrete and disconnected events…. [It] is everybody’s and nobody’s responsibility” (p. 1049). In
contrast, a sustained undertaking, supported by trust and accountability, contributes to a relationship that is complementary, where “each views the other as contributing knowledge and experience” (Jordan, p. 98).

**Collaborative Models**

Collaborative models of professional development can be seen in the productive line of research on project-based science instruction conducted by University of Michigan researchers (see Blumenfeld & Krajcik, 1994; Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 1994; Marx et al., 1994; Marx, Blumenfeld, Krajcik, & Soloway, 1997). Collaborative efforts that meet the core criteria of effective professional development can and do contribute to the learning of researchers and teachers. As Marx et al. (1998) describe,

Researchers bring new knowledge to inform teachers of new practices, along with concepts and language from research that can help propel conversation. Teachers bring experience with students and contexts, knowledge of the limits imposed by curriculum frameworks, and craft knowledge of the daily rhythm and flow of life in schools. Collaboration in this vein is not a top-down model of what constitutes good practice. Rather, it is a process of group design and problem solving constructed by the participants. (p. 34)

These are the stepping stones to a collaborative enterprise that is generative and responsible.

Shulha and Wilson (2003) make a significant contribution to understanding the generative nature of collaborative experiences and the variability in collaborative learning that results. They have constructed a rubric that reflects a growth model of collaborative learning. They identify five elements of collaboration: motivation for involvement, depth
of participation, quality of the dialogue, authority in decision making, and joint meaning making. As qualitative descriptors, they use distanced, related, and integrated. To describe growth, they suggest that as behaviour within each element becomes more complex, there is progression along the continuum of distanced, related, and integrated. The integrated stage sees collaboration and learning as interconnected and “virtually impossible to separate collaboration from learning; the whole point of the collaborative activity—the motivation for engaging in the process at all—is learning” (Shulha & Wilson, p. 663). Shulha and Wilson provide an example from their research (Shulha, 2000) where the profile that resulted assessed the elements as primarily, but not totally, integrated. This representation is more organic than Gately and Gately’s (2001) Developmental Stages of Coteaching. Further, it incorporates Chin et al.’s (2004) analysis of Hung’s theory of epistemological appropriation. Chin et al. suggest that all stages of a hierarchical model coexist in a complex relationship where subsequent stages do not necessarily subsume preceding stages.

Like Shulha (2000), the collaborative experience that Reed, Janine, and I shared reveals a profile that is primarily, but not totally, integrated. Our “motivation for involvement” was integrated as our shared purpose and commitment to enriched student learning was reflected in the students’ participation, engagement, and performance. Almost from the outset of the Canadian Government Unit, we arrived at an integrated perspective for this element. Once started, the professional growth that we experienced, individually and collectively, created its own momentum. Once begun, we were unable to stop until the school year ended. “Depth of participation” moved between the related and integrated descriptors, contingent on the activities in the unit of study. For example, Reed
directed the comprehensive independent student projects, while I developed shorter assignments, such as the newspaper article summaries and the Prime Minister Research Report. As described in Chapter Four, our roles became more flexible and elastic as the collaboration proceeded. Janine became more involved than she had initially anticipated; Reed incorporated a wider range of instructional approaches than he had expected; I participated in a broader range of classroom responsibilities, such as evaluating tests, oral presentations, and projects, beyond what I had foreseen at the outset of the study.

“Quality of the dialogue” raises interesting questions since much of our discourse was abbreviated, almost cryptic. Yet this interpretation implies that dialogue must be explicit. In this study, as the collaboration unfolded, implicit understandings were enacted, rather than articulated. Therefore there was movement between the related and integrated descriptors. Under the “integrated” heading, Shulha and Wilson (2003) elaborate, “works to make explicit the assumptions shaping ideas and actions” (p. 664). As we collectively worked to enhance students’ learning, to develop engagement-supporting practices, and to align learning and instruction in whole class and parallel lessons, our assumptions became manifest and were realized through our teaching actions.

“Authority for decision making” also moved between the related and integrated descriptors and, as with “Depth of participation,” was tied to particular lessons, tasks, and responsibilities. This helps to explain how our respective expertise was strongly contextual. Although I was seen as the expert regarding reading curriculum development for the Canadian Government Unit, I was the novice in the collaborative experience, as was Janine. When a lesson was over, we returned to negotiating the direction of a
subsequent lesson and relied on the classroom teachers’ understanding of their students and disposition towards working with them.

Meaning-making, the final element in Shulha and Wilson’s (2003) rubric, reflects the effort that each of us expended individually and jointly as we constructed “meaning of information and behavior” (p. 665). “The optimal form of collaboration will always depend on the purpose of the joint effort” (Shulha & Wilson, p. 663). As the collaboration unfolded, we became more attuned to one another, to the dynamic that we were creating, and to the learning environment that we enacted. In so doing, we progressed from related to integrated as what we learned was both individual and collective and extended to other contexts. Janine spoke of various pedagogies she adopted for her Grade 4/5 students that we had introduced in Social Studies; Reed indicated that he would use in the following year many of the instructional approaches for expository text that we had initiated. I recognized how I could incorporate into my preservice teaching an authentic example of differentiated instruction and an alternate model of special education that was built on research-based practices.

**A Co-constructed Enterprise**

Sarason (1993, 1996) laments that a supportive, collegial context is the exception, rather than the rule, in the culture of schools where “intellectual-professional collegiality hardly exists….The teacher is regarded by others, and so regards himself or herself, as an individual—a bounded, isolated one—whose thinking, problems, and actions are private affairs” (p. 386). This representation can help to explain some of the challenges inherent in classroom-based research. It also underscores the need for co-constructing innovations and changes to instructional practice, for respecting boundaries while working to extend
them, and for closely attending to the dynamics of the particular classroom. In this study, I came to understand that collaboration was indeed a co-constructed enterprise, requiring ongoing negotiation, boundary crossing and contextual awareness.

Adaptive experts. Darling-Hammond (2006) argues that we need teachers who are adaptive experts who are able to innovate when routines are insufficient, who can adapt materials, strategies, or supports when students are having difficulty learning. Ultimately, “adaptive experts also know how to continuously expand their expertise, restructuring their knowledge and competencies to meet new challenges” (Darling-Hammond, p. 11). Therefore, the aim of professional development must be to develop adaptive experts who can be responsive to diverse student needs and abilities, open to knowledge restructuring, and willing to confront new challenges. Corno (2008) argues that teaching adaptively means that teachers are highly responsive to learners and have an “inquiring mindset” (p. 171). These teachers see student differences as “assistive, affording, and enabling for teaching as well as student learning.” As well, these teachers monitor students’ thinking and understanding on a continuous basis in a variety of ways; [they] show respect for students’ varied talents and perspectives; and [have] a hesitant attitude about using any one approach with every student” (p. 171). Corno concludes that adaptive teaching is intellectual and technical and captures dynamic teaching strategies. This is complex teaching that has the potential to enhance learning for teachers as much as for their learners.

Reflective practitioner. The notion of adaptive experts meshes with Schön’s (1983) description of a reflective practitioner who acquires new competences. In doing so, familiar sources of satisfaction are relinquished in exchange for new satisfactions.
Familiar sources include unquestioned authority, the freedom to practice without any challenges to competence, the comfort of relative invulnerability, and the gratification of deference. New satisfactions are discovery based and relate to knowledge-in-practice and self-knowledge. Yet this self-examination can be unsettling. Schön frames the “recognition of error with its resulting uncertainty… [as] a source of discovery rather than an occasion for self-defense” (p. 299). Schön distinguishes between a reflective practitioner and an expert on three counts: knowledge, client connections, and professional persona. A reflective practitioner does not hold exclusive rights to knowledge; it may be shared. A reflective practitioner connects to client’s thoughts and feelings. Maintaining a professional façade that looks for deference from the client and acknowledgement of status becomes unnecessary.

In this study, our collaboration required that each of us relinquish, to a degree, the comfort of familiar roles. Each of us was highly experienced, yet Janine initially saw Reed as the leader and herself as the follower, based on his familiarity with the Grade 5 curriculum and her unfamiliarity with it. Initially, I was the guest in the classroom, treading carefully, not wanting to disrupt well-established routines and practices. Of all of us, Reed faced the most uncertainty as new curricula and pedagogies were introduced into a program that had met with continued success, given his experience and student and parent satisfaction. As the collaboration progressed, it became easier to share what we knew, easier to question one another, and easier to let knowledge-in-action do the talking, as we remained centred on the students’ propositional, procedural, and conditional ways of knowing.
Enacting professional learning. The extant literature does not appear to capture the “in-the-moment” enactment that is crucial to a collaboration that is curriculum driven and classroom embedded. As described in Chapter Four, negotiation was continually enacted through our respective and responsive teaching moves, rather than through the planning process. Webster-Wright (2009) suggests a crucial opportunity is missed when the focus is placed on improving professional development programs rather than listening to professionals speaking about how they learn. “Listening to descriptions of experiences of learning is different, incidentally, from asking professionals to choose which PD activities they find most useful, as often occurs when attempts are made to engage professionals in PD research” (p. 725). Even more powerful than listening is engaging professionals in enacting their learning. Webster-Wright presents an argument that a shift in discourse and focus is needed, moving away from the delivery and evaluation of professional development programs towards understanding and supporting professional learning that is authentic. She concludes that most professionals are “enthusiastic learners who want to improve their practice” (p. 728). Therefore, she asks that we listen to their experience and work to support, not hinder, their learning. Rather than deny, seek to control, or standardize the complexity and diversity of professional learning experiences, let us accept, celebrate, and develop insights from these experiences to support professionals as they continue to learn. (p. 728)

This ethnography extends our understanding of collaboration for professional learning. In so doing, complexity is acknowledged, challenges are explored, and benefits considered.
Considerations and Implications

The strength of ethnography is, at one and the same time, also a weakness. Its singular focus allows for intimate examination of the particulars of a case, context, situation, event, and the like. This intimacy precludes generalization, making findings necessarily descriptive and interpretive. That being said, findings from this study can provide some direction towards understanding the complex array of challenges confronting older poor readers. Findings can also contribute to the development of pedagogical approaches to engage older learners while differentiating instruction to meet the needs of a divergent class with varying needs and abilities. Further, recognizing the inherent complexities of school-university partnerships and detailing the course of collaborative relationships can provide some directional markers. However, before pursuing some of the implications for further research, there are additional considerations that should be identified.

The nested design of the study carried its own set of limitations. These included the challenges tied to being classroom embedded. The parallel lessons had to accommodate the classroom context and dynamic, as well as the classroom teachers’ plans and schedule. Additionally, the timing of the election and the Student Vote meant that withdrawing a small group of exceptional children while the class’ excitement was mounting and momentum was generated could have been counterproductive. Given the significance of engagement and motivation for older students in general, and struggling students in particular, delaying the intervention while promoting interest and enthusiasm seemed apropos.
As well as being classroom embedded, this study was curriculum embedded. Again, this meant that the classroom schedule took preeminence over my agenda. A researcher-driven, pre-planned schedule with a fixed number of instructional sessions was incommensurate with the ecology of this classroom. Although more time for additional parallel lessons would have been desirable, this was not possible, given the overall, yearly plan for social studies. Optimally, more planning time and time for discussion between and among the classroom teachers and myself would have been desirable. Pragmatics prevailed, however, and the realities of life in the classroom precluded opportunities for extended dialogue. Logistics were also an ongoing constraint; combining two classrooms meant that changes to the usual dynamic had implications for management and required more vigilance. Considerable flexibility was required to ensure that the key features of expository text were instantiated throughout lessons, that prior knowledge was tapped, purpose was established, and text previewing occurred. Because this study was classroom embedded, not all units leant themselves as readily to accommodating this overlay.

A number of implications for future research arise from this study. Text demands increase as children move from the primary to the junior grades, accompanied by increasingly dense curricula. Concurrently, the cognitive demands increase and, for struggling readers, the “Matthew Effect” is operational. By embedding comprehension instruction within subject-specific areas, such as social studies, additional opportunities are afforded for teaching and learning. The subject becomes the vehicle for authentic instruction, while supporting reading processes and developing comprehension-monitoring. Further research into curriculum-driven, embedded instruction is needed. As
Edmonds et al. (2009) indicate in their synthesis of intervention studies with older students, Grades 6-12, comprehension practices used by teachers are more effective for narrative text than expository. They recommend that more attention be directed to targeting comprehension skills for the older struggling readers, including a focus on the use of additional elements, such as text structures, when students are reading content-area text. Noting that comprehension outcomes were higher when interventions were implemented by researchers rather than classroom teachers, they suggest that researchers may be more attentive to high levels of fidelity.

This study has ramifications for professional development of classroom teachers, introducing an instructional overlay that targets text features such as text structure, text search, and text summary. There are also ramifications for special education teachers in terms of alternate delivery of support. The collaborative model developed in this ethnographic study could be applied in-house within a school, with the resource teacher partnering with a classroom teacher. Further research is needed to assess the relative merits of coteaching in concert with parallel lessons, coteaching without parallel lessons focusing on differentiating instruction within the regular classroom, and supporting classroom teachers to pursue coteaching arrangements that are subject-specific.

The collaborative enterprise that we co-constructed was enacted in-the-moment and, in that regard, met Corno’s (2008) requirements, described above, for adaptive teaching. Further research is needed to explore how the “inquiring mindset” that Corno suggests is needed for adaptive, responsive, and elaborative teaching. This type of teaching well supports exceptional learners and can be embedded within the classroom context. Of course, teaching of this kind is not exclusive to classroom teachers and should
also be situated within preservice programs if aspiring teachers are to meet the complex needs of their prospective students. Darling-Hammond (2006) underscores the importance of context in shaping all teaching and learning, namely, “the nature of the subject matter, the goals of instruction, the individual experiences, interests, and understandings of learners and teachers, and the settings within which teaching and learning take place” (p. 115). This contrasts with previously held beliefs that assumed that effective teaching meant that “teachers mastered a set of generic teaching behaviors appropriate to all settings and subjects” (Darling-Hammond, p. 115). Pursuing ways to enact a content-rich, challenging curriculum aligned with student needs and classroom context is a research agenda unto itself.

Faggella-Luby & Deshler (2008) make the case that future research and development agendas need to pursue the application of tiered models of instruction, or responsiveness to intervention (RTI) for middle and high school settings. This approach was well represented in this study. Levels 1 and 2 provide enhanced content instruction and embedded strategy instruction, generally within a regular classroom, while levels 3 and 4 provide targeted instruction, intensive strategy instruction (level 3) and intensive basic skill instruction (level 4), usually outside of the regular classroom. Level 5 refers to therapeutic intervention for learners with severe language deficits. They describe the urgent need for interventions that can be integrated within ongoing practice. Following Csikszentmihalyi (1994), they suggest that the most enduring innovations are those that are both powerful and easy to use. They conclude that “merely turning the task of figuring out ways to overcome potential implementation barriers to those on the front lines decreases the chances of innovations being successfully adopted” (p. 77). More
research is needed to ensure that innovations can be adopted, that classroom teachers can experience ongoing professional learning, that older struggling readers receive the research-grounded supports they require, and that “habits of mind” (Bruner, 1990) are scaffolded through responsive, elaborative, and adaptive teaching. Further investigation is needed to explore the complex interplay among the multiple requirements of expository text, instructional prerequisites, and the particular needs of older poor readers including maintaining and sustaining engagement. So, too, is further inquiry needed into collaborative undertakings and the promise they offer for differentiating instruction and enhancing contexts for productive learning for exceptional students.

Meeting the challenges that researchers and teachers encounter when they collaborate requires them to be in touch with their landscapes. To do so invokes consciousness, sense-making, and wide-awakeness to experiences and encounters that centre and effect learning. The complexity of the classroom must be honoured and, so too, the complexity of differentiating instruction if older poor readers are to learn how to learn while reading to learn.
EPILOGUE

The prologue set the stage for the reader, describing how the original plan for this study altered and was redrawn. The epilogue closes the curtain, moving behind stage to acknowledge the vulnerability of the ethnographer amid expectations for validation (see Creswell, 2007). Geertz (1988) speaks to the ethnographer who is challenged by having to sound like a pilgrim and a cartographer at the same time. The pilgrimage is the road that the ethnographer traverses, a purposeful course that leads to unexpected circumstances and settings. The work of a cartographer demands accuracy, authenticity, clarity, and corroboration. Geertz elaborates, describing the signature issue that the ethnographer confronts as “finding somewhere to stand in a text that is supposed to be at one and the same time an intimate view and a cool assessment” (p. 10). He suggests that this is “almost as much of a challenge as gaining the view and making the assessment in the first place” (p. 10). Almost inevitably, these dual roles produce uneasiness. There is enormous tension between the poles of data-driven evidence and interpretations that are subjectively contingent, what Bruner referred to as paradigmatic and narrative modes of thought. At the risk of sounding like an apologia, the point to be taken is that ethnographic research exposes the players in intimate and personal ways. Concurrently, it demands rigour, care, and caution. This tension is ongoing and requires, perhaps demands, the reader’s indulgence.

The intimacy of ethnography makes the researcher vulnerable, while also reflecting commitment, purview, and perspective. Multiple voices and multiple points of view are represented, which contribute to a richly textured, richly detailed landscape. Florian’s (2007) notion of “reimagining” is represented in this study. We have seen how
addressing the significant comprehension challenges of the struggling readers in one Grade 5 class required intense and targeted intervention, aligned with classroom instruction that was authentic, mindful, and meaningful. Alternative models to traditional, pull-out special education can yield what Darling-Hammond et al. (2008) describe as powerful learning.

The backdrop to this study was a collaborative enterprise, involving considerable trust, adaptability, flexibility, and risk-taking on the part of all of the players. The (re)construction of knowledge in real-life situations (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986) is not to be taken lightly. Embarking on a collaborative undertaking meant that careful negotiation was necessary to respond to the demands imposed by timetables, unexpected events, curriculum expectations, and reporting periods, among others. In addition, the familiarity of previously successful units and accompanying lessons had to be confronted if changes were to be made. These challenges were compounded by the boundary crossing between school and university.

Revisiting the notion of collaborating for convergence is timely. Webb and Palincsar (1996) describe the essence of collaboration as “convergence—the construction of shared meanings for conversations, concepts, and experiences” (p. 848). The requirements of flexibility and adaptability necessary to differentiate instruction are similarly required to enact a truly collaborative enterprise, infused with trust, purposeful pedagogy, and respect. Throughout, accountability is crucial as the responsibility for students’ learning is diffused among the collaborating teachers. Tensions are inevitable and must be negotiated. Whether convergence is fully attainable is moot; whether it is worthwhile is incontrovertible.
This study opened with Maxine’s Greene’s (1978) representation of landscape. It is fitting to conclude with her direction that “to be in touch with our landscapes is to be conscious of our evolving experiences, to be aware of the ways we encounter our world” (p. 2). The landscape that I have presented throughout this study speaks to a classroom encounter that was complex, multilayered, and intense. The collaborative enterprise provoked a reflective turn (see Schön, 1991) for me and for the classroom teachers, as we worked to construct and maintain an authentic and mindful classroom. The children with the most intense needs and most significant reading deficits were supported through differentiated instruction that was tiered, flexible, and responsive. The parallel lessons targeted comprehension and comprehension-monitoring while also aggressively promoting engagement, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and metacognition, critical for older struggling readers. Social context and authentic content were interwoven and instrumental in engaging the children, maintaining their motivation and sustaining their commitment to read to learn.
References


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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am writing to request your son/daughter’s (please circle) participation in a research study. I am a graduate student at the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University, and I am about to begin work on my doctoral dissertation. The title of the study is: *Collaborating for Convergence: Instructional Interventions to Improve Children’s Content-Area Reading*. The purposes of the study are: (1) to find out more about how children learn to read content-area text; namely, text that is filled with information about a particular topic or subject area; and (2) to learn more about how the children can best be helped to better understand this kind of material. Many children find textbooks much more difficult to read than storybooks. As they move along through school, however, more and more of the reading that they are asked to do is content-specific, and more of the writing and projects that they are asked to do is also related to information gathering on particular topics and subjects. Your child’s classroom teacher [insert name] and I will be working together on this study. We both think that the findings from this study can have important educational implications for the development of best practices to support children in their interactions with content-area text. This research has been cleared by the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board and approved by the [insert name] school board.

For all children who participate in the study, data on their reading will be collected three times (November, March, and May). The teacher and I will choose a small number of children who would benefit from being involved in small-group instructional sessions. These sessions will occur 3x/week (approximately 40 mins. each) for 12 weeks. They will begin the week of November 28th and end the week of March 6th, 2006, except for the week immediately preceding Christmas holidays and the first week back to school in January. The school calendar tends to be so full during those weeks that scheduling could be problematic. Individual preassessment (approximately one hour) to determine your child’s appropriate instructional level for content-area reading materials will take place during mid-November. Postassessment is planned for early March 2006, and again in May 2006. The same reading tasks that your child did during the preassessment will be repeated.

All activities will take place during the regular school day with the full cooperation of [insert name of teacher]. During the small-group sessions that I will teach, the children will be using the same textbooks and other content-area related materials that are being used in their class. They will also have an opportunity to choose some of the reading selections that are used within the small group. The intent is to alter their regular school day routine as little as possible while providing support in essential content-area text-based skills. Following the small-group sessions, the classroom teacher [insert name] will teach a similar lesson to the whole class. This kind of practice and
review can help in learning the complex skills associated with reading. Since reading skills are foundational to success in almost all subjects, and since most subjects require ever more demanding reading, the goal is to assist the children in learning what they can do to deal with these demands and to be more successful in so doing.

There are no known risks, discomforts, or inconveniences associated with participation in this study. There is no obligation for your son/daughter to answer any questions during any instruction that may make them feel uncomfortable. Agreement on your part to allow your son/daughter to become a part of the study in no way obligates your son/daughter to remain a part of the study. Participation is voluntary, and your son/daughter, or you on their behalf, may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Further, participation or non-participation will not affect any school mark or report card that your child may receive.

I intend to publish the findings of the study in professional journals and report them at conferences. At no time will the actual identity of the participants be disclosed. Pseudonyms will be used for participants’ names, and code numbers will also be assigned to maintain confidentiality.

Should further information be required before either you or your son/daughter can make a decision about participation, please feel free to telephone me at Queen’s University, Faculty of Education, at (613) 533-6000 ext 77237. For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, (613) 533-6210, or the Chair of the University General Research Ethics Board, D. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6081, email stevensj@post.queensu.ca.

If you agree to have your son/daughter participate in this study, please sign one copy of the attached Letter of Consent and return it to me in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope at your earliest convenience. Please keep the second copy for your records.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea K. Martin
Doctoral Candidate
Faculty of Education, Queen’s University
Phone: (613) 533-6000 ext. 77237
Email: andrmart@educ.queensu.ca

Attachments: Two (2) copies of the Letter of Consent
APPENDIX B

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR RESEARCH STUDY

I consent to my child’s participation in the study entitled "Collaborating for Convergence: Instructional Interventions to Improve Children’s Content-Area Reading," conducted through the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University.

I have read and retained the Letter of Information and the purpose of the study is explained to my satisfaction.

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

If my son or daughter is chosen by the teacher and the researcher to participate in the small group instructional sessions, I give my consent for the small-group instructional sessions to be audiotaped. Parents will be informed if their children are chosen for these sessions.

I understand participation involves: individual preassessment to determine the instructional level in reading (approximately 1 hour) for my son/daughter; small-group instructional reading experiences, 3x/wk (approximately 40 minutes each) for 12 weeks, beginning the week of November 28th, 2005 to the week of March 6th, 2006 (inclusive), except for the week immediately preceding Christmas holidays and the first week of school in January, 2006. Postassessment is planned for early February and again in April 2006. Each of these assessments will take about an hour and the same reading tasks that your child was asked to do during the preassessment will be repeated.

I understand that the researcher intends to publish the findings of this study.

I understand that pseudonyms will be used for participants’ names, and participants' names will also be coded to maintain confidentiality.

I understand that a copy of each publication resulting from the research will be mailed to each parent/guardian who requests a copy by supplying a mailing address in the space below.

I understand that my son/daughter’s participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw him/her from this study at any time without negative consequences.

I understand that I have the option to request deletion of some or all of my son/daughter’s data.

I understand that my son/daughter’s participation or non-participation will not affect any school mark or report card that my child may receive.

I am aware that if I have any questions about this study I can contact the researcher, Andrea Martin, at the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University by email (andrmart@educ.queensu.ca) or by telephone at (613) 533-6000 x77237.

If I have any questions, concerns or complaints about the research procedures I may also contact Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, Dean of the Faculty of Education (613-533-6210) or Dr. Joan Stevenson, Chair of the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board (613-533-6081).
Please sign one copy of this Letter of Consent and return to Andrea Martin, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University, Kingston, ON K7L 3N6, using the preaddressed stamped envelope. Retain the second copy for your records.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO HAVE MY SON/DAUGHTER PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Parent/Guardian’s Name (Please Print): ________________________________

Child’s Name (Please Print): ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Date _____________________ Telephone number: _____________________

Please add your mailing address in the space below ONLY if copies of any publications based on this research study are requested.
APPENDIX C

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT
(adapted from Perry, 1998, & Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, n.d.)

Section A

Teacher_______________________     Date_____________________

Activity________________________

Start time_______________________  End Time_________________

Section B

Running Record re. Teacher Behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description/Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaching/Scaffolding</td>
<td>Engaging the children in recitation, i.e. short, specific answers to questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explaining how to do something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging students in discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section C

**Running Record re. Student Behaviours**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description/Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control over challenge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived task engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading Attitude Inventory

Name ____________________________   Age _____ Grade_____ Date ___________

1. What do you like to read? For example: books, short stories, comics, magazines, the newspaper, websites, other…

2. What is your favourite book? Why?

3. What kinds of stories do you like to read? For example: adventure stories, fantasy fiction, science fiction, historical fiction, animal stories, stories in a series, and…?

4. What kinds of informational books do you like to read? For example: “how to” books, reference books (encyclopaedias), subject specific books (science…)?

5. Approximately how many minutes a day do you read for pleasure: less than 5 minutes, 15-45 minutes, 45-90 minutes, more than 90 minutes?

6. How did you learn to read?

7. When you are reading and you come to a word that is unfamiliar, what do you do? Do you ever do anything else?

8. If you knew that someone was having difficulty reading, how would you help them?

9. What do you think that your teacher would do to help that person?
10. What would you like to do better as a reader?

11. Do you think that you are a good reader? Why?

Additional Notes:
Dear Teacher:

I am writing to request your participation in a research study. I am a graduate student at the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University, and I am about to begin work on my doctoral dissertation. The title of the study is: **Collaborating for Convergence: Instructional Interventions to Improve Children’s Content-Area Reading.** The purposes of the study are: (1) to find out more about how children learn to read content-area text and the particular challenges attached; and (2) to learn more about how children can best be helped to better understand this kind of material. As you know, as children progress through school, more and more of the reading that they are asked to do is content-specific, and more of the writing and projects that they are asked to do is also related to information gathering on particular topics and subjects. However, since many children find textbooks much more difficult to read than narrative text but are expected to read more expository text, they can be caught in a cycle of ever increasing demands. If they are already constrained by reading deficits, they run the risk of falling ever further behind their normally achieving peers. I am particularly interested in working with and supporting these children. However, I have a concern that researcher-driven interventions for children with various challenges can be developed with little or no input and participation from classroom teachers who are responsible for teaching these children. Therefore my intent is to develop and implement, in collaboration with you, research-grounded interventions for your students with reading difficulties that can also be used in the regular classroom. These interventions would target key aspects of expository text, including text structure, text search, and text summary. In essence, we would form a research partnership and would work together intensely and collaboratively. This research has been cleared by the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board and approved by your school board.

The study will span 18 weeks. For the initial week and a half, my plan is to conduct naturalistic observations within the classroom, followed by 1.5 weeks of individual assessments on the children who will be part of the small group instructional sessions. For twelve weeks, interventions will initially be pretaught to the children in the small group by myself. Parallel sessions, using a similar model, will subsequently be taught by you to the whole class, including the children who have had the small group instruction, thereby providing an additional opportunity for review and practice for those with more significant reading difficulties. I anticipate that the whole class instruction will require a total of 90-120 minutes or three periods per week. The particular subject selected is at your discretion. The only contingency is that the children have informational text, drawn from your usual classroom resources about a specific subject or topic, that they need to read. The study would begin the week of October 3rd, with instructional time extending from the week October 24th, 2005 to the week of January 29th, 2006 (inclusive), excepting the week immediately preceding Christmas holidays and the first week of school in
January 2006. Additional time commitments include up to 30 minutes/day x 3 days per week x 12 weeks for joint planning and debriefing. The most relevant sections of these sessions will be audiotaped and transcribed.

There are no known risks, discomforts, or inconveniences associated with participation in this study. You are not obliged to answer any questions during any discussions that make you feel uncomfortable or that you find objectionable. Agreement on your part in no way obligates you to remain a part of the study. Participation is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time during the research.

I intend to publish the findings of the study in professional journals and report them at conferences. At no time will the actual identity of any participant be disclosed. Pseudonyms will be used for participants’ names, and code numbers will also be assigned to maintain confidentiality.

Should further information be required before you can make a decision about participation, please feel free to telephone me at Queen’s University, Faculty of Education, at (613) 533-6000 ext 77237. For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, (613) 533-6210, or the Chair of the University General Research Ethics Board, D. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6081, email stevensj@post.queensu.ca.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign one copy of the attached *Letter of Consent* and return it to me. Please keep the second copy for your records.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea K. Martin
Doctoral Candidate
Faculty of Education, Queen’s University
Phone: (613) 533-6000 ext. 77237
Email: andrmart@educ.queensu.ca

Attachments: Two (2) copies of the *Letter of Consent*
APPENDIX F

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR RESEARCH STUDY

I consent to my participation in the study entitled Collaborating for Convergence: Instructional Interventions to Improve Children’s Content-Area Reading, conducted through the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University.

I have read and retained the Letter of Information and the purpose of the study is explained to my satisfaction.

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

I understand participation involves the following time commitments:

Whole class teaching of lessons (approximately 30-40 minutes each), 3x/wk., using a model parallel to that used by the researcher in the small-group sessions.

For joint planning and debriefing, up to 30 minutes/day x 3 days

Time span: 12 weeks of instructional time, beginning the week of October 24th, 2005 through the week of January 29th, 2006, excepting the week immediately preceding Christmas holidays and the first week of school in January, 2006.

I understand that the researcher intends to publish the findings of this study.

I understand that conversations between the researcher and myself may be audiotaped and that the tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet in the office of the Principal Investigator.

I understand that a copy of each publication resulting from the research will be mailed to me if I provide a mailing address in the space below.

I understand that all participants’ names will be coded to maintain confidentiality and pseudonyms will also be used.

I understand that I have the option to request deletion of some or all of my data.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without negative consequences.

I am aware that if I have any questions about this study I can contact the researcher, Andrea Martin, at the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University by email (andrmart@educ.queensu.ca) or by telephone at (613) 533-6000 x77237.

If I have any questions, concerns or complaints about the research procedures I may also contact Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, Dean of the Faculty of Education (613-533-6210) or Dr. Joan Stevenson, Chair of the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board (613-533-6081).
Please sign one copy of this Letter of Consent and return to Andrea Martin. Retain the second copy for your records.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Teacher’s Name (Please Print): _________________________________

Teacher’s Signature: _________________________________

Date ______________ Telephone number: _____________________

Please add your mailing address in the space below ONLY if copies of any publications based on this research study are requested.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SURVEY</th>
<th>HOW GOOD WAS YOUR LEARNING THIS SEMESTER IN SOCIAL STUDIES?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How good was your learning overall in social studies over the course of the whole semester?</td>
<td>Circle one and then give a reason for your choice:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERY GOOD</td>
<td>Reason:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOOD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEQUATE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POOR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe one thing that your teachers did that helped you understand what you think they wanted you to learn.

Describe one thing that you did that helped you understand what you were learning?

Circle or highlight ANY of the items at the right to indicate ways that you could have made your learning better. (Just enter your own idea on the blank lines if the items provided don’t apply to you).

Ask a question
Ask more questions
Talk quietly to a neighbour
Write more notes during the lesson
Try to connect different ideas in the lesson
Try to track more during oral reading
Spend more time on homework assignments
Spend more time working on assigned projects

What was the most important idea that you learned in social studies?

NAME: __________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How good was your learning in the unit on government?</th>
<th>Circle one and then give a reason for your choice:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VERY GOOD</td>
<td>Reason:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOOD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEQUATE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POOR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you like the most about the government unit? Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How good was your learning in the unit on ancient civilizations?</th>
<th>Circle one and then give a reason for your choice:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VERY GOOD</td>
<td>Reason:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOOD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEQUATE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POOR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you like the most about the ancient civilizations unit? Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How good was your learning in the unit on archaeology?</th>
<th>Circle one and then give a reason for your choice:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VERY GOOD</td>
<td>Reason:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOOD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEQUATE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POOR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you like the most about the unit on archaeology? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have anything else that you would like to say about what you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learned and how you learned about social studies?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have been introduced to the different parts of information text.</td>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle or highlight ANY of the items on the right that you think that</td>
<td>Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you are able to use independently when you read non-fiction. (Enter on</td>
<td>Glossary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the blank lines any other ways that help you to understand what you</td>
<td>Words that are in bold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read)</td>
<td>Identifying topic sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding chapter summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highlighting key terms and key sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are different ways that information can be presented. Think</td>
<td>_____ Written text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about the ways that help you to learn and understand and remember what</td>
<td>_____ Chapter summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you read? Using numbers one to six, put the number #1 next to what</td>
<td>_____ Charts or diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps you the most, #2 for what helps you next best, then #3, then</td>
<td>_____ Pictures or photographs with captions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4, then #5, and lastly #6 for what is least helpful for you. You can</td>
<td>_____ Questions at the end of a chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>add #7 if there is something else that helps you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Often students think that it is harder to read nonfiction than it is to read fiction? What do you think? Which is harder for you? Why?

In social studies, you have had 3 teachers who all worked together to teach you. Please tell us what you think about the experience of having more than one teacher teach the social studies units.

In social studies, your teachers have taught you and presented information in many different ways. You have also been given opportunities to choose topics and to be creative in showing what you have learned. Circle or highlight ANY of the items on the right that have helped you to learn and remember what you learned.

Whole class discussion
Small group discussion
Reading aloud with a partner and tracking while s/he reads
Reading aloud in a small group and tracking while others read
Reading aloud in the whole class and tracking while others read
Reading silently to yourself
Writing summaries
Writing answers to questions
Working independently on a project
Researching on the internet
Creating a visual for a project
Is there anything else that you would like to say about reading strategies, about social studies topics, about your learning, about what you liked or did not like, about what was really interesting for you, or about being able to choose your own topic to study???