

AT THE INTERSECTION OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND ADOLESCENT READING:

TWO CASE STUDIES OF LEARNING TO TEACH

by KATIE WESTER-NEAL

(Under the Direction of Kathleen deMarrais & Ajay Sharma)

ABSTRACT

Although reading is a key skill for adolescents (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2010), few studies have examined how teacher candidates learn to teach middle grades reading (AMLE, 2006). Using a Vygotskian sociocultural perspective (Smagorinsky, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985, 1991) and a qualitative case study methodology (Stake, 2006), this research was focused on exploring the experiences of teacher candidates as they learned to teach middle grades reading and planned to use their learning in practice in the future as they completed their final year in a university-based middle grades teacher education program. Two key findings were developed from cross-case analysis. First, participants developed a sophisticated ability to negotiate tool use across settings to reach their goals, revealing a complicated relationship. Second, teacher education coursework, in particular, played a significant role in participants' learning.

INDEX WORDS: Teacher education, Adolescent literacy, L. S. Vygotsky, Sociocultural theory, Multiple case study, Cross-case analysis

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by

KATIE WESTER-NEAL

BA, The University of Georgia, 2002

MSEd, The University of Pennsylvania, 2005

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KATIE WESTER-NEAL

Major Professors: Kathleen DeMarrais & Ajay Sharma

Committee: Peter Smagorinsky

Cory Buxton

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour

Dean of the Graduate School

The University of Georgia

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DEDICATION

To Zach Neal, for everything.

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CHAPTER 1

MAKING CONNECTIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

During my first year of teaching, I found some of the students in my fifth and sixth grade language arts classes could not read the way I had assumed they would. Evan read aloud beautifully with inflection and perfect pronunciation, but at the end of the text, he had no idea what it meant. Lo, reading at a second grade level, sounded out and understood short words and sentences. Ricardo, Maria, and several other students were new to English, but they also struggled to read in their first languages. My ten, eleven, and twelve year old students struggled to construct meaning from and with written text.

Like me, other teachers have recognized their adolescent students' difficulty with reading (Bintz, 1997; Delfino, 1998; Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009). This difficulty—and the lack of consensus about what it means to teach reading in the middle grades—surprises and confounds teachers (Balfanz, 2009; Broadus & Ivey, 2002). The ambiguity around adolescent reading differs from teaching reading in the early elementary or secondary grades, for which there is a more common understanding of what it means to teach reading (e.g., Dombey, Clemson & Ellis, 2013). Questions arise from these differing understandings, including: Should teaching adolescent reading mean teaching students to explore and interact meaningfully with texts, a common approach in many secondary classrooms, or should it be about teaching them the mechanics of reading, a task typically undertaken in elementary school? This uncertainty about how to teach adolescent reading can leave students stuck “in the middle”—not quite ready for secondary work, which usually involves exploring literature, but eager for more challenges than

in the early elementary grades, in which phonics and comprehension skills are typically emphasized (Atwell, 1998, 2007).

In my teaching practice, I answered these questions through a multi-faceted process developed over time. First, I drew on my knowledge from a formal teacher education program to help my students. Then, my past experiences as an avid reader and what I knew about how I learned to read bolstered my teaching. Next, I asked students what they thought would be helpful and talked to more experienced teachers to get their ideas. Throughout this learning process, I considered input from school administrators, standards, the demands of standardized testing, parents' wishes, and feedback from students. Ultimately, I found learning to teach adolescent reading meant carefully negotiating simultaneous demands from multiple sources to find the right approach for each student. Given these experiences and my work in teacher education, I have been compelled to ask the following questions: How have other teachers experienced learning to teach adolescent reading? What role did teacher education play? What other kinds of experiences factored into this learning process? My interest in this study is borne from my curiosity about these questions.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study focused on teacher candidates throughout their final year of a university-based teacher education program. Using a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical framework, the purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of four teacher candidates as they learned to teach adolescent reading and planned to use their learning in practice after graduation.

The following research questions guided the work of this study:

1. How did participants, who were all middle grades language arts teacher candidates, learn to teach reading?

2. What skills and ways of teaching did participants learn from different settings, and how did they plan to operationalize their learning in practice?

In using these questions, I was searching for contextualized understandings about how the participants learned to teach.

Rationale for the Study

What does it mean to learn to teach? Recently, this question has been taken up in a wide variety of ways by different stakeholders, including teacher educators, policymakers, and educational reformers (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012). At the same time, much attention has been focused on adolescent literacy and the specific needs of adolescent readers. In this field, researchers have found that adolescents benefit from tailored reading instruction designed to meet their specific reading needs. As teacher candidates learn to teach adolescent literacy, research on teacher education and adolescent literacy intersects. Few interdisciplinary studies bring these fields together, which suggests more work is needed in this area.

From the limited research combining teacher education and adolescent literacy, we know teacher education provides multiple effective ways for teacher candidates to learn to teach and teacher education serves as a powerful setting for learning to teach. The literature, however, is missing a deep understanding of how teacher candidates learn to teach adolescent reading in a teacher education program and their forward-thinking plans for their learning. This gap in the literature led me to conduct this study. With its focus on learning to teach adolescent reading, this study contributes to the research base by exploring how teacher candidates learned to teach, using a theoretical framework centered on context and particularity and a rich, qualitative case study design.

Organization of the Dissertation

As I discussed in the opening paragraphs of the dissertation, learning to teach adolescent reading involves multiple, interconnected issues. In this research, I approached learning to teach with this complexity in mind. While I introduced the relevant literature above, in the first part of Chapter 2, I explore teacher education and its intersections with adolescent literacy as the overarching context for this study.

I approached this research using a Vygotskian sociocultural perspective. This theoretical framework is grounded in theories first developed by Vygotsky (1978, 1987) and later extended by sociocultural scholars, including Smagorinsky (2011, 2013) and Wertsch (1985, 1991, 1994, 1995). In Vygotskian sociocultural theory, learning is an inherently social, situated, mediated process involving tool use in settings toward goals. As teacher candidates learn to teach, they use objects, or *tools*, to perform actions in *settings*, places as constructed by those participating in them, to achieve *goals*, their forward-focused plans. To focus the research, I retained mediated action as my unit of analysis, the major entity being explored in this study. In the second part of Chapter 2, I provide specifics about these concepts by describing the theoretical framework, discussing the unit of analysis, and offering examples to connect both to the work of this study.

In Chapter 3, I detail my methodological choices. First, I discuss the use of a qualitative case study design based primarily in Stake's (2006) multiple case study methodology. Then I explain how I engaged with teacher candidates and others involved in their learning through observations, interviews, and document collection to generate data. Finally I specify how data was analyzed using qualitative methods.

Chapter 4 presents two case studies of learning to teach adolescent reading—one centered on Chase's experiences and one about Elizabeth. Finally, in Chapter 5, I offer findings from

cross-case analysis of the two cases. Two key findings were developed from the data. First, participants learned to negotiate tool use across settings to reach their goals, revealing a sophisticated, complicated relationship between tools, settings, and goals. Second, in examining settings, teacher education coursework played a significant role in participants' learning. Then I conclude the dissertation with discussion of the findings and implications.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTS AND FRAMES FOR THIS RESEARCH: LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As discussed in the last chapter, this study is connected to my personal experiences as a teacher and learner. This study is further shaped by and linked to two broader bodies of literature and sits at the nexus of research on teacher education and adolescent literacy. Most directly, this study is situated under the umbrella of teacher education research. The literature on teacher education spans a vast field, making it difficult to characterize given its wide range (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012). Although the scope of this project does not allow for an in-depth discussion of all the complexities of teacher education research, I begin with a brief overview of the current context surrounding teacher education to position this study in the overarching setting in which was conducted. After discussing teacher education, I review two other bodies of literature related to this study: 1) research on adolescent literacy; and 2) interdisciplinary research on learning to teach reading to adolescent students.

The Current Context of Teacher Education

Recently, the question of how to best prepare teachers for their profession has become a flashpoint in discussions of education in the United States. As Cochran-Smith and her colleagues (2012, p. 2) argued, “Over the last two decades, questions about teacher quality, including how teachers ought to be educated and licensed, have ranked near the top of the educational agenda in the United States and elsewhere. There are enormous controversies about

these issues.”¹ Although I acknowledge and considered many possible ways to understand the debate over teacher education (see, for example, Reckhow, 2012 and Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015), even my interpretation—which attempts to account for complexity—presents only one view of the many rich strands of thought about how best to educate new teachers.

Although many possible readings of this debate exist, I frame teacher education as an entangled system of threads operating within the same knot. In my view, layers of intricate connections exist between three main threads: 1) college- and university-based teacher education; 2) federal educational policy, which sometimes works against these teacher education programs; and 3) educational reformers who promote alternate pathways into the teaching profession, designed mostly as neoliberal responses to the perceived problems in teacher education. While these three threads seem monolithic, they are diverse, maintain varying levels of connectedness, and employ multiple (and in many cases opposing) approaches to teacher education.

Teacher education programs based in colleges and universities have been the customary means for earning a teaching credential across the United States for the past half-century and educate more new teachers than any other pathway. In many instances, these programs—designed by teacher educators—comprise a similar, broad structure: required coursework and one or more practical, hands-on experiences with K-12 classroom teaching. At many universities, these learning experiences last for four semesters during teacher candidates’ junior and senior years of study and include at least two semesters of practica in P-12 schools.

Within this system, teacher educators have continually conducted research and innovated their field by proposing multiple ways of thinking about and reconstructing the ways in which

¹ I do not know the preferred pronouns for all authors mentioned in the dissertation, so in places where I was unsure, I used my best estimate.

new teachers are prepared. For example, Darling-Hammond (2006) explored case studies of effective teacher education programs to determine characteristics of powerful teacher preparation. In researching teacher education, she argued, “If the nation’s classrooms are to be filled with teachers who can teach ambitious skills to all learners, the solution must lie in large part with strong, universal teacher education” (p. 2). She examined six exemplary teacher preparation programs to glean lessons for use across teacher education. Based on the data, Darling-Hammond provided new evidence to support strong ties between field placements and university coursework, reiterating the importance of a close relationship between theory and practice. While the concept of praxis was not new, teacher educators have continually used research to explore and redevelop how to link theory and practice while preparing new teachers.

Ball and Forzani (2009) expanded on the importance of praxis by calling for deeper attention to practice in teacher learning. They explained: “We claim that practice must be at the core of teachers’ preparation and that this entails close and detailed attention to the work of teaching and the development of ways to train people to do that work effectively...” (p. 497). By focusing on the practical component of teacher candidates’ learning, Ball and Forzani drew attention to the intricate work of teaching, which “requires appropriately using and integrating specific moves and activities in particular cases and contexts, based on knowledge and understanding of one’s pupils and on the application of professional judgement” (p. 2). Preparing new teachers for such complicated work requires acute attention to teaching as a practice—one which necessitates repeated, careful unpacking of how skillful teachers use what they know in the classroom with their students. For years, a subset of teacher educators has worked to identify essential elements of effective teaching practice, including university

researchers (e.g., Grossman, 2011; Lampert & Graziani, 2009) and practitioners (e.g., Lemov, 2010; Marzano, 2007).

Zeichner (2012) responded to the turn toward practice with a warning about narrowing teaching into a set of core practices. He argued: “There is a danger of narrowing the role of teachers to that of technicians who are able to implement a particular set of teaching strategies, but who do not develop the broad professional vision,” including deep knowledge of students and the contexts and cultures in which teaching occurs, needed to teach all students effectively (p. 379). To address this issue, he proposed increased attention to developing “a more coherent curriculum for teacher education” with continued attention to both overarching issues teachers face and the skills teachers need for successful teaching (p. 380). This type of best practices approach, designed with input from P-12 teachers, would then be shared nationally across teacher education programs to guide the development of new teachers.

Other scholars have taken a different approach and proposed particularizing teacher education. Research into culturally relevant pedagogy is one move toward such specificity in teacher education. Originally conceptualized by Ladson-Billings (1994; 1995), researchers have used the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy to engage with localized, culturally-situated issues in teaching and teacher education. For example, Seidl (2007) explored how teacher candidates, through a partnership between their teacher education program and a local African American church, developed their own culturally relevant pedagogies. Teacher educators in the study situated prospective teachers’ learning in the belief “that prospective teachers must learn what it means to become students of a particular context. They must learn about the range of cultural experiences and norms within a specific community” to become effective teachers (p. 170). In doing so, Seidl explained: “There has been an attempt to explore the process of understanding,

making concrete, and naming cultural and political information to begin to personalize this information within a culturally relevant approach” (p. 182). Purposefully, “the particular cultural context, the people involved, and the ways in which they utilize experience and literature” was prioritized as teacher candidates developed a culturally relevant pedagogy through teacher education (p. 182). Even Zeichner (Zeichner, Payne & Brayko, 2015), along with his colleagues, revised the earlier call for broad-based best practices, and instead, suggested the need to democratize teacher education by valuing the situated knowledge of multiple stakeholders, such as P-12 educators, in the process of learning to teach,.

Very recently, teacher education programs have begun innovating through new structures for preparing prospective teachers. Bain and Moje (2012), for instance, argued for a model of teacher education based in medical rounds. Through this approach, teacher candidates moved “through multiple school sites, classrooms, and focused tasks of teaching” instead of a previous program in which they completed three semesters of field experience largely disconnected from the university (p. 64). By joining together the university and the K-12 setting, the authors explained: “The Rounds Project enable[d] us to focus on both content-specific features of quality instruction and those that cross socioeconomic contexts” by “building coherence among participants ([teacher candidates], field instructors, and faculty members), spaces (subject-area major courses, education courses, and K-12 school settings), and concepts (disciplinary substance, practices, and literacies) (p. 65). Besides offering an innovative model, this program positioned teacher education as a highly specific learning process. Teacher candidates, for example, took disciplinary literacy courses deeply rooted in each of their subject areas. This new structure for preparing prospective teachers borrowed from other professional training models to help new teachers learn to teach.

McDonald and her colleagues (2015) provide another example of a novel teacher education structure. Used in only a few teacher education programs across the United States, “community fieldwork is not a new idea in teacher education, but it has never been a common strategy” (p. 1671). In this study, the authors placed teacher candidates in community-based organizations to impact their learning and found: “Partnerships with community organizations may move teacher education efforts closer to the overall goal of preparing teachers with contextualized knowledge of children that allows them to incorporate the complexity of children’s lives into the classroom” (p. 1682). McDonald and her colleagues used community-based placements to add a third component to the traditional structure in which teacher candidates take coursework in a university setting and participate in the field in P-12 schools.

In sum, research on teacher education includes many effective ideas, which indicates a lack of definitive answers about how to prepare new teachers most successfully. As this body of research has demonstrated, the effective preparation of new teachers tends to stem from localized practice—leading to difficulty in locating a single, best common ground from which to operate in teacher education. Despite these dissimilarities, however, the broad and extensive body of literature has shown the effectiveness of different ways of preparing future teachers in college- and university-based teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015).

Differing from teacher education scholars, federal policymakers in the last two administrations have discounted teacher education research and focus on problems with current systems for preparing new teachers. Two former Secretaries of Education, for example, have voiced concern that university-based teacher education is “broken” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 11) or, at best, “mediocre” (Duncan, 2009, p. 1). As Arne Duncan (2009), the former top federal education official, argued:

America's university-based teacher preparation programs need revolutionary change...For decades, schools of education have been renowned for being cash cows for universities. The large enrollment in education schools and their relatively low overhead have made them profit-centers. But many universities have diverted those profits to more prestigious but under-enrolled graduate departments like physics—while doing little to invest in rigorous educational research and well-run clinical training.

Two main effects have followed from such harsh criticism of teacher education programs. First, federal policymakers have negated the idea of learning to teach as a particular, specialized process, and second, they have moved to redesign teacher education with business interests in mind (Sleeter, 2009). For many federal policymakers, teacher education fails to prepare new teachers to help students achieve academic success.

In an effort to restructure teacher education, federal policymakers have begun implementing a deregulated, standardized approach to teacher education (Zeichner & Conklin, 2016). For instance, policymakers at the U.S. Department of Education (2016) recently developed a nationally mandated system to track prospective teachers. The new regulations link teacher education quality to P-12 students' standardized test scores by following teacher candidates past graduation as they become instructors of record in P-12 classrooms. Through this system, the Department of Education (p. 2) explained:

These reporting requirements exist in part to ensure that members of the public, prospective teachers and employers (districts and schools), and the States, [colleges and universities], and programs themselves have accurate information on the quality of these teacher preparation programs...Thousands of novice teachers enter the profession every year and their students deserve to have well-prepared teachers.

This approach equates good teacher education with high test scores. While these regulations have yet to become final, federal policymakers planned to use this ratings system to undermine teacher education by placing immense pressure on programs whose graduates fail to conform to a narrow definition of proficiency.

Educational reformers tend to agree with federal policymakers about the poor state of teacher education and call for revolutionizing the field. A National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) report (2014), for example, called teacher education an “industry of mediocrity” (p. 7). The authors of the report contended: “Today’s model of teacher preparation leads to widespread dissatisfaction from public school educators, aggravates the poor regard in which the field is held, and, as a consequence, ramps up interference by outsiders” (p. 15). Teacher education programs contribute to the “widespread assumption that the general incompetence of first-year teachers is unavoidable” by offering weak learning opportunities (p. 14). While the report does not offer solutions to the issues plaguing teacher education, the authors broadly suggest the need to shift away from the current model of preparation and push for widespread transformation across the field.

Emerging from the calls for change proffered by federal policymakers and a group of educational reformers including educational non-profits and think tanks, alternative preparation models—such as Teach for America, TNTP (formerly The New Teacher Project, and now going by only the acronym), and city residency programs—have become increasingly popular in recent years (Brewer & deMarrais, 2015; deMarrais, Wenner & Lewis, 2013). Differing remarkably from the multiple semesters of teacher education required by university-based teacher education, these alternative programs provide a pathway to teacher education involving little or no instruction in pedagogy and theory before entering the classroom. Teach for America, for

example, only requires potential teachers to complete a short summer institute as adequate preparation to lead a P-12 classroom. As Brewer (2014, p. 251), a veteran of both a teacher education program and TFA, recounted: “TFA’s method of training corps members over the course of 5 weeks is in stark contrast to the generally accepted route for traditional certification...Corps members are trained in groups of 15–20 under a [mentor] who has completed only a few years of teaching.” Beyond the short training, alternative routes into teaching routinely emphasize learning to teach on the job over guided practice in field experiences, as in teacher education programs, and tend to neglect theory as useless.

While I have painted each of these groups in broad, generally oppositional strokes here, stakeholders from across teacher education, federal policymaking, and the educational reform movement agree on the importance of improving teacher education for future teachers and their students. As Darling-Hammond (2010, p. 36) explained: “The past two decades have witnessed a remarkable amount of policy directed at teacher education—and an intense debate about whether and how various approaches to preparing and supporting teachers make a difference.” Even within each group, differences of opinion abound. As Zeichner and Pena-Saïdoval (2015, p. 4) wrote:

A system of categorization like this inevitably oversimplifies a much more complex situation. There is much variation...(e.g., in terms of the intensity and substance of positions) as well as multiple points of overlap between positions...That said, the distinctions between groups offer a meaningful lens for considering differing views on how to move forward in teacher education.

Both in and across groupings, however, teacher educators, policymakers, and those promoting alternative pathways into teaching disagree about how to accomplish the task of innovating

teacher education to bolster its ability to provide high-quality preparation for all future teachers (Levine, 2006). Teacher candidates become part of this multifaceted culture, in many cases unknowingly, as they enter teacher education programs and learn to teach. Although difficult to untangle, these overarching issues serve as an important foundation for understanding teacher education and this study's goal of exploring how teacher candidates learn to teach adolescent reading.

Research on Adolescent Literacy

Adolescent literacy continues to be a popular subject in educational research (Snow & Moje, 2010). As part of this field, scholars have consistently shown the importance of explicitly teaching reading well into the middle grades (Alvermann, 2001; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2010). Moje & Ellison (2016, p. 27), for example, concluded:

If adolescent readers are to be part of a nation of readers (and writers), then teachers need to actively support their growth and development because it is clear that learning to read at the early grades will not carry learners forward in learning to read in specialized domains.

Adolescents continue to require targeted help from their teachers to improve as readers, but these findings, however, have yet to translate into sustained teaching of and inquiry into adolescent literacy.

Obstacles have created a gap between teachers' knowledge of teaching adolescent readers and student success in reading. One such complication is especially important in considering how teachers learn to teach adolescent literacy: the entrenched structures and traditions positioning reading as a skill to be mastered in the elementary years and then subsequently

performed in higher grades. A familiar adage illustrates these structures through the concept of learning-to-read versus reading-to-learn. As Robb (2011) described it:

The fundamental premise of the myth is as follows: "Learning to Read" happens in the early grades (K–3) and consists primarily of decoding and memorizing basic sight words.

"Reading to Learn" begins in fourth grade and consists mostly of reading for information. Once students have mastered learning-to-read by about third grade, they are expected to read-to-learn—reading as a means of acquiring new information—throughout the rest of their academic careers with little direct assistance in further developing their reading skills (Chall and Jacobs, 2003; Snow & Matthews, 2016). Although this mantra is popular, particularly in P-12 settings (Center for Public Education, 2015; Snow, Martin & Berman, 2008), it functions as a simplified dualism, denying the complexity and necessity of continued reading development as students progress past elementary school.

A sociocultural perspective on reading counters this simplification and supports adolescent literacy as an ongoing, specific process. Through a sociocultural lens, reading involves symbols and is built upon signs, small or individual units of meaning, and texts, which are compilations of signs (Smagorinsky, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). Simultaneously, “the learning and use of [these] symbols is mediated by and constituted in social systems and cultural practices” (Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2008, p. 109). In a sociocultural sense, reading and learning to read, as meaning-making processes, are reconfigured and re-understood by readers each time they are undertaken based on social, historical, and cultural factors. Rather than a discrete skill to be mastered early in education and then repeatedly enacted, reading is learned over and over again as readers engage with new texts in new circumstances with new

people. In this way, a sociocultural approach to reading situates it as a continual process concerned with the particular rather than the general.

Bringing together these ideas about adolescent reading and sociocultural theories of reading, researchers in the field of adolescent literacy have begun to explore how students continue learning to read and what they need from their teachers to achieve success. Goldman and her colleagues (2016, p. 221), for instance, studied “what adolescent students needed to learn if they were to take their places in 21st-century society as literate generators, as well as consumers, of knowledge.” Their research ultimately led to a conceptual framework for teaching adolescents to master more complex reading skills. Many studies have explored adolescent literacy pedagogies and how in-service teachers help adolescent readers. Very few studies, however, specifically address how teachers learn to teach adolescent literacy (e.g., Finders & Bush, 2003; Lee & Spratley, 2010). Recently, however, a small body of literature on learning to teach middle grades reading has begun to emerge.

A Move Toward Interdisciplinary Study: Research on Teacher Education and Adolescent Literacy

Empirically, little is known about the learning experiences of prospective teachers of adolescent readers. To locate and review studies combining teacher education and adolescent literacy, I developed a systematic search protocol:

1. Only empirical research from peer-reviewed journals was included as a way to account for quality and rigor.
2. I used studies conducted in the educational context of the United States because the particular versions of teacher education and adolescent schooling structures (such as

junior high schools and the middle grades concept) may not be shared by systems in other countries.

3. Given the landmark changes across education since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, articles published after 2001 were used to account for the most current contexts for teaching and teacher education.
4. Studies were only included if they focused specifically on middle grades teacher preparation (grades 4-8 or 5-8). As a result, research with participants enrolled in elementary (K-5/6 and K-8) or secondary (7-12) programs were excluded because they did not center on preparing teachers for the particularities of teaching adolescent students.
5. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed design studies with teacher candidates in initial teacher education programs, both undergraduate and graduate-level, were open for inclusion to allow for diverse research perspectives on learning to teach.

These parameters then guided me in developing search terms. Because multiple terms are often used to describe learning to teach reading in the middle grades, I used different combinations of related search terms, such as *adolescent*, *middle grades*, *middle school*, *teacher education*, *pre-service teacher*, *teacher candidate*, *language arts*, *reading*, and *literacy* to produce broad results.

To ensure that articles fit the protocol criteria, I read titles, abstracts, and if applicable, full articles that explicitly addressed adolescent reading teacher education. More specifically, I hand searched journals with a focus on adolescents, literacy, and teacher education. These included:

English Education; *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*; *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*; *Journal of Teacher Education*; *Middle Grades Research Journal*; *Reading Research*

Quarterly; Research in Middle Level Education; Teaching and Teacher Education; and Voices from the Middle. Studies included in this review were found in these and other journals.

Five studies on this subject were located in the search (Frager, 2010; Pope, Beal, Long & McCammon, 2011; Saunders & Ash, 2013; Stover, Yearta & Sease, 2014; Vagle, 2011). Four of these studies focused exclusively on learning to teach adolescent reading (Frager, 2010; Pope et al., 2011; Stover et al., 2014; Vagle, 2011). One study included middle grades teacher candidates from multiple academic disciplines and provided specific information on prospective adolescent literacy teachers' learning processes (Saunders & Ash, 2013).

Frager (2010) studied how the use of a research activity built teacher candidates' understanding of teaching adolescent reading. After reviewing research on teaching adolescent reading, middle grades teacher candidates enrolled in his introductory course wrote a research proposal, conducted a reading experiment with adolescents, and presented the results of the study in a research roundtable of classmates. In doing so, Frager explained: "Engaging undergraduate preservice teachers in research requires students to formulate questions, analyze data, and use findings to solve problems" (p. 200). Based on the results, Frager argued this research activity taught teacher candidates research skills to help adolescents improve in reading.

Pope and her colleagues (2011) studied their teacher education program in which middle grades students participated as part of the teacher education team. In this structure, both teacher candidates and adolescent students learned reflexively as they engaged in a novel study. By positioning students as teacher educators, the authors "discovered that middle school students are, indeed, great mentors...They can talk about teaching as if they have peeked into our classes" (p.345). As a result of this shift, teacher candidates learned to teach adolescent reading.

Stover, Yearata and Sease (2014) conducted a collective case study of nine teacher candidates as they participated in a literature-based blogging activity with fifth grade pen pals during one semester of their teacher education program. Through this learning experience, teacher candidates “designed and implemented differentiated instruction as they gained practice engaging students in real world 21st century reading and writing activities” (p. 99). Teacher candidates learned to teach adolescent reading through this experience as they practiced planning differentiated instruction, read and wrote with their pen pals, and reflected on their learning.

In studying adolescent literacy in teacher education, Vagle (2011) encouraged teacher educators to turn a critical eye toward their practice. Using his supervisory work with one middle grades literacy teacher candidate as an example, Vagle proposed cultivating a stance of humility as a teacher educator to help prospective teachers. Teacher candidates could develop their skills as adolescent literacy teachers through the guidance of teacher educators who read their work critically and as an exercise in humility.

Using the young adult novel *The Hunger Games* as a starting point, Saunders and Ash (2013) designed a semester-long project to educate teacher candidates about literacy. The project involved multiple teaching-related “achievements” patterned after tasks completed by the main character of the novel, including lesson plan design that incorporated disciplinary literacy and mentoring an adolescent student. By participating in this project, teacher candidates learned to “integrate disciplinary literacy in their instruction *and* simultaneously develop themselves in a profession that expects community leadership and sustained learning throughout their career” (p. 491, emphasis in the original). Teacher candidates learned to teach adolescent literacy by exploring disciplinary literacy through this project.

Common ground amongst this body of scholarship. Two commonalities connected this research: 1) teacher candidates learned to teach in multiple ways, and 2) teacher education served as a powerful site for learning. In Frager's (2010) study, for example, teacher candidates learned to teach by reading and conducting their own research to improve reading instruction. Even though teacher candidates successfully learned to teach by participating in this study, the author did not encourage teacher educators to repeat his activity with teacher candidates in their courses. Instead, he advised teacher educators to devise their own research activities so instruction could be tailored to their particular needs, suggesting teacher candidates could successfully learn to teach in a variety of ways.

Other authors echoed this idea by employing different approaches to successfully prepare teacher candidates. Saunders and Ash (2013), for instance, found that their semester-long disciplinary literacy project based on *The Hunger Games* helped teacher candidates learn to teach literacy. Through the project, teacher candidates completed multiple teaching-related activities modeled after challenges faced by the novel's main character, and they practiced planning units to connect the book to their discipline. The language arts teacher candidates' units involved making inferences about the characters and comparing and contrasting the characters' portrayals in the book and the movie. Although much different than the research activity used in Frager's (2010) study, teacher candidates in this study reported they felt better prepared to teach after participating in the *Hunger Games* project. Across these five articles, the authors showed how multiple methods of learning to teach adolescent literacy were effective.

In this body of research, teacher education experiences played an influential role as teacher candidates learned to teach reading. Researchers described how, in each of these studies, teacher education experiences served as an effective setting for learning and enabled teacher

candidates' development. Practice teaching experiences, for example, provided opportunities for hands-on learning, which allowed teacher candidates to learn to teach. In their study exploring the use of a new tool for preparing prospective adolescent literacy teachers, Stover and her colleagues (2014) matched nine middle grades language arts teacher candidates with fifth grade pen pals to discuss a novel using a blogging format. Teacher candidates learned to teach as they taught their pen pals through blogging, which increased teacher candidates' understanding of "their own reading processes" and explicit and implicit strategies for helping readers make meaning from what they had read (p. 104). Teacher candidates described how the project helped them learn to teach: "To teach [my pen pals] how to read and write thoughtfully and critically, I myself had to read and write thoughtfully and critically" and "I caught myself reading as a teacher and a reader...thinking oooh what strategies can I share" (p. 104-105). Teacher candidates learned to teach reading through this pen pal/practice teaching experience.

In another study, Vagle (2011) tasked teacher educators who supervised practice teaching with creating more useful teacher education experiences through the use of a critical lens. As teacher educators help teacher candidates learn to teach adolescent literacy, they could look for "critical openings"—those "untested and unpredictable" moments in which it might be useful to employ a questioning lens to discuss teaching and learning—as they supervised teacher candidates in their practice teaching experiences (p. 369). This practice could allow teacher educators to "focus more on possibilities and less on limits" by looking critically at their work as they help teacher candidates learn to teach (p. 368). In doing so, teacher educators opened up an effective space for learning to teach. Throughout these five studies, the authors suggested teacher education served as a powerful site for learning.

While small, the body of research on learning to teach adolescent reading offers interdisciplinary knowledge on the process of learning to teach. As teacher candidates are prepared to teach, research on learning to teach and adolescent literacy intersects, but few studies bring these fields together, which suggests more work is needed in this area. This study, with its particular focus on learning to teach adolescent reading, contributes to what research already offers by exploring how teacher candidates learned to teach. Through this study, I examined multiple, interconnected issues and ideas coming together as teacher candidates learned to teach reading in the middle grades using a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical framework, which is detailed in the rest of this chapter.

Through a Vygotskian Sociocultural Lens

Lev S. Vygotsky (1987) highlighted the interconnectedness of research and theory. Inevitably, he wrote, research is viewed “in light of one theory or another” (p. 55). In this study, I used Vygotskian sociocultural theory to understand the process of learning to teach. The phrase *Vygotskian sociocultural theory* served to position this theoretical framework in a specific way, one which was heavily indebted to Vygotsky and certain scholars who have studied and used his work—most notably Smagorinsky (2011) and Wertsch (1985, 1991). The purpose of this chapter is to explain how Vygotsky’s ideas and sociocultural theories about the processes of learning and teaching were used to frame a study of what middle grades teacher candidates learned about teaching reading in different settings and how they planned to operationalize their learning in practice. In this chapter, I discuss how several key ideas from Vygotskian sociocultural theory—tools, signs, settings, and goals—were particularly useful as a theoretical framework for understanding this study.

Vygotsky and his Theoretical Legacy. Vygotsky was a Belarusian developmental psychologist who focused on the cultural, historical, and social nature of human consciousness. Much of Vygotsky's work explored a "socio-cultural" theory of human development in which thinking and learning are fundamentally influenced by the cultural, historical, and social environments in which they occur (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 132). Vygotsky (as cited in Cole & Wertsch, 1996) theorized "the central fact about our psychology is the fact of mediation" through tools (p. 252). In this sense, everything humans think or do, including learning to teach adolescent reading, is mediated by tools and signs in settings toward goals.

These theories were left unfinished with Vygotsky's death in 1934 at the age of 37, after which the Communist Soviet government suppressed his work for many years (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). In the past several decades, Vygotsky's ideas have been taken up across a number of academic disciplines since becoming more broadly accessible to international scholars (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Currently, common Vygotskian perspectives can be split into three broad, interconnected categories: cultural-historical theory; cultural-historical activity theory, or CHAT; and sociocultural theory (Ellis, Edwards, & Smagorinsky, 2010; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Each of these categories focuses on different but closely interrelated aspects of Vygotsky's theories, and although this summary does not try to encompass the possibilities for identifying research within a Vygotskian tradition, I mention these veins of sociocultural theory to situate my understanding of it within the broader field of Vygotskian approaches. Based in Marxism, cultural-historical theory "proposes that physical and psychological tools are used to build cultures" (Ellis et al., 2010, p. 3). As its name suggests, cultural-historical theory focuses on the cultural historicity of tool and sign usage, especially as they relate to settings and the

individuals using them for varying purposes (Ellis et al., 2010). Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) research, originally developed from the work of Vygotsky and Leont'ev, works along similar lines but focuses primarily on collective subjects and activity systems instead of individuals (Cole, 1996; Zinchenko, 1995). Sociocultural theory, as it is used in this study, is concerned with “the ways in which [individual] human action,” such as learning, “is inherently linked to the cultural, institutional, and historical settings in which it occurs” (Wertsch, 1994, p. 203) and involves the analysis of “goal-directed, tool-mediated action” in context (Smagorinsky, 2011, p. 250; see also Wertsch, 1991). In this way, Vygotskian sociocultural theory rests on the premise that learning is inherently social, situated, and mediated and involves the use of tools—both physical tools and psychological tools, which are called signs—in settings toward goals. I discuss the process of learning using a sociocultural emphasis on tools, settings, and goals in the following sections.

An Emphasis on Tools, Signs, Settings, and Goals

While there are multiple possibilities for framing Vygotskian sociocultural research, learning is framed by “the *tools* that mediate thinking, the *setting* in which those tools have gained currency and sanction, and the *goals* toward which people put them to use” in this study (Smagorinsky, 2011, emphasis in the original, p. 251; see also Wertsch, 1991). The mediational means by which humans interact with the world around them, *tools*, are appropriated in *settings*, the co-constructed places in which activity occurs, toward *goals*, or forward-focused plans. The interaction of tools, signs, settings, and goals influences what and how teacher candidates learn to teach adolescent reading and serves as a theoretical framework for understanding the data. I define these terms, discuss how they are interrelated, and connect each one to this research in the following sub-sections.

Tools. Learning, in a Vygotskian sociocultural approach, “can be understood only if we understand the tools” and signs mediating it (Wertsch, 1985, p. 15). One of Vygotsky’s main projects was to explore the mediational role of tools, which could be physical or, in the case of signs, such as language, psychological. Tools and signs, often referred to simply as tools, serve “as the conductor of human influence on the object of activity” and a means by which humans exert control on the world around them (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 55). In this sense, tools allow humans to perform actions on their environments. For teacher candidates, tools include verbal instructions, teaching methods, and written texts. Tools have a cultural-historical background, meaning they “are appropriated and imbued with personal significance as a result of the situations and interactions with others in which they are encountered” (Wells, 2007, p. 245).

Just as tools have a cultural-historical background, teacher candidates bring their own backgrounds with them as they engage in thinking about teaching tools, which includes both material tools, such as texts, and psychological tools, or signs, such as decoding (Grossman et al., 1999). For instance, teacher candidates’ personal beliefs and feelings about reading serve as a historical legacy they carry into teaching. These backgrounds affect how teacher candidates learn to use tools to teach reading. In this way, “individual characteristics of learners serve as factors that are implicated in the process of appropriation” (Smagorinsky, 2011, p. 36). For example, teacher candidates carry with them the ways in which they were taught to read while they learn about tools for teaching reading through field placements and university coursework. In this study, the research questions were built around understanding tools and the ways in which teacher candidates learned to use them.

Settings. Tools are appropriated in settings. While a setting generally involves a place, it is more specifically “the manner in which individuals construct what surrounds them,” which

means a setting involves more than just the place where actions occur (Smagorinsky, 2011, p. 296; see also Lave, 1988). A setting is “created by the participants” involved and interpreted through those participants’ backgrounds (Wertsch, 1985, p. 215). In examining settings where teacher candidates learn to teach reading, I focused on individual teachers’ understandings of the environments where their learning occurred while recognizing the presence of a wide “variety of variables having to do with the settings in which teachers learn and practice their work” (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 2). Teacher candidates enrolled in a university-based teacher education program learn to teach in three broad settings:

- 1) their own schooling, which serves as an “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975, p. 61);
- 2) the formal setting of college classes; and
- 3) the informal setting of field placements (Grossman et al., 1999).

Although these settings are distinct in many ways, they intersect and overlap as teacher candidates learn to teach adolescent reading and provide a foundation from which to begin exploring each teacher candidate’s mediated activity. Furthermore, I recognize there are also other settings besides these—such as micro-settings, which are more locally personalized and context-based—in which teacher candidates learn to teach (see also Barnes & Smagorinsky, 2016).

Teacher candidates’ backgrounds cannot be separated from the nested, interrelated settings in which they function (Wertsch, 1985). For example, teacher candidates carry beliefs about gender, such as norms for proper behavior for male, female, and transgender students, with them as they learn to teach. These beliefs mediate how they appropriate tools and interact with students in different settings as they work toward the goal of teaching adolescent reading, and at

the same time, these beliefs are subject to change via mediation. In this study, I examined the varying effects of different settings, including the various assumptions and contexts at work in each one, on the ways teacher candidates learn to teach reading.

Settings for teacher candidates' learning. Through their own experiences as students, teacher candidates have seen and been part of reading instruction for much of their lives. These experiences form an apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). After entering their teacher education programs, teacher candidates learn in two other major settings: university coursework and field placements. In general, university courses are a more formal setting, and in field placements, learning involves less structure. As Lave (1996, p. 150-151) argued,

Formal education was supposed to involve 'out-of-context' learning in which instruction is the organizational source of learning activities; learners build understanding through abstraction and generalization, which produces less context-bound, more general understanding, and results in broad learning transfer to times and places elsewhere and later. In informal education, learning was supposed to be embedded in everyday activities, taking place through demonstration, observation, and mimesis.

While exceptions exist, this conception encapsulates differences in university coursework and field placements. Learning is more deliberately structured in college classes: syllabi are drawn up by professors, books are purchased, and lectures and class discussions are held. In the informal setting of field experience placements, teacher candidates are often expected to learn from practice and reflection through their daily activities and experiences. Field placements typically offer teacher candidates the opportunity to take part in a process where knowledge is "both reconstructed and co-constructed in the course of dialogic interaction" throughout the school day (John-Steiner & Meehan, 2000, p. 35). In this study, learning occurred in and from

these interactions as teacher candidates observed, took part in, and developed understandings of, in, and from different settings.

This study explored what teacher candidates learned in formal and informal settings and how experiences in these settings shaped their conceptions of teaching practice. Underlying this exploration was the understanding that “what becomes appropriated and in what manner then depends on the degree to which the learner understands the expectations of different settings and adjusts” appropriately (Smagorinsky, 2011, p. 36). In this study, I approached teacher candidates’ learning with the idea that they were not akin to parrots simply following the enculturation efforts of others, but instead participated as co-constructors of culture, analyzing and reassembling cultural messages in new ways as they worked toward the goal of learning to teach reading (John-Steiner & Meehan, 2000). Although I have outlined each of these settings separately for purposes of explanation, they are, in practice, complex and intertwined—intersecting and building on each other much more than they are singular, clearly defined entities in teacher candidates’ learning processes.

Goals. Goals, “those more local forward-directed plans of individuals or subsets of people,” arise from mediated activity (Smagorinsky, 2011, p. 21). For different teacher candidates, various individual goals, such as developing a love of literature or boosting students’ Lexile levels, can come out of the task of teaching adolescent reading. Many factors, such as a school’s culture and a teacher candidate’s background, affect and alter goals even as they are being pursued. Teacher candidates, in addition to working toward individual goals, operate within school and classroom settings, which are steeped in their own cultural goals and often impact individual goals.

Cultural goals for development, called *telos*, are ultimate or optimal outcomes (Cole, 1996). Sometimes, cultural goals are conveyed explicitly in the present while others are transmitted through *prolepsis*, a cultural mechanism that shifts the perspective of time, brings the end goal into the present, and involves implicit assumptions at work in a setting (Cole, 1996; Smagorinsky, 2011). Through prolepsis, social trajectories of individuals and groups are moved toward desired outcomes, although even experienced members of a culture are unaware of how the culture of a setting operates (Smagorinsky, 2011; Wertsch, 1985). In schools, for instance, stated cultural goals can differ from the more subtle workings of prolepsis, altering how goals are interpreted or enacted. In this study, I explored “the problem of how a given goal-oriented activity”—here, the task of teaching adolescent reading—was accomplished by teacher candidates in terms of their individual goals and broader cultural goals (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 126).

In studying teacher candidates’ goals, it was necessary to look into culture and context because doing so “recognizes the power of social institutions relative to individuals and the potential of individuals” (Cole, 1996, pp. 142-143). Schools are immersed in the overlapping cultures of, for instance, school districts; state governments and policy boards; the U.S. Department of Education; and federal laws, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Goals, then, are not as simple as being student-, teacher-, or school-based. Goals are usually defined in a top-down manner based on requirements given by overarching cultures at the district, state, and national level—each of which can differ. By incorporating (or resisting) goals as they trickle down to the classroom level, teacher candidates work in the context of a school but also beyond it, much as the mind can extend beyond the body (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, a focus on goals allowed me to answer the research questions by exploring the

multitude of cultures and ideas laying beneath the ways in which teacher candidates learned to teach and planned to operationalize what they have learned.

Unit of analysis. Using a sociocultural framework, I framed this study by identifying a “nonreductionistic, yet manageable” unit of analysis (Wertsch, 1994, p. 204) and focusing on social and cultural activities and processes as teacher candidates learned to teach adolescent reading (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 1991). For sociocultural studies, Wertsch (1994, 1995) suggested the use of the mediated action of individuals as a unit of analysis—a fitting choice for this study given its sociocultural underpinnings, the centrality of each participants’ experiences, and its focus on individualized activity through tools, settings, and goals. In this study, social and cultural activities and processes, such as learning to teach, were grounded the individuals involved in them. As a result, this study’s unit of analysis was teacher candidates’ mediated actions as they learned to teach adolescent reading. This focus on mediated action included the tools, settings, and goals involved in the learning process. In using this unit of analysis, a Vygotskian sociocultural framework was integrated throughout the study informing the research questions, data generation and analysis, cases, and findings.

CHAPTER 3

A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

In the last chapter, I detailed how a sociocultural framework based in the work of Vygotsky (1978, 1987) serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. Because “methodology is inevitably interwoven with and emerges from” theory, this same framework anchors the study methodologically (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 97). In this chapter, I detail the processes used to answer the research questions and explain why they were chosen, dividing the chapter into four sections: 1) the use of a theoretically informed multiple case study methodology; 2) data generation methods; 3) data analysis; and 4) issues of rigor, quality, and limitations of the study.

Building and Selecting Multiple Cases for Analysis

This study was anchored by a multiple case study design based primarily in Stake’s (2006) work. In this methodology, each case served as “an arena or host or fulcrum to bring many functions and relationships together for study” (Stake, 2006, p. 2). In this study, each case involved the mediated actions of one teacher candidate as s/he learned to teach middle grades reading. Multiple tools, settings, and people who participated in a dynamic web of interactions were part of this process and informed each case. Although it can be “difficult to transfer to others a full picture of what both researchers and data sources know of experience, interactivity, and context,” my purpose in creating each case was to produce a vivid, narrative account of the data I generated (Stake, 2006, p. 18).

In generating data, my ultimate goal was to address the study's research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). To reach this goal, I built two cases, presented in Chapter 4. Each case was built using data from interviews, observations, and documents and bounded by the study's unit of analysis: each teacher candidate's mediated actions. Such actions could not be studied in isolation; they were mediated by tools and settings toward goals as teacher candidates learned to teach. To the extent possible, each individual teacher candidate and his or her mediated actions formed the boundaries for each case. For this research, the single cases, which focused on each teacher candidate's mediated actions, allowed for an understanding of the larger phenomenon of learning to teach middle grades reading (Stake, 2006).

Alignment. This multiple case study design aligned with both the theoretical framework and the goals of this study in two significant ways. First, both Vygotskian sociocultural theory and multiple case study analysis were concerned with activity as it occurred “in its context and in its particular situation” (Stake, 2006, p. 2). This idea was important here because of my commitment, through my theoretical framework, to the situated, contextualized nature of thinking and learning. Second, both were concerned with the difficulties of studying and bounding multi-faceted processes, such as learning to teach. Because it was concerned with so many interrelated contexts and activities, learning to teach middle grades reading was a challenging topic to study. It involved many interrelated factors, including teacher candidates' histories, numerous tensions, and the intersection of multiple worlds. In using this design, I could attend to these various factors, allowing for deep alignment with the study's theoretical framework.

This multiple case study design fit well with the aims of this study. First, as Stake (2006, p. 2) asserted, qualitative case studies require “experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in

its contexts and in its particular situation.” This study was fundamentally concerned with experience, activity, and context. Second, I explored the complicated process of learning to teach. The design enabled such an exploration because case studies could account for “many-sided, complex, and sometimes conflicting” factors (Flyvberg, 2006, p. 238). Instead of requiring generalizations, case studies allowed for an exploration of the rich ambiguities in a “particularly ‘thick’ and hard-to-summarize” process, such as learning to teach (Flyvberg, 2006, p. 237). As a result, this design made it possible for me to consider multiplicities and reveal depth, instead of generality (Simons, 1996).

Choosing Cases. As Stake (2006) explained, multiple case study projects involve selecting certain cases upon which to focus and advised researchers to consider three factors: 1) the relevance of each case to the phenomenon under study; 2) the diversity of cases across contexts; and 3) the opportunity each case provides to explore complexities and contexts. For this project, I selected two focal participants from the original group of four to create cases. Ultimately, these cases were selected for analysis because they both focused on the phenomenon of learning to teach middle grades reading, they involved diverse contexts, and their data was the most robust of all four cases.

Both cases involved middle grades language arts teacher candidates, which meant they were directly concerned with learning to teach middle grades reading. Even though both cases involved participants enrolled in undergraduate teacher education programs and placed at the same school, they were placed in different classrooms and grade levels within the school. In addition, the participants came from dissimilar backgrounds, different geographic areas, and did not identify as members of the same race or gender. Finally, these cases were selected because they involved the richest data. The participants were particularly motivated, talkative, and open

to sharing and reflecting on their experiences. Their cooperating teachers and university supervisors were similarly interested in talking to me extensively about their experiences and those of the participants, which did not happen with all participants.

Participants and Data Generation Methods

To study teacher candidates' mediated actions as they learned to teach, I recruited teacher candidates from one university-based teacher education program to participate in this study. Purposeful sampling (Stake, 2006) was used to identify middle grades teacher candidates in their final year of their university-based teacher education with a primary emphasis in language arts. These characteristics were important because they allowed for particular insights into learning to teach reading. First, in their final year of a teacher education program, participants were situated near the end of a structured educational experience in which they learned about reading pedagogy in both college classes and field placements. Second, participants were at the conclusion of a lengthy apprenticeship of observation, during which they had spent most of their lives in classrooms constructing an understanding of what it means to teach by being taught themselves (Lortie, 1975). Besides meeting these criteria, a major factor in selecting participants was availability and district rules and permissions. After identifying and contacting teacher candidates who met these criteria, four participants enrolled in the study.

Cultures and contexts. In this study, the participants learned to teach through the formal setting of college courses, the informal setting of field placements, and their apprenticeships of observation. Participants also learned to teach in other settings, such as teaching and mentoring opportunities outside of the teacher education program. All of these settings were important in this research because participants learned in different ways across these settings, which shaped and led to different outcomes (Cole, 1996). In this study, the ways in which the participants

learned to teach middle grades involved looking, as Wells suggested, “not only at individuals, but also at the social and material environment with which they interacted” (Wells, 2000, p. 53). From this perspective, the situated nature of culture and context in different settings was integral to this research (Daniels, 2008; Smagorinsky, 2011), even though definitions for culture, context, and setting are debatable across psychological research on learning. To clarify, I used culture to mean *the way things are usually done around here*, including social norms and traditional customs. I employed *context* as a broad term for the circumstances and arrangements that surrounded learning, such as the organization of the teacher education program and the structure of the field placement school. The *settings* in this study, the places as constructed and interpreted by the individuals involved in them, included culture.

To explore the fundamental role of culture and context in this study, the following subsections provide further details about the settings in which the two focal participants, Chase and Elizabeth, learned to teach. Culture, context, and setting are fluid, multi-dimensional concepts, making it difficult to present a fixed, linear description. These sections represent my best effort to capture a snapshot of the cultures, contexts, and settings involved in this study, but this glimpse is not meant as a singular or definitive account because my theoretical framework suggests the impossibility of providing one.

University-based teacher education program. Chase and Elizabeth were both enrolled in the same middle grades teacher education program in a large research-intensive university in the Southeastern United States. In the Middle Grades Program, they participated in a two-year set of courses and field experiences, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Middle Grades Program: Sequence of Courses and Field Placements

	Fall Semester, First Year in Program	Spring Semester, First Year in Program	Fall Semester, Second Year in Program	Spring Semester, Second Year in Program
Coursework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory middle grades course • 4 subject area courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second middle grades course • 3 subject area courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third middle grades course • 3 subject area courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final middle grades course
Field Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No field placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part-time field placement (2 days/week) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part-time field placement in a different school than last year's placement (3 days/week) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time student teaching field placement in the same school as last semester (5 days/week)

Through this sequence, the culture of the Middle Grades Program centered on adolescence as a distinct developmental period, one which required teachers to learn and use specific pedagogical knowledge and skills to help middle grades students achieve success. Chase and Elizabeth were required to complete a series of four courses on adolescent pedagogies, which were taught by faculty or graduate students, as part of this Program. These courses focused on adolescent development and middle grades curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Topics of study, for example, ranged from social justice through education and reflective practice to differentiated instruction and building relationships between teachers, students, and families. To learn about literacy, Chase and Elizabeth took five semester-long disciplinary courses in English/Language Arts with content- and pedagogy-specialists from the Literacy Education Department in College of Education, not the College of Arts & Sciences, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Along with coursework, the Program placed heavy emphasis on the importance of experiential learning in middle grades classrooms. Instead of the typical one or two semesters of field experience (AACTE, 2013), the Program required three semesters of field placement experience: two part-time and one full-time student teaching semester. Together, these courses and field experiences were designed to prepare teacher candidates for the particularities of working with adolescent readers.

University coursework outside the middle grades program. The Program required Chase and Elizabeth to pursue certification in two subject areas. Chase and Elizabeth both designated ELA as their primary emphasis and took most of their coursework outside of the Middle Grades Program in discipline-centered courses taught by professors within the college's teacher education programs, not arts and sciences faculty. Chase and Elizabeth took two methods courses and three content courses through the Literacy Education Department. Faculty and graduate assistants in the Department were committed to identifying and practicing different tools for teaching, unpacking their theoretical and historical underpinnings, and developing teacher candidates' understanding of various learning contexts. For instance, topics in these courses included disciplinary literacy, adolescent literature, and connecting with adolescents through reading pedagogy.

Due to scheduling and availability, Chase and Elizabeth took the same set of ELA courses. Both characterized three of their five required ELA courses as related to reading: one on teaching literature, which included reading and writing about children's literature; a middle grades disciplinary literacy course; and one course dedicated to teaching reading in the middle grades. Chase and Elizabeth recalled these courses centered on different activities, texts, and the theoretical and pedagogical reasons for using them to teach reading. Across their coursework

experiences, they placed less emphasis on their learning in coursework than on experiential learning from their field placements during interviews, even though they consistently used learning from teacher education during observations.

Field placements. Chase and Elizabeth worked in middle grades classrooms with students and cooperating teachers in their field placements. During their time in the Program, Chase and Elizabeth were placed in two different school districts, changing schools between the first and second year in the Program. In addition to switching schools, Chase and Elizabeth changed grade levels to gain experience with different ages of students in the 4th-8th grade range. To help ensure quality in field experiences, cooperating teachers with at least three years of classroom experience were recruited to mentor teacher candidates.

The school in which Chase and Elizabeth were placed was a participant in a school-university partnerships. Through the partnership, Chase and Elizabeth took several university courses at the school and worked with students as part of their coursework in addition to their field placement experiences. With teacher candidates attending, observing, and teaching classes, the partnership affected the culture in the placement school. For instance, middle grades students at the placement school were accustomed to having visitors in the classroom and being taught by teacher candidates, both for whole classes and in small groups. One example of students' familiarity with different teacher candidates as a routine part of the classroom occurred during one of my initial classroom observations when an eighth grader struck up a conversation with me. He seemed to assume I was a teacher candidate, asked if the university class was "making me come in here," and whether I would be leading small group work during the lesson. This familiarity allowed teacher candidates to develop rapport with the students and encouraged them to work actively with students instead of quietly observing. For Chase and Elizabeth, the

partnership allowed them to gain experience in the school even before they began their field placements.

The participants' placement school was a large, urban, Title I middle school with a majority-minority student body. The school culture focused on helping students achieve academic success. Conversations with faculty and teacher candidates, wall decorations and written feedback in classrooms, and school-wide announcements repeatedly indicated a commitment to pushing students to reach for high academic goals, usually as measured by standardized tests. Within Chase's and Elizabeth's classrooms, this commitment was revealed in different ways depending on the cooperating teacher, which will be discussed in more depth in each case.

The cooperating teachers who mentored Chase and Elizabeth repeatedly referred to academic achievement as a major goal for their students. To reach this goal, however, their classrooms were structured differently. In Chase's placement classroom, the cooperating teacher structured the daily routine to let students know they were valued as people and communicated her high academic expectations for them. For example, students and teachers participated in a daily affirmation to remind them of their individual worth and reinforce the importance of effort. Before engaging in academic tasks, a teacher or a student led the group in chanting the affirmation, which would be posted on the board (see Appendix A for a sample affirmation from Chase's placement classroom). Classroom walls were covered with motivational posters and exemplary student work. In Chase's placement classroom, the culture focused on high academic expectations by affirming students as people and reminding them of the importance of effort.

The culture in Elizabeth's placement classroom was structured around maximizing learning time. Lesson plans were designed to keep students focused on academic tasks

throughout the class period, from a warm up on the board as soon as students entered the room to a closing activity just before students left for their next class. For example, Elizabeth's cooperating teacher taught her to stretch lessons and incorporate short review games to keep students working on academic tasks even when the lesson ended early. Students who finished their work quickly were encouraged to read quietly or work on another academic task until the rest of the class was ready to move on to the next activity. Classroom walls were filled with teacher-created posters and student work to remind students about standards covered previously, so students were exposed to academics even when they looked around the room (see Appendix B for a sample self-made academic poster from Elizabeth's placement classroom). In Elizabeth's placement class, the culture centered on using the entire period for academic tasks to encourage students to meet high academic goals.

During their field placements, Chase and Elizabeth were assigned to university supervisors from the Middle Grades Program. Supervisors were professors, graduate assistants, and highly-experienced former teachers with advanced degrees who mentored participants and observed their teaching two to three times each semester. Supervisors provided feedback on lesson plans and helped participants craft a two-week unit plan. During the final semester in the program, some supervisors held seminar meetings with participants to discuss how they experienced teaching, support them in creating lesson and unit plans, and answer questions. At times, supervisors helped in ways that cooperating teachers could not. For example, supervisors assisted the focal participants as they navigated tensions with the cooperating teacher. Chase and Elizabeth relied on their supervisors to deepen their learning and provide advice.

Apprenticeship of observation. Both participants had strong memories of their apprenticeships of observation in the middle grades. The cultures in each of these settings

influenced how they learned to teach middle grades reading and their plans for teaching in the future. Chase's apprenticeship of observation occurred in an urban charter school, which was part of a national network of charter schools. His middle school experiences were marked by the values of the charter school, which affected his teaching practice. For example, Chase explained behavior at his middle school was closely monitored and regulated, all students were expected to go to college after high school, and academics were consistently promoted as a top priority. Chase felt a strong, positive connection to his middle school, and he carried ideas from his apprenticeship of observation into his teaching as he tried to inspire students to achieve high academic goals and determine the behavior he wanted to encourage. He discussed how students at his middle school were expected to carry and read a novel of their choice wherever they went throughout the school, even as they waited in line for lunch. This emphasis on reading transferred into Chase's teaching practice as he envisioned using novel studies with his future students and encouraging them to select books to read outside of class.

During her middle grades apprenticeship of observation, Elizabeth attended a large, suburban, public middle school. Her apprenticeship of observation was marked by several ineffective teachers. She discussed how her middle grades language arts teachers seemed disengaged and uninspired, which affected how she thought about teaching. For instance, learning frequently involved worksheets for Elizabeth, and authentic reading tasks were rarely part of the daily curriculum in her middle school. As an enthusiastic reader, Elizabeth was disappointed in these boring lessons; as a teacher candidate, Elizabeth carried her frustration at the dull culture of reading in her middle school classes with her as she planned exciting lessons to spark students' interest in reading.

Other teaching and mentoring experiences. Both participants were involved in teaching and mentoring experiences outside of the teacher education program. These experiences impacted the participants, influencing how they learned to teach middle grades reading and what they planned for their future classrooms. Chase's outside experience involved his work for the national charter school network to which his former middle school belonged. He interned at the charter organization's national headquarters and taught an ELA summer enrichment course for students who had recently completed eighth grade. These experiences had a significant, formative impact on his ideas about teaching and learning, especially the summer school teaching experience in which Chase led his own classroom. Through the summer experience, Chase planned lessons, managed the classroom on his own, delivered all instruction for the course, and assessed students' progress. In this setting, Chase tested and refined his ideas as he learned to teach.

Like Chase, Elizabeth learned to teach outside of the teacher education program. Elizabeth developed a desire to teach during childhood, inspired by her mother and aunt who were teachers. Elizabeth's mother taught her to teach by allowing Elizabeth to spend time in her classroom and with mentoring throughout the teacher education program. Elizabeth routinely discussed conversations she had with her mother about teaching. She was always able to call her mother to think through lesson ideas or ask questions about classroom issues. This open line of communication with an experienced teacher allowed Elizabeth to explore and sharpen her ideas as she learned to teach middle grades reading.

Situating myself as the researcher. In this research, my theoretical commitment to situated knowledge positioned participants' relationships to and involvement in different cultures and contexts as an integral part of how they learned to teach. As a researcher, the same was true

for me. Reflexively, I shaped and was shaped by different cultures and contexts throughout this study. For example, as a white, middle-class woman, I recognize I fit the demographic profile of a typical teacher (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). These broad, cultural constructions of race and class and the similarities and differences between participants' backgrounds and mine shaped our relationships, potentially enhancing or distancing me from participants. In another example, I was a middle grades language arts teacher for several years before the study, which provided me with some experiences similar to those of the participants. I, too, completed a university-based teacher education program, taking university coursework in content and methods and engaging in field experiences. My involvement in teacher education prompted a sense of familiarity with the participants' experiences as they learned to teach. In examining my positionality, my aim is not be exhaustive, and it is unclear exactly how the participants' and my positionality affected the study, even after careful consideration. Like describing the air I breathe, it was challenging—and in many ways, impossible—to step back from myself to explain the effects of the cultures and contexts I brought to my relationships with participants and this research overall.

Beyond these connections, it is useful to explore how my positionality in this research is deeply integrated with my personal commitments. Motivated by my passion for reading, I taught middle grades language arts for five years in Title I schools in two different states. Across these different geographies, I developed an understanding of challenges injustices faced by my traditionally marginalized students, including the perpetuation of educational inequity through a lack of resources and top-down instructional decisions. Each year, for example, many of my students lacked the reading skills they needed to make meaning from and with middle grades literature. As I searched for ways to help them, I sometimes found myself at odds with school

culture if I introduced a new teaching method, and I spent ample time searching for books and engaging resources, even as the school districts in which I taught were spending millions of dollars on textbooks I could not use with my below grade-level readers. These barriers to helping students grow as readers were disheartening, and my experiences shaped my belief that all students deserve a meaningful education filled with rich literacy experiences. I brought my beliefs about teaching and learning with me to this study, which is fueled by my curiosity about how teachers can help students become engaged in high-quality reading experiences to prepare them effectively for their futures.

Data Generation Methods. To generate data for this study, I used three methods: participant observations, interviews, and document collection. After generating data for four cases, I built and analyzed two focal cases for the purposes of this dissertation. Each case was based on one teacher candidate's mediated actions as he or she learned to teach. I used the data generation schedule shown in Table 2 to obtain data for each case:

Table 2

Data Generation Schedule by Semester

Fall Semester Schedule

Fall Semester Schedule					
	August	September	October	November	December
Formal interviews with teacher candidates	1st formal interview			2nd formal interview	
Formal interviews with cooperating teachers and university supervisors				Formal interview	
Observations and informal interviews		1st observation & informal interview	2nd observation & informal interview		
Documents	Document collection throughout the semester				

Spring Semester Schedule

Spring Semester Schedule					
	January	February	March	April	May
Formal interviews with teacher candidates				3rd formal interview	
Formal interviews with cooperating teachers and university supervisors				Formal interview	
Observations and informal interviews	3rd observation & informal interview	4th observation & informal interview	5th observation & informal interview		
Documents	Document collection throughout the semester				

As shown in Table 2, I met with participants about once per month over the course of the school year. I observed each participant and conducted an informal interview five times. Formal interviews with teacher candidates were conducted three times over the course of the school

year. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors were each interviewed formally once per semester. I collected documents from teacher candidates, their cooperating teachers, and their university supervisors throughout the school year. To explain more thoroughly how the research questions were answered by building cases from this data, the following sections focus on these methods, how they were used, and why I chose them.

Participant observations. Through observations, I studied teacher candidates as they engaged in mediated action. To help me answer this study's research questions, these observations provided a close look at teacher candidates' mediated actions, the tensions framing these actions, the tools involved, the settings in which the action occurred, and at times, the goals toward which the action was directed. While tools and settings are more obvious in an observation setting, goals were only sometimes made explicit and able to be observed. In some instances, I asked questions during informal interview sessions to elicit information about goals. Even then, deep discussions about goals were, at times, elusive.

I observed each teacher candidate a total of five times throughout the data generation period. Each observation lasted between one to two hours. During each observation, I used a self-created observation protocol to take notes (included in Appendix C). In it, I recorded descriptive and reflective field notes, rich with details and thick description (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I noted the "people, objects, places, events, activities, and conversations" taking place as teacher candidates worked in their classrooms in my descriptive notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 118). These notes involved the details of what I noticed as I observed. While I cannot put aside my subjectivities while conducting research, my descriptive field notes included an effort to look ethnographically and pull back on judgments and evaluations (Frank, 1999). In my reflective notes, I did the opposite and included "speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches,

impressions, and prejudices” about what I observed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 122). These reflective field notes helped build “a bridge between observation and analysis,” supporting me as I began analyzing the data during generation (Spradley, 1980, p. 33). In these observations, I employed my theoretical framework to pay close attention to teacher candidates’ mediated actions, the tools they used, the settings in which they taught, and when possible, the goals toward which they were working.

Observations were closely tied to interviews because I used them to craft more specific questions to ask during interviews. During informal interviews, I explored teacher candidates’ reasoning about their mediated actions by asking them to discuss their thoughts on what occurred during the observations. In formal interviews, I asked cooperating teachers and university supervisors for their thoughts on teacher candidates’ actions during the observations, the tools they used, and their goals. The observations and interviews corroborated each other, adding triangulation to the data.

Interviews. Mediated action cannot be studied directly through interviews, but interviews served to provide an account of mediated action. In this study, interviews served three important functions. First, they provided a way to reconstruct mediated action from the point of view of the person being interviewed. Each interview involved questions about how teacher candidates learned to teach reading—what tensions they had to navigate, the actions they took, what tools mediated that action, the settings in which they acted, and the goals toward which they worked. Second, interviews allowed me to elicit multiple points of view on each teacher candidate’s process of learning to teach—including those of the teacher candidate, the cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor—which built in triangulation. Instead of using one person’s reconstruction of mediated action, I triangulated the data using formal and informal

interviews with more than one person involved in the process of learning to teach. Third, interview data helped me answer this study's research questions as I asked about the ways in which teacher candidates learned to teach.

Both informal and formal interviews were conducted throughout the study (Roulston, 2010). Interviews lasted between 30-90 minutes, depending on time constraints of the participants, the type of interview, and how forthcoming the participants were about their experiences. Informal interviews were based on the needs of the immediate situation and were shorter in duration. I planned informal interviews after each observation session to clarify events and contexts from the observation and discuss teacher candidates' thinking as they learned to teach. During these informal interview sessions, I took detailed notes, transcribing as we talked. Other quick, informal interviews sometimes occurred spontaneously.

Formal, semi-structured interviews with the teacher candidates, their cooperating teachers, and their university supervisors were conducted at planned times throughout the school year. Each formal interview was audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis. Teacher candidates were interviewed three times throughout the nine-month data generation period: once near the beginning, once in the middle just before they began student teaching, and once near the conclusion. Interviewing at these intervals allowed me to gather information from participants at three key points. The first interview was scheduled when participants were taking university courses and had recently completed their first year in the Middle Grades Program. The second interview occurred at the end of the fall semester, just as participants completed their university coursework and prepared to begin student teaching. The third interview was scheduled when participants were completing their student teaching, a 60-day immersion in practice teaching. In each of the formal interviews, I used a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix D), which

followed a general format while allowing for probing and follow-up questions. Formal interviews with cooperating teachers and university supervisors, which also involved a similar semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix E), occurred once each semester. These interviews were conducted at the end of the semester, after all observations and program requirements were completed.

Document analysis. Documents, like interviews, could not provide a direct window into mediated action. However, documents allowed for a different look at teacher candidates' mediated actions, the tensions and tools involved, the settings in which they acted, and the goals toward which they were working—all of which added to the picture of how they learned to teach. Throughout both semesters of data generation, I collected two types of documents: those created as part of the study and those created as part of the teacher candidates' learning and teaching.

I began collecting documents by prompting each teacher candidate to create a document about his/her experiences learning to read and teach in the first formal interview session. Teacher candidates were given blank paper and markers and asked to draw and write, much as in a graphic novel, what they remembered most vividly about learning to read and how it affected how they had learned to teach reading. At subsequent formal interview sessions, I asked teacher candidates to create more pieces of visual data, including a timeline of their teaching and reading experiences, which added to the picture of how they learned to teach. In addition, I collected documents related to the teacher candidates' university coursework and field placements. These documents included: syllabi from university coursework, teacher candidates' written work from their courses; formal and informal university supervisor and cooperating teacher evaluations of the teacher candidates; formal and informal lesson and unit plans; and instructional materials

used during teaching. All of these documents were collected to use along with other forms of evidence so the particularities of each could be understood, which provided another form of triangulation (Hodder, 2000).

Data Analysis Methods

Qualitative research analysis methods vary depending on the research design and theoretical framework of the study. In this study, I used qualitative analysis methods to help me answer the research questions by allowing for an exploration of multiple possibilities in the data (Smagorinsky, 2011). To stay aligned with this study's theoretical framework, I chose analytic strategies employed by other sociocultural scholars (e.g., Conklin, 2012; Grossman et al., 2000; Smagorinsky, Rhym, & Moore 2013). I began preliminary analysis during data generation. An initial, informal analysis of my reflective notes from observations and memo writing during data generation allowed me to refine the process and inform subsequent interviews, observations, and document collection.

For a more thorough, formal analysis after the data generation period, I used Atlas.ti to support an iterative, in-depth process. I began by creating narratives from the focal participants' data to get to know them better through the data. In the narratives, I used interview quotes to create a short picture of the histories each participant brought to teaching, such as his/her family background and early experiences with reading. These narratives gave me a deeper sense of the participants.

Buoyed by the understandings I developed from these narratives, I transitioned into another round of analysis. First, I used my unit of analysis (focal participants' mediated actions as they learned to teach middle grades reading) to mark boundaries in the data. As discussed previously, observations were the only data generation method allowing for direct insight into

mediated action. In observations, changes in mediated action were typically well-delineated as focal participants shifted from one instance of mediated action, or tool use, to the next as their lessons progressed. During analysis, I used these natural breaks and shifts to parse out changes in mediated action and signal the conclusion of an episode. Interview and document data expanded these episodes, providing corroboration and further detail about the mediated action that occurred in observations and deeper insight into focal participants' thinking. In using this unit of analysis, I was able to break up large swaths of data into manageable units for coding and ask the same questions to each part of the data as I coded it.

Next, I began initial coding (Saldaña, 2013). I read and re-read interview transcripts, observations, and documents and developed a list of codes, as shown in Table 3:

Table 3

Codes from Round 1 of Data Analysis

Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools/methods/activities used by participants in teaching² • Settings/places in which participants learned to teach • Goals/reasons for activity • Attributions of learning/sources of teaching knowledge • Information on participants' backgrounds/histories/cultures • Interesting or potentially important quotes or ideas
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I developed these codes in two ways: first, by using open coding to develop spontaneous codes based in the data, and second, by employing concepts from the study's theoretical framework to understand the data (Wertsch, 1994; Smagorinsky, 2011). During this process, I wrote memos to

² When using slashes, such as in "tools/methods/activities," I do not mean to imply these words are exact synonyms. As I have discussed in the theoretical framework, the Vygotskian sociocultural concept of "tools" carries a particular meaning, which "methods/activities" does not necessarily share. I did, however, use these groups of terms together in a broad, related sense in the initial round of coding.

record my thoughts, comparing and contrasting codes to notice links and striking ideas (see Appendix F for an example memo). As I coded each episode of data, I asked myself a guiding question: What do I know about the data so far? This process allowed me to develop an introductory picture of the data.

Then I looked deeper into the data by recoding and asking more questions. I borrowed from the processes of other sociocultural scholars to develop more detailed second-round codes (Grossman et al., 1999; Smagorinsky, 2013). For example, I asked myself: How can the data be categorized? Following Grossman et al.'s (1999) framework as a source of inspiration for this stage of analysis, I looked at different kinds of tools the participants were learning to use in teaching. Participants learned to use both conceptual tools, which include “principles, frameworks, and ideas about teaching, learning, and English/language arts acquisition,” and practical tools, which “do not serve as broad conceptions to guide an array of decisions but, instead, have more local and immediate utility” (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 14). Codes developed in round 2 of data analysis are shown in Table 4:

Table 4

Codes from Round 2 of Data Analysis

Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conceptual ○ Practical ○ For teaching ○ For learning to teach ○ Classroom management • Related to background/history/culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early reading experiences ○ Personal reading feelings/experiences ○ Placement school culture/climate • Types of settings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Own K-12 schooling ○ Coursework ○ Practica ○ Other ○ Unattributed • Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For the future ○ For him/herself as a teacher
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In this round of coding, I developed an understanding of the tools participants used to teach and learn to teach, the settings in which participants learned, and their relationships with the past and the future. This round of coding helped me develop a deeper, more nuanced picture of the data.

Next, I continued analysis by delving deeper into each participant's teaching. I explored particularly noticeable or prominent parts of the data, marked recurring ideas, and used my reflective notes from each observation to spark new possibilities. As the analysis process progressed further, it became more comprehensive and cohesive. I used what I learned in earlier coding to refine my understandings, develop categories, and examine patterns and concepts for emergent themes. This round of coding was more specific to the participants and their particular experiences, which meant the codes were usually unique to each participant. Some codes, however, were common. For example, after looking at what and how participants had learned to

teach, I asked what they had *not* learned as a way of exploring the data with a critical eye. I found the participant had gaps in their learning, leading me to a pattern of data about what they had not learned about teaching. As I explored themes in each case, this part of the analysis process provided me with a more unified understanding of how each participant learned to teach.

I completed the analysis process by considering participants' activities as they learned to teach reading in the light of the research questions. This step in the data analysis process taught me participants' experiences as they learned to teach were deeply situated in particular experiences and moments that occurred in an uneven, conflicted, and inconsistent process. To finalize the analysis process, I wrote up each individual case, refining my understandings into specific themes for each focal participant. The cases, in their final form, involved my analysis of each participant as s/he developed a conception of what s/he had learned and worked to understand how their learning could translate into his or her work as a teacher in the future.

Rigor and Quality

Ideas about rigor and quality and how to achieve them in qualitative research have long been subject to disagreements and challenges among researchers (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). Given the array of possibilities for conducting and representing qualitative research, I pursued rigor and quality for this study by aiming to answer a question: Why should readers accept what I have written about this study? In answering this question, I worked toward rigor and quality by pursuing a sense of trustworthiness in the inferences I drew from the data through analysis (Freeman et al., 2007). In the next section, I explain how I contributed to the strength of my claims about this research.

Strengthening my claims about the data. I strengthened the validity of this study in three key ways: 1) following approved IRB protocol and my methodological plans closely; 2)

triangulating the data; and 3) providing a thorough account of how the participants and data are situated. First, I strengthened the study's validity by creating and closely following a plan for the research. By describing this research in such detail that its design could be replicated by others, I promoted the validity of the results (Smagorinsky, 2011). In crafting detailed plans, I was explicit about the study's methodology, providing "systematic and careful documentation of all procedures" as a way to strengthen my claims about the data (Freeman et al., 2007, p. 26). By leaving room for the unexpected in these plans, I contributed to the validity of this qualitative study by remaining open to questions and changes occurring during data generation (Stake, 2005, 2006; Yin, 2014). I did not expect the data generation or analysis processes to adhere to any rigid formulas, but I carefully outlined the study's methodology to add strength to my claims about the data.

Next, I triangulated three data sources—interviews, observations, and documents—to lend trustworthiness to my results. Researchers from across methodological sources on case studies have recommended triangulating multiple sources of evidence as a means for strengthening validity (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005, 2006; Yin, 2014). With different data sources, "the case study's findings will have been supported by more than a single source of evidence" (Yin, 2014, pp. 120-121), and conclusions based on the data will be stronger "because multiple sources lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 115-116). In this study, I used a process of clarifying and verifying meaning from different sources using critical review and comparison between them to triangulate the data in interviews, observational field notes, and documents (Stake, 2006). As I coded and developed themes, for example, I considered the data about a possible theme in its entirety across sources instead of examining each one on its own. Using multiple sources meant I was not limited to the

perspectives of the teacher candidates and myself; I had many perspectives to triangulate, including those of university supervisors and cooperating teachers, which allowed for deeper, more nuanced understandings of the data.

Finally, I added to this study's validity by recognizing this research was "always positioned culturally, historically, and theoretically," which informed and shaped it (Freeman et al., 2007, p. 27). To explore these positions, I was purposeful in examining the contexts in which this research took place, and I gave careful consideration to context throughout each part of this research project. In doing so, I bolstered my claims about the data by acknowledging and exploring multi-faceted, localized factors—such as teacher candidates' backgrounds—involved in learning (Gutierrez & Penuel, 2014). This measure added to the validity of this research.

Limitations of This Study

To contextualize this study, I briefly discuss some limitations of its design. First, this study involved a small number of participants at one university. Generalization was not a goal of this study, given its theoretical and methodological basis (Flyvberg, 2006), but my aim in conducting this research was to shed light on the process of learning to teach middle grades reading. This goal is tied to the idea, as Wolcott (2009, p. 32) claimed, "Good qualitative research ought to confound issues, revealing them in their complexity." In this study, I worked to explore the complexities of teaching and learning in the hope of illuminating and typifying participants' experiences.

Second, I recognized that the use of Vygotsky's work and sociocultural theory leads to one of many possible interpretations of this data. With my findings, I have not attempted to assert singular authority over meaning in the data. The findings are my analytic perspective on the data, one based in the particular theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approach I have

outlined. Other researchers, working from different epistemologies or methodologies, might not reach the same conclusions as those presented here. For example, this research does not account for the role of gender or race in participants' understandings of learning to teach. Researchers employing feminist or critical race theories would focus on those meanings in the data, asking different research questions and likely producing results quite different than those based in Vygotskian sociocultural theory. In this study, my commitment to qualitative research meant the goal of this research was to use a particular theoretical and methodological approach to explore and discuss the process of teaching and learning, not to produce definitive results to explain truths about teaching and learning fully.

Third, my familiarity with the participants and the program outside of the interview setting influenced the research in unknowable ways. As I mentioned earlier in writing about context, culture, and settings in this study, I have attempted to represent myself in a fixed way here, even though I recognize who I was and who the participants were in relation to this study was fluid and multi-dimensional. At the time of the study, I was a doctoral candidate at the university in which it was conducted, teaching methods courses and supervising teacher candidates in their field placements as a graduate assistant for the university. My multiple, layered roles as a former middle grades teacher, doctoral student, and a graduate assistant provoked questions about learning to teach middle grades reading and spurred me to take up this research. While none of the participants were enrolled in any of my courses when this research was conducted, I was a graduate assistant in their teacher education program. This relationship with the program may have been a benefit; for example, teacher candidates might have felt more comfortable speaking with me. Conversely, participants may have altered their responses or been less open with me because they knew of my connections to their teacher education

program. Given qualitative research is, by its nature, grounded in relationships (which are messy and unpredictable), I accepted these issues as part of the study and acknowledged I was unable to know the possible effects.

Finally, the scope of this project was limited by time and available resources due to my role as a solo researcher. Participants were placed in different classrooms in two schools in districts which were many miles apart from each other, introducing time constraints to observations and interviews. During data generation, changes in daily schedules and participants' needs routinely affected when and for how long I could observe and interview them. In addition, I was able to conduct observations of participants in their field placements, but not as they took part in university coursework, which limited my observed understanding of their learning in that setting. Given these limitations, however, I conducted the study to answer this study's research questions through the development of two case studies, which are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

TWO CASES

In this chapter, I present two case studies. The first case study concentrates on Chase's learning process and focuses on how he learned to teach and his future plans for teaching. Even though the case presented here comes across as cohesive, through lines and themes were only exposed during analysis. I have noted instances where tensions arose in what Chase said and did as he experienced the process of learning to teach. For Chase, the reality of learning to teach followed an unclear path, which extended into his thoughts about the future.

Next, I present a second case study, which focuses on how Elizabeth learned to teach and her future plans for teaching. While analysis smoothed out gaps to allow me to present a unified account here, Elizabeth's learning process was similar to Chase's in its fragmentation and unevenness. Learning to teach, as Elizabeth experienced it throughout her final year of formal teacher education, was multi-faceted and defied a neat, linear progression. As she looked forward to the novel context of her own classroom, Elizabeth felt simultaneously prepared and open to continued learning.

Chase's Beginnings

Chase, an African American male in his early twenties, grew up surrounded by a large family in an urban, predominantly African American neighborhood in a major city. Throughout his childhood, education was a priority in his family. For his K-12 education, Chase attended five different schools, some on scholarship: three different charters, one private day school, and private boarding school several hundred miles away from home during grades 9-12. He recalled

them as “very different school environments. When I think about my education experiences and the different backgrounds I come from, I’ve received different qualities from those different schools. They’re all different in one way or another but all beneficial.” His charter middle school, Top Achievement, had a lasting impact on him and his family. Chase “was part of the founding class” at the school, and he remembered that “it was very strict, but I see the purpose of it. They want you to understand the value of always being in that mind of developing your skills.” At the time of the study, his brother was a seventh grader at Top Achievement, his sister was preparing to apply, and his family was “always at the school” to volunteer or attend school events. After graduating, Chase kept “in contact with a lot of the staff members and people who are there.” His former principal at Top Achievement, who left the school to become the assistant superintendent of a large urban school district, served as his mentor and advisor throughout his educational career, even continuing into college.

Chase did not always know he wanted to be a teacher. After finding success in several leadership positions in middle and high school, he envisioned becoming an elected official, perhaps even President, because he liked to “speak in front of people” and wanted to “make a difference.” Chase began college as a Pre-Law major and “held onto that until sophomore year of college” when he noticed that he was routinely “going back, volunteering,” and continually involving himself with the school and its larger charter organization. Initially, Chase did not realize that he “had a true passion for working in education” and simply saw his involvement was a way to give back to his alma mater. As he eventually discovered, “My inspiration from teaching came from Top Achievement. It wasn't really like I'd noticed it back then. I noticed it after a year or two at college, and I realized I was spending so much time at Top Achievement,

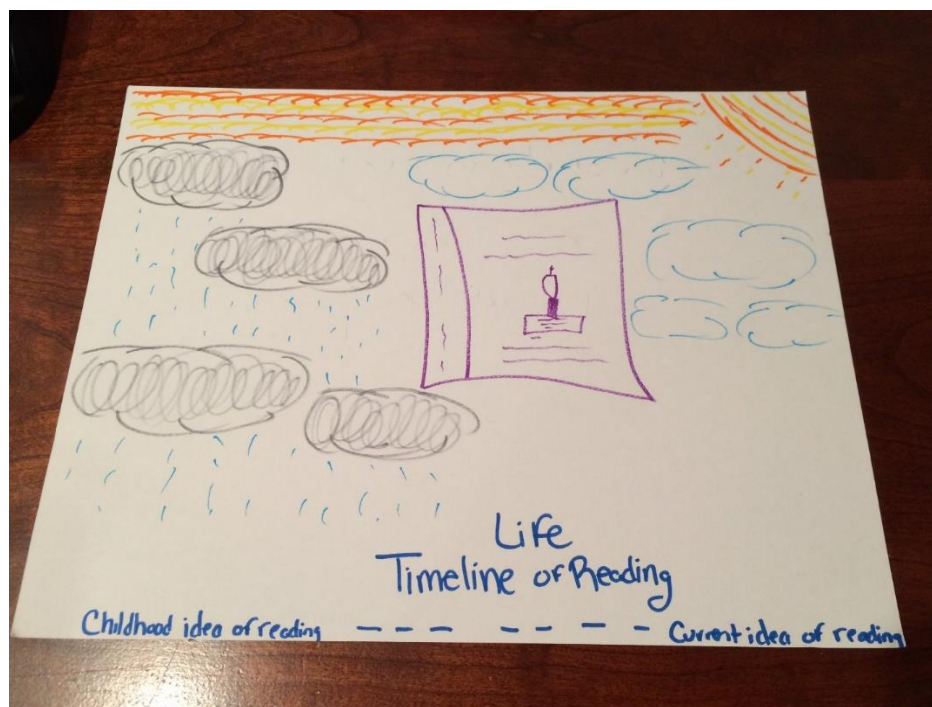
post-Top Achievement.” Chase decided to “make the transition from being the leader of the free world to a leader of a classroom” and switched his major to middle grades education.

Even though Chase chose literacy as his primary subject area, he did not enjoy reading, either as a student or in his personal life. As a middle grades student, he was required to read, even during spare moments. He recalled:

Our school required us to [read when we stood] in line. We called it “assigning yourself.”

While we were waiting to go to class or were in a hallway waiting to go into the lunchroom, we always had to assign ourselves and that meant having a book. If you didn't have your book, you'd stand in line with your two palms together reading your hands.

Chase completed required reading assignments, but he explained that “if it was a book that did not catch my eye automatically, I was more hesitant in picking up the book and reading it on my own free time.” For Chase, reading “was a school thing; it wasn't a personal thing.” Chase continued to dislike reading as a college student, noting that reading was not “one of those things I would naturally do on a Saturday or a Sunday when I'm chilling.” Chase wrote and drew his feelings about reading during an interview:



After completing the picture, Chase explained its meaning. First, in the middle, he drew a book to represent reading. He drew “gloomy and gray” clouds on the left of the book to display his dislike of reading. Above and to the right of the book, Chase added sun rays and blue clouds to show the “theme of goodness and usefulness running through” reading, explaining that he realized that “reading helps you in everything. It’s foundational to learning.” Even though Chase did not enjoy reading, he recognized its value and read when it could help him reach his goals.

Despite his personal reluctance to read, language arts was Chase’s first choice subject area when he applied to the Middle Grades Program. Chase wanted to teach middle grades language arts because he thought it allowed him the most flexibility to impact students’ lives. Chase believed that “reading different texts to get different perspectives on life, on situations, on events in the past and present” would help him teach students who “they are and the type of world that we live in.” Language arts would provide “the freedom to teach standards and

prepare the students for the next level while incorporating” relevant material to help students learn. Through language arts, Chase wanted to inspire students by starting “those real conversations. [Students] should know, for the most part, that [teachers] are trying to help them get out of the grade, continue their education,” and achieve their dreams in “high school, college, and then the world beyond.” In teaching language arts, Chase’s wanted to help students reach their goals in and out of the classroom.

How Chase Learned to Teach

Chase learned to teach by appropriating different tools in multiple settings. Over time, he developed three main tools that he used to teach. First, Chase believed in knowing and connecting to his students. Second, Chase was committed to finding ways to make curriculum relevant to his students’ lives. Third, as a teacher, Chase positioned himself as a mediator for students’ learning. These tools anchored how Chase learned to teach.

Connecting to Students. Chase was committed to knowing and connecting to his students. He wanted to connect to students to let them know that “there is somebody in that classroom who can relate. No one person is going through something alone. Whether [a student] voices it or not is up to [them], but everybody has gone through something.” Building on his teacher education program’s focus on developing teacher-student relationships, Chase practiced connecting with students in his field placement.

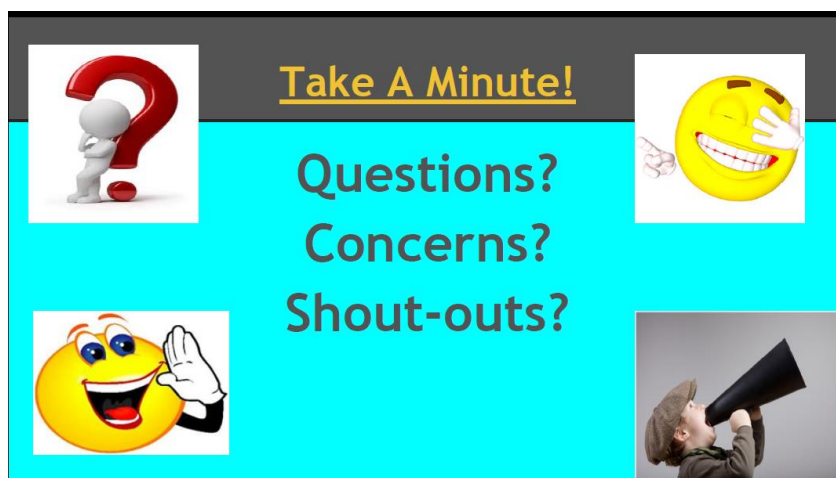
Chase’s cooperating teacher, Ms. Eskins, was deeply committed to building relationships with students, and she encouraged them to “believe they can do anything they want.” Each period, for example, began with a moment for students to quiet themselves and reflect on their goals for the day. Then the whole group participated in a self-esteem chant designed to remind students of their abilities and their value in and out of class (see Appendix A for the full text of

the chant). Ms. Eskins explained that connecting with students was an essential part of her teaching:

We try to have rituals, have celebrations, acknowledge the students academically and non-academically throughout. We try to begin each day, as you've seen, with a chant of self-esteem...We have to teach the student. We sometimes sacrifice certain content to have that individual achieve success in the classroom.

Chase learned that "a big part of teaching" is "knowing the kids," and he realized the importance of making "sure the students know you are invested in their learning." These activities impacted how Chase planned and taught.

Chase's lessons routinely included ways for him to develop connections with students. For example, when he led the class, Chase continued the opening routine with the moment of silence and the self-esteem chant to let students know he thought they were "capable of achieving great things, high things, both academically and in other areas." Based on my observations, the choice to keep this practice of starting class with a moment of reflective silence and the group chant was truly Chase's decision. Chase was given a wide berth for making his own decisions about classroom procedures and norms once he took over for a period of solo teaching near the end of his placement experience. For example, he made significant changes in other areas, such as rearranging the room to promote conversation. In addition, he added to the routine by concluding the chant with the slides to encourage conversation, such as this one:



Chase showed this slide to reserve time for discussion and encourage students to bring up issues so he could develop relationships with them. If students were not forthcoming, Chase pointed to this slide as a reminder to pause and ask students about their lives. Through these actions, Chase showed how important it was for him to connect with students.

Chase's commitment to connecting with students was apparent to others involved in his teaching. For example, Ms. Eskins recognized that Chase tried to get to know the students and "really figure out who they are." Dr. Hannah, Chase's first semester university supervisor, saw him using this teaching tool and remarked, "He is really good at connecting to the kids' lives." Likewise, during observations, I noted that Chase had "a comfortable rapport with students," who often "smiled at him, chatted with him, and said hello in the halls," because he had developed relationships with them. To others who observed his teaching, Chase learned to teach by building relationships with his students.

Designing Relevant Curriculum. Chase wanted to make the curriculum relevant to his students' lives, which he learned and practiced often in his field placement. Ms. Eskins served as a role model in this area. She continually adjusted her teaching so all students were assigned "meaningful" and "relevant" work. Chase and Ms. Eskins discussed the importance of "keeping every assignment accessible" and engaging students by helping them connect to the reading.

Through Ms. Eskins’s mentoring, Chase learned that “what [students] bring to class is just as important as the book” and saw his students as rich with knowledge about the world, remarking that they had “12, 13 years of [life] experience, and 8 years in the classroom” to build on through his teaching. He believed all students could “relate to something in [class]. Let’s find out what those somethings are. Bring it to the class, and let’s see how we can relate to different things” in the curriculum. Chase explained: “If what you planned doesn’t connect well with the students, you can switch it up in that moment... You have to be able to think on your feet and say, ‘All right, how can I relate this to the students?’” Chase learned to teach by making the curriculum relevant to students’ lives.

Chase planned lessons to help students connect to the reading, often focusing “on themes from the book and then relat[ing] them to students and their personal lives.” Near the end of student teaching, for example, Chase planned a unit in which students were reading and interacting with *Leon’s Story*, a biography of an African American man who grew up in rural North Carolina in the 1930s. One of Chase’s main goals for the unit was “to get students to understand identity as it relates to their own lives and those [other identities] they encounter in different texts” and encourage students to think through “their personal experiences and communities and find how they are alike or different from those of the characters” encountered in the book and supplemental readings. To anchor the unit, he created two overarching questions to guide students as they read: “Am I who I thought I was and who I want to be? Who am I in relationship to the larger community around me?” Both questions were designed to help students think about connections between their lives and the book.

Throughout the unit, Chase planned more ways to make the curriculum relevant to students and help them connect with *Leon’s Story* because he “really want[ed] to make reading

relevant.” Each lesson provided opportunities for students to relate their experiences to the reading by engaging in discussions, writing journals, and creating projects. In one observation, for example, Chase introduced the final unit project: conducting an “identity interview” and writing about it to connect to *Leon’s Story*, which was written up from a series of interviews. Chase encouraged students to interview someone close to them to make the project more meaningful. The written component of the project required students to reflect on identity—their own and the interviewee’s—and what they had learned from the book. Through his teaching, Chase prompted students to “think about the relationship between themselves, the book, and the world.”

Others involved in Chase’s learning observed how he worked to make the curriculum relevant. Ms. Eskins, for example, remarked that throughout the year, “that’s what I tried to stress to him: make your assessments tangible, relevant.” She “really liked his final assignment for *Leon’s Story*,” in which students conducted interviews, because the project made the book more relevant for students. Similarly, Chase’s first semester supervisor, Dr. Hannah, told him: “Know your students and then bring their lives into” teaching. She noted that Chase followed this suggestion and found ways to include “pop culture” and “student voice” as he tried to connect the curriculum to students’ lives. In observations and lesson plans, I noticed how Chase routinely included ways to make the curriculum relevant, such as discussions in which students were encouraged to talk about how the reading related to them. Chase wove these discussions throughout the unit on *Leon’s Story*, using questions on PowerPoint slides like this one to start conversations:

Day 1 Identity Reflection

“... as a young boy, I used to look in the mirror and I would curse my color, my blackness.” -Leon Tillage

1. What do you know about this author and the setting?
2. What does this quote mean for him?
3. What surprises you?
4. For Leon, what does this mean in terms of understanding his identity?
5. Reflect. Have you ever felt this way about yourself?
6. How does this relate to knowledge of self?

As shown in these questions, Chase planned for students to connect the book they were reading to their lives. In planning curriculum that related to students' lives, Chase learned how to teach.

Teacher as Mediator. As a teacher, Chase saw himself as a mediator for students' learning. Chase learned and practiced this idea in multiple settings. In his apprenticeship of observation, Chase saw that students “who weren't able to go to a private or a charter school were receiving education, but not at the same level” that he had. He wanted to change that experience by serving as a mediator for learning and encouraging his students to read. The structure and strong focus on reading in his apprenticeship of observation inspired him to want to encourage students to read in and out of class and engage with books. He felt he could achieve this teaching goal by serving as a mediator between students and books.

In his teaching, Chase mediated learning through theme-based book units. Chase's main self-planned unit involved choosing a book for the class to read together, presenting themes from the book for students to discuss, and designing assessments to help them demonstrate what they had learned. Chase explained: “I just feel comfortable doing this. My first time ever teaching a book was doing the summer experience.” He practiced and developed these skills while teaching an enrichment course for his former middle school during the summer before his senior year and

in his senior-year field placement, in which the theme-based book unit was a departure from what his cooperating teacher typically planned.

Chase's lesson plans for summer teaching and his final field placement reflected his commitment to serving as a teacher-mediator. His lessons often centered on back-and-forth discussion of themes from a book. Chase described how he planned theme-based discussions and activities during his summer teaching experience:

They were supposed to read *Animal Farm*. Most kids could read it. I gave them tons of different activities to engage with the book, which they were supposed to read at home at night. We did summaries to start the class, debates, illustrating what they read, talking about the book, acted out the book. Most of the activities were centered on the themes of the book.

Through these theme-based book units, Chase planned curriculum that would help students develop an understanding of themselves in relation to the book they were reading. The success of the summer experience led Chase to believe "that's kind of stuff I'd like to do with my own students" during the school year. In his placement, he planned his "teaching around themes" whenever possible, and his unit plan followed a format similar to his summer teaching plans. Through his teaching, Chase worked to help students examine their relationship to the book and how they could connect the book to their lives. In this way, Chase mediated learning through his planning.

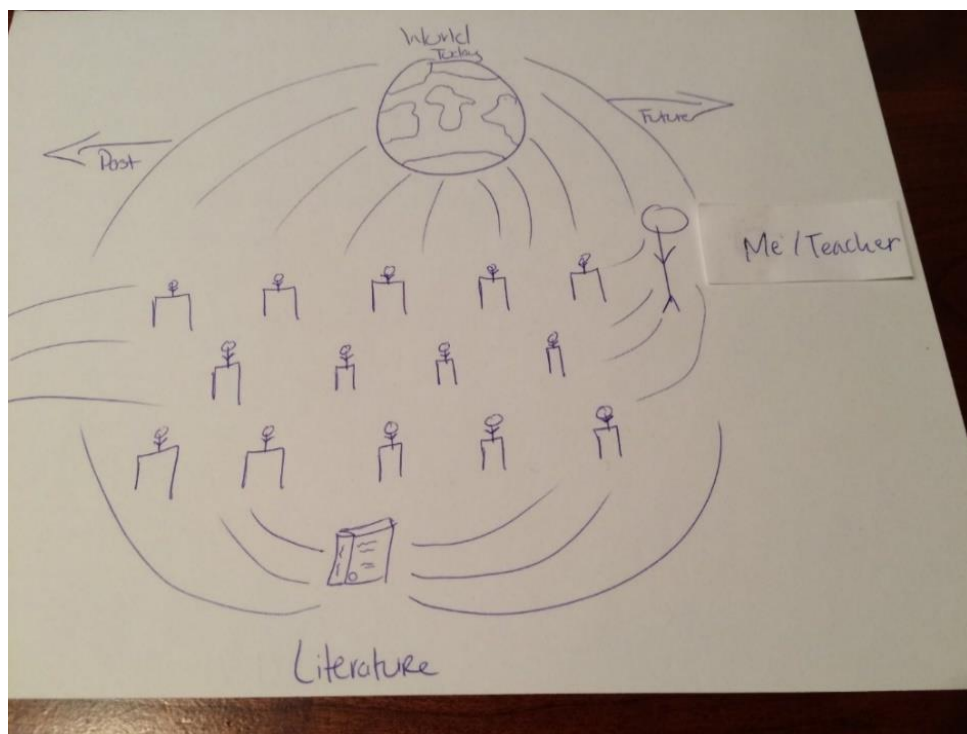
Chase's role as a teacher-mediator went beyond planning as he organized the space in the classroom carefully to allow him to serve as a mediator. He felt the physical design of the classroom was "a big factor in creating that type of environment, that type of space for students to feel like they are able to speak up and talk." Chase did not "want to do the desks traditionally

in rows,” explaining that “the rows make it like I am ‘the teacher.’ I’m the head of the class, and you are the class.” Instead, he imagined that he would “play” with the space to “make it feel a lot more open for students” because “the classroom and the physical space has a lot to do with how your students perform.” He wanted to “make tables. Or maybe a circle. Something to promote more conversation so it’s more of a dialogue in class.” Chase felt he could serve as a mediator by carefully designing the space in the classroom to encourage students to explore and connect with books and each other. Chase learned how to teach by positioning himself as a teacher-mediator.

Summary of These Themes. Chase used three main conceptual tools while learning to teach. First, Chase worked to learn about and connect to his students. Second, Chase found ways to make curriculum relevant to his students’ lives. Third, Chase situated himself as a mediator for students’ learning. These ideas, which anchored how Chase learned to teach, were learned in multiple settings. Although his field experiences featured prominently in his learning, Chase described combining his learning from different sources, including “seeing other teachers in my placement,” teacher education coursework, and his summer teaching experience.

During our final interview, Chase summarized what he had learned about teaching. He wrote and drew his thoughts:³

³ For confidentiality purposes, this photo includes a change to the original drawing made by the participant. The phrase “me/teacher” is superimposed on the right side of the drawing to cover the teacher candidate’s name.



He explained that the picture represented his overall approach to “teaching reading,” which was based in linking the “students in the classroom, the text we’re reading, and the world in which we live.” Students were purposefully placed “in the center of the illustration” because every part of reading instruction should connect to them. The lines meant that teacher (the larger figure on the right of the drawing) was responsible for finding “a way to mediate and make connections between what the literature is saying” (as represented by the book at the bottom of the page) and “the world” (as signified by the globe at the top of the page and the lines going out of the classroom to the left). This approach to teaching supports the three themes. Chase formed a “dialogue with students to bring those connections into the classroom,” made reading instruction “relevant to [students’] lives,” and served as a mediator to enhance students’ learning experiences. Chase learned to teach by drawing on these tools.

What Chase Planned to do With his Learning in the Future

Chase felt uncertain about how he might use what he had learned about teaching in the future. Near the end of the data generation period, Chase secured a job for the following school year in which he would teach sixth grade language arts. Most of his teaching experience—including his summer experience and his final-year placement—was with eighth grade students, which left him unsure about how he would approach teaching younger adolescents. This uncertainty came up in two main ways. First, Chase imagined using many tools learned from multiple sources over time for teaching in the future. Second, Chase acknowledged gaps in his learning and sought to learn more about teaching over time, including throughout his teacher education program and into the future. These themes ran throughout Chase’s plans for the future.

Using Different Tools for Teaching. Chase drew his ideas about teaching from multiple sources, including his field placement, previous teaching experience, and his apprenticeship of observation. In his field placement, for example, all language arts teachers in the same grade level planned together. Units typically centered on a common book, such as *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, or a play, such as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, used by all teachers and students across the grade level. Chase noted that it was “mostly set in stone what general things we’ll be doing.” Lessons, however, sometimes varied from classroom to classroom across the grade level. Ms. Eskins explained that all teachers had “the same unit names, the same essential questions, but yeah, the path that you get there” was different at times for each teacher in the grade level. For daily lessons, Ms. Eskins typically planned journal responses and vocabulary work, like this worksheet:

WK 3

Shakespeare Alive! Vocabulary - Week 3 Name: _____

	Word	Definition	Part of Speech
1	hideous	offensive to the senses; especially sight	adjective
2	ensue	happen, or occur afterwards, or as a result	verb
3	abduct	to take away a human by force	verb
4	wander	a relaxed journey on foot	verb
5	riotous	the nature of/ taking part in a riot of laughter	adjective

Fill in this table with at least one synonym, antonym, and word variation for each word.

Word	Synonyms	Antonyms	Word Variations
hideous			
ensue			
abduct			
wander			
riotous			

Write your own sentences. You may use the characters and situations from our book.

1. _____

2. _____

Ms. Eskins did not assign reading for students to complete silently or on their own in or out of class. Instead, students often read chapter summaries or subtitles while watching a movie version of the text.

For much of his final, year-long field placement experience, Chase learned how to teach by practicing with Ms. Eskins's plans and leading a segment of the class. In one observation, for example, I noted that Chase and Ms. Eskins went "back and forth in going over synonyms, antonyms, and word variations for 'mischievous' [on their list of reading vocabulary words]. Then they go back and forth, going over the next word: radiant." Ms. Eskins had planned the lesson, which involved completing and correcting a graphic organizer for vocabulary words. Then she and Chase "walked around to check in on students and answer questions." As Chase explained it, "We have an easy back and forth as far as leading the class. We divide the class into sections mostly, and I'll do one part. She'll do another part." This structure, in which Ms.

Eskins led the class and Chase took a supplementary role, was typical for much of the field experience.⁴

Once he took primary responsibility for teaching in his field experience, Chase tried out different tools for teaching.⁵ Primarily, these tools came from his apprenticeship of observation and his summer teaching experience. One major change, for example, involved students' relationship to text. Students in his placement often read teacher-provided summaries or short pieces of text. Chase wanted students to read the original source, even though they were "in the habit of not reading." He explained:

When I was in middle school, we didn't get these summaries! It doesn't encourage reading! They need to read the book, and they won't do it with the summaries. But some of them need the summaries because they can't read it. I want to do reading days and incorporate [reading] every day. I would only give the summaries to my students who I know need that help with reading.

He Chase wanted students to read and comprehend the text itself so lessons could center on discussing themes.

For his 10-lesson unit plan, Chase shifted away from some of the teaching tools Ms. Eskins often used. Instead, he focused on themes from a book read by the whole class, a tool he had practiced during his summer teaching experience. His summer teaching unit revolved around the allegory *Animal Farm*. As the class read the novel, Chase gave short lectures about

⁴ Ms. Eskins acknowledged the difficulty of "letting go" and allowing Chase to lead the class outside of his required solo teaching, such as formal observations by his university supervisor and the 10 day unit plan. In our formal and informal discussions, Chase repeatedly asserted that he did not want to advocate for changing the situation, but I noted that it seemed difficult for Chase "to be here only two days [each week]—a very disjointed schedule. And it sounds like Chase wants and is ready to do more. But that's difficult when you're taking university courses, you're only here two days a week, and you can't always keep up with what's going to happen on your next visit."

⁵ Ms. Eskins gave Chase a wide berth to implement changes. As she said in our final interview, Chase "and I have a lot in common, but I'm not him and he's not me. He shouldn't try to be me at all. He'll drive himself crazy. He has his own voice, and he's a very strong teacher."

themes he had chosen and led whole group discussions to help students think about the themes. Each day, he “used flip chart paper for the themes and laid them out on the chart paper up front before we read.” After reading, he and the students would talk and add “ideas about the themes to the flip chart paper.” Likewise, Chase’s planned a unit that called for students to read *Leon’s Story* and discuss its themes. In it, he assigned reading in class, give short theme-based lectures, and steered whole group discussions, much as he had done in his summer teaching. One lecture and discussion, for instance, delved into “The Cost of Education,” which included an example from Chase’s life, dialogue about what can be gained from education and lost “when you don’t have it,” and how students could relate to “blacks who had to fight to get it” as they did in the book. Chase’s second semester university supervisor, Mr. Caldwell, noticed this pattern, remarking that lessons involved “a lot of round-robin reading and then discussion.” Differing from Ms. Eskins’s preferred tools of vocabulary work and journal responses, the cornerstones of Chase’s unit were lectures and whole group discussion.

Chase’s ideas about teaching tools changed over time. He believed he would use different tools in the future and planned to change his reliance on theme-based book units. Chase explained:

I’ve had the option to practice some things here during my unit plan, which was very successful. I think that I’ve been able to focus a lot on themes from the book and then relating it to students and their personal lives. But I think that I now realize that, especially in teaching sixth grade this next year [at his new job], I can use a book, focus on themes, and that’s one of the things that we’ll cover. But it doesn’t have to be the driving force behind teaching a book.

In the future, Chase believed he would alter his teaching. He imagined using the standards to guide his planning from the start instead of centering on themes in his planning and then matching standards to his lessons. He realized that “that there's so much more within a book. You can highlight and focus on what relates to the standards, so you can hit a number of standards in one chapter of a book.” Chase planned to start with “whatever our standard is for that week” and find “different ways in which that standard comes to life in the texts” he assigned.

Both of Chase's university supervisors encouraged Chase to pursue these ideas. Mr. Caldwell, his second semester university supervisor, pushed Chase to think about planning in terms of “here's the learning objectives. Here's where I want to go to all the way to the end, and here's step by step by step how we're going to get to that end.” Mr. Caldwell told Chase to think about how to “take [all] the information you have about a novel” instead of focusing on “just the themes in literature...because in language arts, there's not a separate reading test. They have to integrate grammar, writing, all of it.” In his final interview, Chase discussed planning ways for students to use the text to practice each standard and locate “different ways in which that standard comes to life in the texts.”

When asked about this change, Chase explained that he had been using themes to help students make connections as they read. He used himself as an example, saying, “If I don't connect to a book, then I won't read it. I share that with the students. If I'm not interested in the book, then more than likely I won't force myself to push through it.” He felt his role as the teacher was “to step in and say, ‘This book's themes cover [X, Y, and Z].’” so students “can still relate to some of the things that Leon or any other character or author experienced then. Those things are still relevant today.” Chase believed he could foster those same connections without

relying so heavily on theme-based units by making careful book selections that would “make it personal” so students “can relate to it.” Chase felt unsure about using this new teaching tool in the future, but Chase hoped to foster “those personal connections or those light bulbs turning on for” his students as they read by changing his teaching.

Not Knowing. In thinking about how he would use what he had learned, Chase’s uncertainty was manifested as he recognized that he still had much to learn about teaching reading. Throughout much of the data generation period, for example, Chase described how he wanted to continue teaching as he had in the summer enrichment course, even though he felt unsure about how his ideas might work in the new setting of his placement. In his summer teaching, “most kids could read” the book he chose for the class, and the majority would complete a certain number of assigned pages each night. Chase acknowledged, however, that “they don’t do that so much here.” As he observed differences in his placement, he noted, “I’m learning that there’s lots of ways to teach reading—through vocabulary, through the movie, through Shakespeare Alive. It’s not just reading, or at least not what I automatically think of when I think of reading.” When discussing students who might be unable to read on their own each night and participate as he planned, Chase expressed uncertainty, saying:

At 8th grade, they should be reading comfortably and be able and expected to do that. If they’re not, you really need extra people—teacher candidates, reading specialists, someone to help with reading in small groups. Without that help, I don’t know?

He recognized that he “only had 13-14 students” in the summer, and “with a big class of 25-30, it’ll be different.” This uncertainty about adapting what he had learned for use in new ways continued throughout data generation.

As the year progressed, Chase still felt unsure about how to use what he had learned about teaching in the future. Chase had taught from Ms. Eskins's plans and put his own ideas into practice. He reflected on both learning experiences and developed new questions, such as: "How do I make it relevant to students who don't want to read?" and "Is it important to read the entire book and finish it, or is it important just to point out different things as we read different chapters?" When asked to share his most pressing questions about teaching reading, for example, Chase replied:

Everything. It's nothing specific; it's just the constantly developing idea. I mean, I could have 200 questions for every student I teach, like how do I make sure that you understand the importance of reading? How do I make sure that you understand the context which we're in right now? How can I relate this to you personally? That goes for every student, and it changes by student. So there's no specific questions, but I just know there is so much that's still developing in my understanding of teaching.

Chase believed in continual learning as a prerequisite for successful teaching and planned to carry this belief into his future teaching. With graduation nearing, Chase reported feeling simultaneously prepared and full of questions as he looked forward to the future.

Others involved in Chase's learning identified areas—often different than those recognized by Chase—in which he could learn more to strengthen his future teaching. Both university supervisors, for example, believed Chase needed a better grasp of curriculum planning. As Mr. Caldwell explained:

What I think that they haven't practiced doing...is thinking about every single part that you need if you do a unit plan. Chase was going to have them do a T-chart to compare and contrast. His lesson plan said they're going to do a T-chart and compare and

contrast...I said, “What do you see on that chart? I want to see everything that you see on that chart.” That really threw him off. Because it’s easy to say to do a T-chart...I think what is hard for new teachers to think, “Where are we taking them? What is it we want them to have on this chart? What do we want this to look like when it’s finished? And why?”

Both supervisors encouraged Chase to seek out more practice creating curriculum. Dr. Hannah described how Chase had “not demonstrated” that he could plan “awesome unit[s] with all these objectives for the end” in which he considered “the kids who he’s going to have to scaffold for and do different modifications.” Once Chase improved his planning skills, Dr. Hannah Chase was “going to nail it” as a teacher “because everything else [he does] is so thoughtful.” Chase’s supervisors saw that he was still developing the ability to plan thoughtful, differentiated curriculum and believed he would need further practice to be successful in the future.

Ms. Eskins, Chase’s cooperating teacher, and I noticed a different area in which Chase might need to learn more. I found that Chase carried ideas and expectations with him from his apprenticeship of observation and teaching experiences outside of the teacher education, but he seemed unprepared to adapt to different situations and student needs. After one observation, I reflected in my interpretive field notes:

He has clear ideas about what students should be able to do, perhaps from his charter school days. Students should be able to read and should be expected to do so. Less isn’t okay—not okay for students to do or him to expect. He doesn’t seem as definite about what will happen when students can’t or won’t. I don’t get the impression that he’s had much experience thinking about that. In the interviews, he swept past it (“well, most

students can read” or “you need support”), and I got the idea that he wasn’t really sure what to do even though I asked twice.

In our final interview later, Ms. Eskins echoed these ideas. She explained that Chase had to learn “that you can come in and you should set high expectations, but you have to adjust your expectations to what the students are actually capable of doing.” Throughout the year, Ms. Eskins encouraged Chase to “be more flexible” and helped him practice “how to adjust, how to know where to teach, and where to lay back” to help all students learn. Both Ms. Eskins and I identified learning to adapt expectations and plans to meet the needs of all students as an area in which Chase could learn more to strengthen his future teaching.

Summary of These Themes. Chase felt unsure about how he might use what he had learned about teaching in the future. Chase’s plans for the future were marked by two themes. First, Chase envisioned using different tools from multiple sources in his future teaching and developed his learning over time. Second, Chase acknowledged ways in which he had not learned everything he needed. He wanted to continue learning and believed he would rely on other teachers and his knowledge from prior experiences to help him teach successfully in the future. As he planned for the future, Chase recognized the presence of many unknowns but thought he could use what he had learned to adapt to new situations.

Elizabeth’s Beginnings

Elizabeth, a white woman in her early twenties, grew up in a small city with most of her extended family nearby. Given the close proximity, family was very important. Elizabeth was raised with two younger siblings, both of whom were in high school during the time the study was conducted. She went to the same majority-white public schools that her parents and grandparents had attended. Even though her family was not wealthy, most of the county where

she grew up was “very affluent” and her “schools always had a lot. There was always money” for education. Her mom was a third grade teacher in the county, and Elizabeth “grew up literally in a school, staying after school with her.” She recalled that being a teacher was “what I have always wanted to do, and it was totally environmental because that’s what my mom did.” Elizabeth could not imagine choosing a career other than teaching.

Elizabeth’s parents “got married young, and then had me young.” She recalled that her parents “didn’t have a lot of money” when she was a child, but “every time they went to a store, they bought Little Golden Books” because “reading was always a very big thing in my family. My mom has never said no if I wanted a book—even if I didn’t read the last one she bought.” Beginning very early in life, Elizabeth’s mom often read to her, and she learned to read from her parents. She explained that she did not “remember the exact age” when she first started reading, but her mom “would write the names of household objects on an index card and tape them to things. I learned that way and through reading every night with my parents.” As a result, Elizabeth developed a lifelong love of reading.

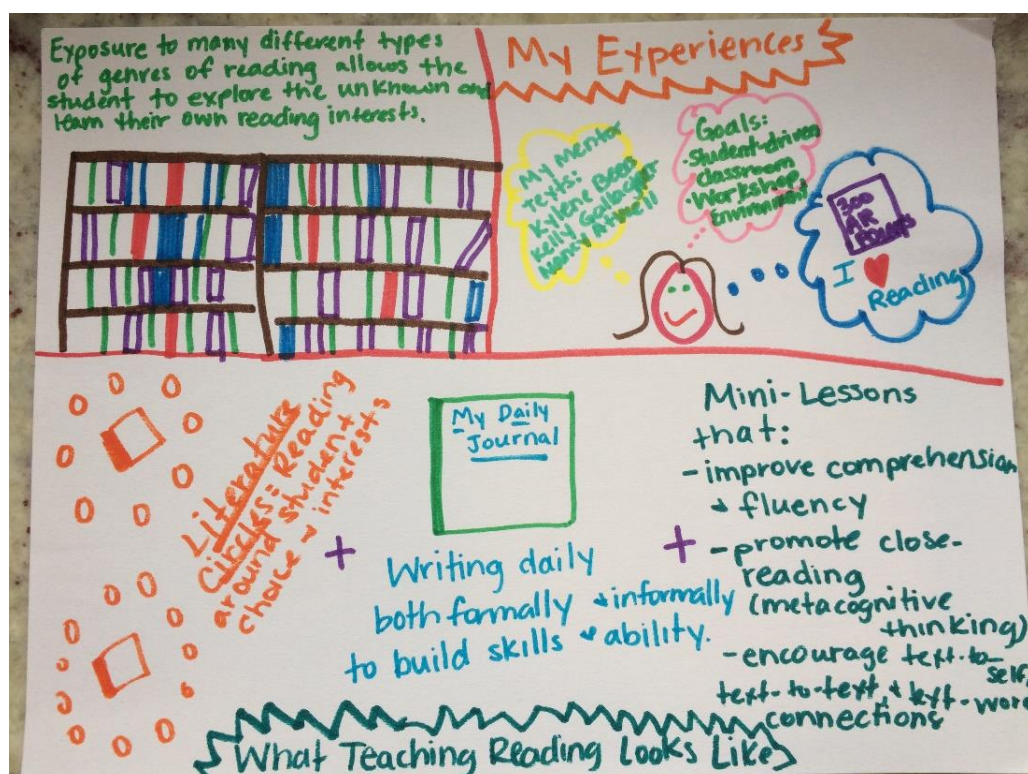
Although teaching seemed like a natural fit, Elizabeth was unsure about which grade level. She explained, “I changed which grade I wanted to teach. I wanted to teach whatever grade I went into. When I was in elementary school, it was always that grade. That continued in middle school” and the beginning of high school. Once she began college, she thought she wanted to teach high school English because she had loved her language arts classes at that level. The teachers, she said, “were posing these really deep questions. I felt smart. I liked that everybody was motivated.” Then she described how she changed her mind: “I took some English classes and realized maybe I don’t want to teach upper level. Maybe I want to go back

to middle school.” One key reason Elizabeth wanted to teach middle school related to her teachers. In middle school, she explained:

I had really boring teachers. They didn’t care. Those teachers were about summers off and just gave us worksheets. When I changed my major, I wanted to do middle school because I didn’t like my teachers. When my students ask me, I’ll say that I wanted to teach middle school because I didn’t feel like my teachers cared.

At the end of her sophomore year of college, Elizabeth was accepted into the Middle Grades Program. Given her love of reading, she chose language arts—her favorite subject—as her primary area of concentration.

When she enrolled in the study at the start of her senior year, Elizabeth was excited to continue her learning. She brought her love of reading and a desire to inspire students to feel the same way with her as she learned to teach. Elizabeth drew and wrote about her feelings as she prepared to begin her placement in a sixth grade language arts classroom:



In the top right corner, Elizabeth connected her prior experiences to learning to teach. Her love of reading was important to her as a teacher, and mentor texts about teaching literacy guided how she thought about teaching reading. As she began the final year of her teacher education program, Elizabeth brought together her past experiences and wanted to learn to create a student-driven, workshop-style classroom for her students.

How Elizabeth Learned to Teach

Elizabeth appropriated different tools across multiple settings as she learned how to teach. She developed four main tools over time to learn to teach. First, Elizabeth learned to teach by building relationships with her students and using those relationships as a springboard for curriculum planning. Second, Elizabeth learned from professional development resources. Third, Elizabeth learned to teach from other teachers. Fourth, Elizabeth learned by forging her own path as a teacher. These three tools were foundational as Elizabeth learned to teach.

Building Relationships With Students. Elizabeth learned to teach by building relationships with her students and considering what she knew about students when planning curriculum. She wanted to create a “community where students feel like they have a voice, they can talk, and they can actively participate,” and she tried to learn “what makes [each student] tick” as a way to build relationships with them. Through relationship-building, Elizabeth learned to use “reading to help connect to students” and make learning “fun and interesting.” She described her ultimate goal in learning to build relationships with students as a way to teach reading: “In order to get your students going academically, you’ve got to know them personally. You have to build those relationships so they’re going to want to work, so they feel comfortable enough to work with you and take a risk.” Her first semester university supervisor, Dr. Che, saw Elizabeth putting these ideas in practice, noting that “she knows that it’s essential to get to know

her students. She lives by that as a teacher and uses what she learns to help her plan lesson that can help her kids.” As she developed as a teacher, Elizabeth learned to use relationship-building to help students grow as readers.

Although Elizabeth discussed learning from “the combination” of many different settings, her final, year-long field placement gave her the most practice with this task. Her cooperating teacher, Ms. Carter, showed Elizabeth how to build relationships with students as a way to teach them effectively. Ms. Carter discussed her thoughts on building relationships and teaching reading:

I try to get to know them at the beginning of the year. I don’t do the interest surveys, but just through conversations, I get to know them a little bit. I see what they are already reading and start making suggestions.

Throughout the year, Ms. Carter wanted students to read texts that interested them and felt it was her responsibility as a teacher to help students “find things that they love” as a way to entice “them to actually read.” Some of these ideas were aspirational for Ms. Carter because they proved difficult to implement. Whole group lessons were often the norm, although she wanted students to select their own texts to read independently and told Elizabeth about the importance of doing so.

Ms. Carter explained that fully relationship-based, student-selected, independent work was her goal, but it was tough to move from planning to instruction because “I personally feel like they don’t always actually do it when they go off by themselves.” Instead, she was often “reading [texts] to [students] and making them follow along and making it more shared reading.” She wanted to give students “time to read for themselves, even if you don’t think they’re going to, even if they’re avoiding it” to teach students to read independently and use reading

conferences to help them make sense of their reading. She also wanted Elizabeth to gain “an appreciation of the fact that they do need to be independent readers,” even though “how it would work in practice” proved tricky.

Elizabeth learned to consider multiple possibilities for her students based on what she knew about them, including, “What texts do I want to use?” and “How could we enable students to self-select books?” Ms. Carter wanted a classroom culture of “independent readers” who were writing “journals and conferencing with the teacher.” To accomplish this goal, she tried to develop relationships with her students, learn about their needs, and plan her lessons accordingly; she taught Elizabeth by example to do the same. One of Ms. Carter’s ultimate goals for Elizabeth was to think “about how to implement [relationship-based lesson plans] in the classroom” and help students “find books that they can really get into emotionally” to encourage their development as readers. In this context, Elizabeth learned to teach.

Elizabeth was able to practice these skills by building relationships with students and using her knowledge of them to plan engaging reading curriculum. In one lesson, for example, she used her knowledge of students to create a kinesthetic activity that used charades as a way to practice making inferences. In her plans, Elizabeth justified the use of the game by writing that it “engages the students who love to have their voices heard and learn best by movement. There are some students who love nothing more than to be the center of attention, and this is the center for active learners.” In planning this activity, Elizabeth used the relationships she had built with students to understand how to engage them in learning.

In another lesson, Elizabeth drew from her relationships with students as she planned to play “Theme Uno” because she knew that her students enjoyed learning games. The game, based on the card game Uno, called for students to “read the passage and identify the theme

before they could play the [Uno] card.” She explained how using her knowledge of students to create the center was ultimately successful:

We played it in second period and usually that’s the hardest in terms of getting them engaged. They were like, “This is fun. Can I play this every day?” and I’m like, “Good. I got something.” Even the kids that usually are sitting there in the corner not minding anything, they played, they did it.

Students who typically “zoned out” were excited to play the game. By basing the lesson on her knowledge of students, Elizabeth was able to engage students in learning.

Others involved in Elizabeth’s learning noticed Elizabeth’s commitment to relationship-building and planning curriculum. In one of my observations, I watched Elizabeth play the Uno game with a small group of students and noticed that students were having fun during the lesson. In my reflective notes, I wrote that “I would want to be a student in her class” because “she moves between segments, connects the work, and engages students in multiple ways” based on what she thought students would enjoy. Similarly, Elizabeth’s second semester university supervisor, Dr. Hannah, observed the connections between relationships with students and the curriculum. After observing one of Elizabeth’s lessons, Dr. Hannah wrote:

Your knowledge of students allowed for everything that unfolded in this lesson, as well as the way you delivered the lesson. You asked wonderful questions, you gave them multiple choices and opportunities to approach [the content] in myriad ways, and you included enough variety in the content so that everyone could find something they were interested in. You truly had an understanding of the social, linguistic, and cultural diversity of your students and their learning.

Elizabeth consistently developed lesson plans based on her knowledge of and relationships with her students. She believed and enacted the idea that “you don’t know how to help the kid until you have a relationship with them” throughout her placement. In this way, Elizabeth learned to teach by building relationships with students and using what she knew about them to plan engaging curriculum.

Professional Development Resources. Elizabeth was committed to her own process of self-directed learning through professional development resources as a way to learn how to teach. This process involved many tools and settings, most notably: practitioner books and professional development conferences. First, practitioner books played a significant role in Elizabeth’s learning. She initially learned about the utility of practitioner books from her coursework. When I asked about the most helpful piece of her teacher education classes, Elizabeth replied, “I think reading different books by different people definitely.” Practitioner books allowed her to gather new ideas “to help [her] think about teaching reading” and “to choose [what she learned]. I want to learn about this; I want to try this element. This doesn’t work for me, so I’m not going to bother with that.” In coursework, Elizabeth learned to use books to increase her knowledge of teaching and help her find out more about specific topics of interest.

Even after she completed her coursework and began student teaching, Elizabeth continued to rely on practitioner books to help her learn about teaching. As she told her supervisor, Dr. Hannah, “I love reading about teaching reading.” Elizabeth recognized the importance of her “own personal exploration” and “going back” to “re-read” practitioner books to find new ideas for teaching. For example, she decided she wanted to implement literature circles, a tool she first encountered in her literacy coursework, as a tool for teaching reading

during her student teaching semester. To prepare, she asked her cooperating teacher to join her in reading a practitioner book about the practice. Ms. Carter agreed with some reservations, remarking that it “seemed like so much more work for me, implementing all of the different circles and getting them engaged in it. I wasn’t resistant when she wanted to try that. But I didn’t know how it was going to work.” I noticed tension over Elizabeth’s request to use literature circles as an instructional tool, and so did Dr. Hannah, who commented, “We met because she had some concerns...[that] she wouldn’t be able to teach the kind of unit she wanted to teach” because of Ms. Carter’s apprehension. Ms. Carter did, however, read the book Elizabeth had proposed and helped Elizabeth implement literature circles. By the end of the unit, Ms. Carter had overcome her initial hesitancy and changed her mind about literature circles. She remarked, “I’ve learned a lot from [Elizabeth]. I’ve learned a lot from her as far as I had never tried lit circles in my class before...Now it’s definitely something I want to do in the future.” After this successful unit, Elizabeth concluded, “I liked the idea of lit circles before I tried them out, and now I know that I love them.” Through the use of practitioner books, Elizabeth learned about teaching reading.

Second, Elizabeth learned to teach from professional development conferences. She became involved with conferences as a way to learn about teaching. Elizabeth remarked that she “really like[d] the professional development side that comes from” attending conferences because she enjoyed “seeing what [presenters] are saying and then reading” their books to learn more. For example, after observing a session at a national middle grades conference led by a popular author of practitioner books on teaching middle grades reading, Elizabeth bought the author’s newest book. She learned about “teaching kids to look for signposts when they’re reading, like close reading” from the conference and the book. Elizabeth began incorporating

these new ideas into her teaching, and the techniques she learned helped her students become “really involved with the reading without it seeming really intense.” Elizabeth learned to teach from what she had learned by attending this professional development conference.

In the same way, Elizabeth learned to teach by presenting at conferences. She described how she “and a group of two other teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers submitted to the State Council for Teacher Educators” conference to “do a presentation on literature circles.” She felt energized about presenting her knowledge to others and looked forward to sharing what she had learned from reading about and using literature circles in her teaching practice. Through attending and presenting at conferences, Elizabeth was able to “pick up more ideas” and learn to teach reading.

Other Teachers. Other teachers—most importantly, her mother—significantly influenced how Elizabeth learned to teach. Elizabeth found that other teachers often served as a key resource for her: “I’m learning so much by asking questions—to you, my mentor, other teachers...I learn so much from other teachers about what to do [during] reading. There’s no one way to do it.” Her first-semester university supervisor, Dr. Che, noticed Elizabeth turning to other teachers as a source of learning. He observed that she often asked “for help from different sources: from me, from you, from her mentor, from her mom.” In this manner, other teachers served as an important source of learning for Elizabeth.

Of all the teachers who helped Elizabeth learn to teach, her mother was the most significant source of guidance. Elizabeth explained that her mom had “a huge influence on my teaching. I ask what she’s doing, and what she would do, and what she thinks I should do, or what she thinks about my lessons.” Elizabeth used her mother as a sounding board for her ideas about teaching. She elaborated:

I'm like, "I just need somebody to tell me that's not going to work." Or, "Well, that's good, try that." It's good to have someone on a daily basis [to say to], "I don't know what they said," or "Is your principal doing that, too?" It's nice.

These conversations taught Elizabeth to think through her teaching and became a space for her to propose new ideas and reflect on the learning process. In these sessions of listening and giving advice, Elizabeth's mother helped her learn how to teach.

Likewise, the teachers at Elizabeth's placement school, including Ms. Carter, served as a source of learning. Elizabeth learned, for example, by "seeing what are other teachers doing" as she participated in team planning with the entire group of sixth grade language arts teachers. Elizabeth often enjoyed this learning experience: "We plan together with the other language arts teachers, and I get to throw out my ideas, too. And I get to modify and try new things as I want." Elizabeth learned by observing and participating in the group planning process. Ms. Carter agreed that team planning was a useful learning experience for Elizabeth. She described how the team met to "plan collaboratively" with all the teachers "typing into the same plans," and Elizabeth learned as the other teachers "talked through that, our entire discussion, and [she saw] our collaborative process. There's different aspects to that process." Through these planning sessions, Elizabeth developed her planning skills by "seeing how to plan instruction, deciding what the best resources are."

Elizabeth learned more after team meetings when Ms. Carter modified her plans to make them "a little more individualized" for her students. She shared those plans with Elizabeth, who was welcome to "add to them, if there's something she wants to contribute." From this experience, Elizabeth learned that "it's also okay that you can put [something] on a lesson plan but not do it." For example, she recalled that the other classes "didn't read *The Giver*. They did

Arabian Nights and some other things. But my cooperating teacher had better responses with *The Giver*. The kids liked that better. So we did that.” Elizabeth learned to teach from other teachers by observing, contributing, and adjusting during planning.

Besides learning from the sixth grade team at her placement school, Elizabeth learned to teach from Ms. Carter. For example, Elizabeth learned from Ms. Carter’s enthusiasm for reading. Ms. Carter believed that some teachers “get really bored with the subject that they’re teaching.” She hoped Elizabeth’s love of reading would continue to shine through: “I get really excited about books, and I hope that she can share—I think she does share—my excitement and can spread that excitement to the students.” On multiple occasions, Elizabeth discussed her love of reading, and she took note of Ms. Carter’s attitude: “My cooperating teacher loves to read and has tons of books and class sets. We can read a whole set, and we can pick” which books to read out of the set. Ms. Carter taught Elizabeth to use her love of reading as fuel for teaching. In another example, Elizabeth learned from Ms. Carter about the importance of building relationships with students as part of teaching. Elizabeth explained that her “cooperating teacher really is student-centered. The direction that they want to go in the class—especially in discussions—she’ll let them do it...She knows their academic abilities as well as their personalities.” After an observation, I noticed this kind of learning, remarking that Ms. Carter seemed to know the students well and had “set up a supportive classroom environment” in which the students “really seem to like and seek out positive attention” from her. Elizabeth learned how to teach by observing Ms. Carter and then practicing relationship-building with students.

Forging her own Path as a Teacher. Elizabeth learned to teach by forging her own path as a teacher and differing from other teachers with whom she interacted. Although she enjoyed working together with other teachers and, as discussed previously, learned from them,

Elizabeth differed—at times—from both her cooperating teacher and other teachers at her placement. While Elizabeth and Ms. Carter had much in common, homework became one issue on which they held dissimilar beliefs. Elizabeth did not “like the homework because [the students] don’t do it. Then [Ms. Carter] spent the last few weeks of the semester like, ‘You owe me 15 reading responses.’” Instead of completing the homework, students often chose to “pick up a book, find the character names, and make up” a journal response.

Dr. Hannah, one of Elizabeth’s supervisors, noticed the tension over homework. She recounted an instance in which Elizabeth asked for advice about it, explaining that Elizabeth had “emailed me, so upset, and it was late at night. She said, ‘I thought I was making progress with this one class, and now they’ve shut down because [Ms. Carter] made them do this homework all the time.’” Instead, Elizabeth imagined a homework differently:

I probably will say they must read every night because I think you should. Read something. Read *something*. It could be a magazine. It could be Tumblr or Facebook. Just do something where you're reading! I think if I wanted them to respond, we'd do that in class, maybe as an opening or journaling to tell me about what you're reading.

Elizabeth felt strongly that she did not “want to give them something if I know they’re not going to care.” While Ms. Carter gave a fixed number of homework assignments each marking period, Elizabeth believed that homework should be less structured and designed with particular attention to building up students’ interest in reading. Elizabeth learned about her preferences by differing from her cooperating teacher.

In another instance, Elizabeth and Ms. Carter disagreed about organizing group discussions. Ms. Carter preferred to keep discussions structured with students raising their hands and waiting their turn to speak. Elizabeth favored a different system: “Let’s have a conversation

where we're responding to each other. That's where the whole hand raising, it doesn't work. I don't care if you do, I don't care if you don't." She wanted to promote a more conversational atmosphere in which students could "be respectful and chime in" instead of insisting on raised hands. She explained, "I don't support that because I'm like, 'You [just] go; what do you have to say?'" Elizabeth believed these kinds of conversations helped her students learn. In one lesson, she planned for students to discuss the books they were reading and explicitly validated this choice in her written plan: "Many of my students learn best by being loud and talking through their thinking. This activity allows them to use their group members as resources." During an observation session, I noticed that discussions, as Elizabeth had constructed them, were fruitful. I wrote that students were "making connections to the real world" during "a discussion about justice and what is fair" in relation to their books. Dr. Che, her first semester university supervisor, made a similar observation, noting that Elizabeth wanted to use her own ideas. He explained, "She is taking on more ways to learn on her own. She doesn't do things simply because her teacher does it that way." Elizabeth came up with and tried out different ideas for teaching. While tensions arose over these changes in certain instances, Ms. Carter was remarkably willing to allow Elizabeth to implement her ideas and learn to teach by forging her own path.

Similarly, Elizabeth learned to teach by differing from other teachers with whom she interacted during her placement. By participating in collaborative planning, Elizabeth observed how several different teachers approached instruction. Many of the ideas she learned were useful, but, at times, Elizabeth forged her own path and wanted to use different ideas, often with the support of her cooperating teacher. Elizabeth remarked, "I am really lucky that the teachers are really receptive, and they're willing to try new ideas." For example, Elizabeth wanted to add

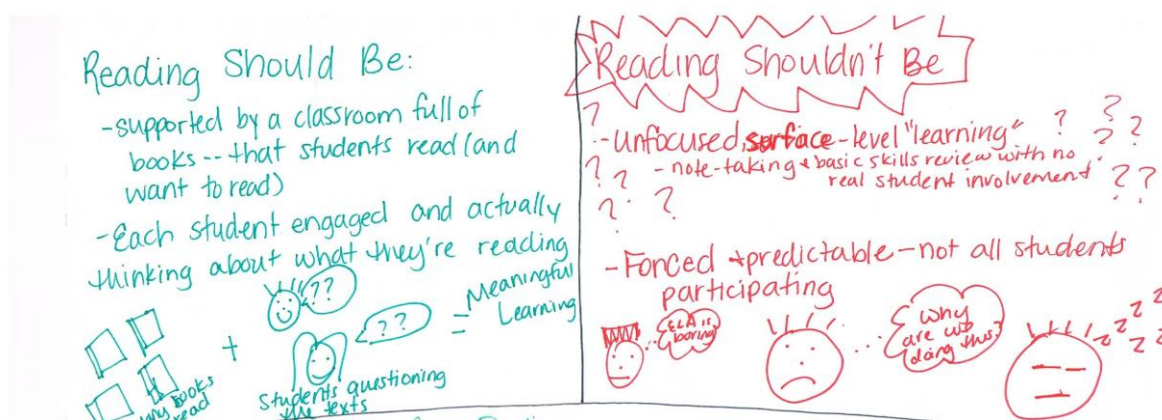
more technology to her lessons to boost student engagement. Instead of traditional reading journals, Elizabeth allowed students to use technology to explain their thinking about *The Outsiders*. She described the results:

One kid actually decided to make a Powtoon on their clique...She was really into getting the design elements and the film making, like zooming in. It's five notches above PowerPoint and way more exciting than Prezi. They get really into that.

Typically, the team required students to “write journals out,” but they were receptive to Elizabeth’s suggestion. Ms. Carter supported Elizabeth’s ideas and noted that Elizabeth would always “bring in something, especially with technology” to make lessons more exciting. Likewise, after one observation, I wrote: “She has lots of her own ideas about teaching, and she wants to try them out.” In this way, Elizabeth learned to teach by forging her own path and differing from the other teachers with whom she planned.

Summary of These Themes. While Elizabeth was exceptional in her skill at appropriating new tools and her curiosity about teaching, this account highlights how she learned to teach. In pursuit of that purpose, some edges and fragmentations in her learning were smoothed out so I could reach into the heart of the research questions and answer them. Elizabeth employed four main tools as she learned to teach. First, she built relationships with students and used what she learned about them to plan lessons. Second, Elizabeth learned through professional development resources. Third, she learned from other teachers—most notably from her mother. Finally, Elizabeth forged her own path as a teacher. These ideas anchored how Elizabeth learned to teach across multiple settings, including her placement, university coursework, and sources outside of her formal teacher education.

During our final interview, Elizabeth wrote and drew about what she had learned about teaching reading. She knew “exactly what I want in my own reading classroom” and touched on what she had learned about building relationships with students and how this knowledge could influence her lessons:



Elizabeth wanted to create “meaningful learning” experiences in which all students read engaging books, instead of “forced and predictable” learning. This commitment led her to use what she knew about her students to connect them to reading. In discussing this document, Elizabeth referred to the other two themes: learning through her own self-directed learning process and forging her own path as a teacher. She envisioned “trying to adjust my scope” to figure out how to “support and advocate” for reading both “inside and outside of class time.” She imagined seeking out new sources of ideas and making learning her own as she developed her teaching practice. Through building and leveraging relationships, her use of professional resources, and forging her own path as a teacher, Elizabeth learned to teach.

What Elizabeth Planned to do With her Learning in the Future

Overall, Elizabeth felt confident and well-prepared for transitioning into her own classroom by the end of her teacher education program, and she had secured a position teaching

middle grades language arts in her home county. Elizabeth envisioned using three main tools for teaching in the future. First, choice would be important in her teaching practice. Second, she imagined that continual learning would be significant to her teaching. Third, she pictured using questioning in her teaching. These three themes undergirded Elizabeth's plans as she thought about how to translate her learning into practice in the future.

Choice. Elizabeth believed that choice would play an important role in how she taught in the future. Her initial interest in using choice as a teaching tool came from her own experiences as a student. She recalled her teachers' typical plans:

You're going to make me read the huge lit book. We had to read whatever story the teacher made me, and then the only way we're engaging in the text is those questions on the side or the end or a worksheet that you copied from somewhere. There was no attempt to make it interesting.

Elizabeth was denied choice as a student, and it had a lasting effect on her thoughts about teaching. In her future classroom, she wanted the opposite: "We can do anything. We can talk about anything. I can engage them by listening to them about what they want to read and how they want to read it." Elizabeth believed that using choice as a tool for teaching would give her "flexibility" and an "open door" for building "a community where students feel like they have a voice, they can talk, and they can actively participate." Elizabeth believed choice would benefit her students and planned to use it with her future students.

During her placement, Elizabeth had frequent opportunities to practice using choice. Literature circles, a teaching tool in which small groups of students choose from a variety of books instead of reading a single text as a whole class, became a key way in which Elizabeth employed choice in her teaching. Students picked "which [books] they wanted to read based on

their interests” because Elizabeth did not “want to force” a certain text “on them if they don’t want to read that.” With literature circles, the students “chose the books, so they were excited about them.” Literature circles allowed Elizabeth to provide students with choices to help them develop as readers.

I found that choice served as an effective teaching tool for Elizabeth. During one observation, I noted that Elizabeth layered choice within the literature circle framework. In the lesson, students were divided small groups to discuss and explore the books they chose to read. Elizabeth provided standards-based question cards and index cards to assess their thinking as a closing activity. The question cards were “made up of about 10 laminated cards on a ring,” which were “divided up by reading skills (synthesizing, visualizing, making connections, inferring, etc.).” Sharing the rings of cards amongst the group, students were instructed to flip through, choose a question, and answer it on the index card. Elizabeth explained that students should “write the question they chose” on one side, and “on the other side, they answer the question” citing “specific text evidence, even using page numbers if possible.” Students showed their enthusiasm for the activity by “chatting and writing” enthusiastically until the bell rang. Through this use of choice, Elizabeth helped students think about their books.

Elizabeth’s cooperating teacher agreed that literature circles were engaging for the students: “She’s been doing lit circles, and they’ve really been amazing.” Ms. Carter noticed that providing choices within the structure of literature circles helped different kinds of learners in the class. She remarked that Elizabeth “provided digital texts for students that have requested it, plus audio versions of text. The audio versions have been phenomenal for some of our lower level readers, really getting them engaged and keeping them engaged.” Ms. Carter “really enjoyed the multiple ways” Elizabeth presented the texts to students, as did Dr. Che, her

university supervisor. He felt that she knew “the importance” of “meeting the needs of all students” and accomplished it by incorporating choice into her lessons.

Another way that Elizabeth incorporated choice into her lessons occurred during a poetry unit. After reading and exploring poetry, Elizabeth planned a poetry choice-board as the unit’s summative assessment. This assessment purposefully contained many opportunities for student choice:

Poetry Choiceboard

ELACCMS: With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed

Making it Your Own: Turning Famous Poems into New Creations

You will create at least 5 new poems inspired from already published work!

To get started, here are 2 frames for you to work with! You can change them to fit your needs.

Mother to Son-Poem Frame
The Mask Poem Frames

You will need to find at least 3 more poems to create your new work! If you need a suggestion, ask a teacher!

Illustrate a Poem

1. Choose a poem that is rich with imagery and details!
2. Before you begin your product, create a new GoogleDoc and copy your poem there. Highlight the lines of the poem that create pictures in your mind—these lines will be where your inspiration comes from.
3. Find photographs that represent the imagery in the poem. You can draw your images by hand or find them digitally.
4. Creatively present your poem in its new format—using Google Slides, Prezi, Storybird, Powtoon, etc.
5. After you have finished your product, you will need to write a paragraph response explaining why you chose the images that you did.

I am Nobody- Emily Dickinson

Designing a Poetry Collection

In this activity, you will create a poetry book containing all of your favorite poems.

1. Analyze a Poem- Choose a poem to completely analyze to discover its meaning, examples of figurative language, and its purpose. Use the "Analyze a Poem" Graphic Organizer to start your thinking. Analyzing Poetry Guide
2. Now, you will choose 9 more poems to include in your collection. With each poem that you choose, you need to

include a paragraph response explaining why you chose this poem and what it means to you.

3. Put all ten of your poems together into a presentation style of your choice—it can be in hard copy or technology based. Design it to represent you!

Your Choice:

Do you have any other ideas on how you want to interact with poetry? Create a plan and share it with the teacher to get approval.

Digging into the Harlem Renaissance: Mini-Research Project

- 1) Choose an influential writer, artist, or musician from the Harlem Renaissance
- 2) Create a product that includes:
 - A biography about the person
 - Why was this person influential to the Harlem Renaissance?
 - Examples of famous work
 - Interesting Facts

You will need to complete the Research Organizer before you begin creating your product.

- 3) Your product can be presented in a digital format (Google Slide, Prezi, S'more, Animoto, Powtoon, etc) or can be created by hand in a format of your

choosing.
Langston Hughes Prezi

Spoken Word/ Slam Poetry

- 1) Create a spoken word poem about a topic of your choosing. It can be in any style and format and can be about any topic that you wish!
- 2) You will need to have a written copy of your poem approved, before you can create a recording or presentation.
- 3) Create a recording of your presentation to share with the class. Ask the teacher for help in this step.

Mike Young- You are Beautiful

The assignment contained many options for students, including the order in which to perform the required tasks, which poems to read, and how to present their learning. This use of choice

helped students engage with poetry. Elizabeth explained, “Poetry, you can go anywhere with it. There’s so many good things out there. Let’s not just analyze, and then pick one poem” to dissect; instead, she gave students choices for interacting with poetry in many different ways. Dr. Hannah, Elizabeth’s university supervisor, felt that students connected to poetry because Elizabeth gave them so many choices. She commented, “Kids were talking about poetry, asking for more time to read” because they had choices about their learning. Elizabeth’s use of choice helped students enjoy and connect to reading.

This positive experience using student choice as a teaching tool led to Elizabeth’s interest in using choice in the future. For example, she remarked, “I had a kid tell me, ‘This is the first time all year I haven’t been bored! I love choosing my own books!’” during the literature circles unit. This success bolstered the appeal of choice as a teaching tool, as did Elizabeth’s observation that student choice promoted engagement:

The book choice was key in getting students engaged. If they didn’t like the whole class book we were reading, they were zoned out. I lost them! But with the lit circles, they chose their books, they chose their roles, and they got to talk. They were so excited and engaged.”

In the same way, Ms. Carter, noticed that “literature circles groups were based on choice,” which led to “highly engaged and communicative” students during the lessons. Based on her experience, Elizabeth wanted to continue using choice as a teaching tool in the future: “That’s something I want to incorporate—student choice in reading” because “student choice” meant “students involved.” By giving choices to students, Elizabeth learned that they were more interested in reading, and she planned to use this tool with her future students. Going forward, Elizabeth wanted her “students to feel like they got to pick what they wanted to interact with on

that day” because she believed that if “you don’t like reading, [it’s because] you haven’t found the right book yet.” Elizabeth intended to incorporate choice into her future plans to help students find texts that would engage them and help them develop as readers.

Continual Learning. In the future, Elizabeth envisioned continual learning as part of her teaching. She felt well-prepared for a future in teaching while simultaneously recognizing areas in which she wanted to learn more. For example, Elizabeth planned to seek further knowledge about how to help struggling readers, broadly defined here as students who disliked reading in general or had difficulty reading a given text, often one on their current grade-level. As she thought about teaching in the future, Elizabeth believed that her teaching would be anchored by a continued focus on learning more.

Struggling readers were a significant concern for Elizabeth throughout the study, and she frequently expressed an interest in learning more about this topic. Beginning in our initial interview, she wondered, “How do you teach that effectively so all my students can get it—not just the higher ones? Because there are some kids in there that are very low, and I don’t know exactly how to reach” them. Elizabeth recognized that some of her students were “struggling readers and reluctant readers. They don’t want to read it because there’s the idea that they should know by now.” Noticing these difficulties sparked Elizabeth’s interest in continued learning in this area.

Elizabeth observed Ms. Carter and other sixth grade teachers as they used whole group instruction as a teaching tool for including all students in reading. Elizabeth recognized that “some classes have 30 kids” and “all the kids are different,” which meant whole group instruction became an easy way to cover material with all students. She noticed some students, however, “tuned out” during whole group reading. She wondered, “Is that reaching everybody?”

Ultimately, she concluded that small group work would give her a footing from which to help struggling readers. She imagined using “literacy-based centers where I can set it up so one group is working on content they’re pretty strong in. They can do it for a few days while I’m focusing on” students who needed targeted help.

Yet despite this framework for teaching in the future, questions remained. By the end of the study, Elizabeth was “still so stumped on what to really do with struggling readers” within small groups. She often asked herself, “What do I do when they can’t do it? How do I help those students while still pushing my other students further? I’m [just] one person.” Both university supervisors noticed Elizabeth wanted to learn more about how to support struggling readers. Dr. Che observed her use of whole group reading as a tool for helping all students access grade-level texts: “She understood that with whole group instruction, in the end, she wanted everyone to be comfortable, and she didn’t want to put anybody on the spot. She really didn’t [directly] address what you do with the struggling readers” who can fall behind during whole group work because she seemed uncertain. Elizabeth echoed this concern to me. In terms of helping struggling readers, she “was still working that out, honestly” at the end of the fall semester and planned to learn more.

Her interest in continued learning about struggling readers carried over into the final semester of her teacher education program. Elizabeth talked with her second semester university supervisor about how to help a group of struggling readers during the literature circles unit. During this discussion, Dr. Hannah explained:

She had *The Hobbit* and *Ender’s Game* and some books I never heard of [as literature-circle-book choices]...Some kids, *The Hobbit* was too dense, and they didn’t like it. She emailed me about that, and she was like, ‘They’re having a hard time, and they’re

struggling.” I said, ‘Then switch them tomorrow. They don’t have to finish, just like with poetry.’ And she did, she put them in something else.

This strategy seemed successful and became a tool for Elizabeth to use with struggling readers in the future. Elizabeth had learned to identify struggling readers and developed a basic plan for helping them in the future, which centered on “the stations approach. Because when it works well—like earlier this week it was one of us at a table working, keeping them moving, and questioning—that one-on-one instruction was useful.” Even with these ideas, Elizabeth wanted to keep learning and add a wider variety of tools into her teaching practice. She committed to continually learning in the future.

Questioning. Throughout the final year of her teacher education program, Elizabeth asked questions and realized she could benefit from continuing to do so in the future. Questioning helped Elizabeth engage in “personal reflection” and think about her learning, her work as a teacher, and her ideas going forward. For example, many of Elizabeth’s questions were concentrated on eliciting students’ ideas about their learning, and she planned to continue using questioning as a teaching tool in the future. Elizabeth believed her students held a wealth of knowledge about their own learning. As the teacher, she wanted to access what they knew about themselves to plan curricula. Elizabeth found that students “will tell you! Seventh graders, sixth graders, eighth graders will tell you everything you wanted to know—and stuff you didn’t.” She was surprised teachers did not often “use that tool, that resource” of simply “asking the students.” In the future, Elizabeth planned to ask many questions of her students, including: “How do I fix this? What would you do?” and even “Why did this suck so bad?” By taking some of “their ideas,” she felt the students would “see that you listened.” She expected

that “if I keep trying and the students see I’m that way, then they’ll be willing to give” more effort. In thinking about the future, Elizabeth envisioned using questioning as a teaching tool.

More specifically, Elizabeth believed asking questions was a powerful tool to use with struggling readers. Through questions, she could find “the way, the avenue that’s going to support them the most” and help them develop as readers. She explained:

[I ask] them to tell me a little bit more about what happens when you see this text. Why do you want to just push it away? What can I do to help you? A lot of times, they’ll shrug a few times, and then I’ll just start talking. Then, in order to shut me up, they’ll be like, ‘Well, you could do this.’

Elizabeth used questions to find ways to help her students—“whatever that is for that kid”—and let “them know that you care. She noticed that using questions made a difference in students’ effort and how they related to her in class and enjoyed the process. Elizabeth loved reading because of “how different it is. It’s almost fun in a way to think, ‘How can I reach this group?’” and what questions could be asked to help them. After finding success with questioning, Elizabeth planned to use it with her students in the future.

Others who observed Elizabeth’s teaching noticed her effective use of questioning as a teaching tool. Ms. Carter, for example, believed Elizabeth had “definitely developed her ability to ask questions, lots of different questions” during her placement, and it “was a great strategy that she used” for helping students open up and talk about their learning. After one observation, I noticed Elizabeth’s awareness of the areas in which she needed to ask questions. I wrote: “It’s easy to get a picture of what she is thinking about and what she wants to know. She is quite clear on what she doesn’t know and how she might be able to learn about it” by asking questions.

These questions included talking to students to find new ways to help them learn. In her future classroom, Elizabeth intended to use this tool in her teaching practice.

Summary of These Themes. Elizabeth employed three key tools as she thought about teaching in the future. First, she placed importance on the use of choice as a teaching tool. Elizabeth expected to use choice as a way to facilitate learning in the future. Second, Elizabeth believed that continual learning would be part of her teaching in the future. As she planned for her own classroom, Elizabeth intended to use what she had learned in her teacher education program as a springboard for continual learning. Third, she planned to employ questioning as a tool for teaching. Through the use of questioning, Elizabeth believed she could learn more about teaching in the future. At the conclusion of her teacher education program, Elizabeth had adapted and made her learning her own by using these tools. She felt excited for her next steps as a teacher and prepared to transfer her knowledge to new situations as she faced the unknown of her own classroom.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of middle grades language arts teacher candidates as they learned to teach reading and planned to use that learning in practice after entering their own classrooms. Using Vygotskian sociocultural theory and qualitative methodology to guide this research, I created two case studies, each of which focused on the mediated activity of one teacher candidate. Then I conducted a cross-case analysis to explore each case further and put the cases in dialogue with each other. This chapter of the dissertation begins by exploring key findings developed from the cross-case analysis. Finally, I conclude the dissertation with discussion of the study and implications for both research and practice.

Cross-Case Analysis

Both of these cases focused on how middle grades teachers learn to teach reading and their plans for teaching in the future. Participants' learning was a fundamentally social, historical, and contextualized endeavor, influenced by the settings in which they learned and people with whom they interacted. For Chase and Elizabeth, learning to teach was an intensive process and involved negotiation as they engaged used tools in settings to pursue their goals. Each participant's process progressed differently, despite being immersed in two similar settings: the same teacher education program and the same placement school.

In the cross-case analysis, I re-examined the full picture of how each participant learned to teach and planned to translate their learning into practice through the framework of mediated

action through tools, settings, and goals. Chase learned and used many tools for teaching reading in different settings as he tried to achieve his goals, as shown in Table 5:

Table 5

Tools, Settings, and Goals Related to Chase's Learning

Tools for Teaching Reading	Settings in Which Tools Were Learned and Appropriated	Chase's Goals for Teaching Reading
<p>Types of Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading summaries of a text • Reading a full text • Popcorn reading • Round robin reading • Teacher read-aloud • Small group reading • Individual reading • Peer-assisted reading • Reading from textbooks and answering comprehension questions • Pair reading • Guided reading • Cloze reading <p>Types of Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Making connections between a text and students' lives ○ Summarizing a chapter ○ Theme-based ○ Debates ○ Analyzing quotes ○ Comparing/contrasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early learning/reading experiences • Apprenticeship of observation • Teacher education program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ University coursework ○ Field placements • Outside teaching and mentoring experiences (teaching summer program; mentors from his middle school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully learn to appropriate tools across different settings • Build strong relationships with students • Become adept at developing engaging curriculum • Make curriculum relevant to students' lives • Serve as a mediator for students' learning • Strengthen understanding of self as a teacher • Continue learning • React well to change in teaching situations and adapt in the moment • Reflect and learn from practice • Work productively with other teachers • Develop ways to motivating resistant and struggling students • Manage the classroom effectively

Tools for Teaching Reading	Settings in Which Tools Were Learned and Appropriated	Chase's Goals for Teaching Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Answering questions about a text ○ Discussing similarities and differences between a text and students' lives ○ Reciprocal teaching ○ Pair-share ○ Exploring essential questions <p>In-Class Learning Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book/text studies • Studying features of a genre • Lecture and direct instruction • Small group jigsaw presentations • Journaling • Vocabulary activities • Centers • Creating class anchor charts • Sticky notes/chalk talk • Graphic organizers <p>Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksheets (both electronic and paper) • Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timeline ○ Create a character Instagram 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to incorporate standards into teaching plans • Inspire adolescents to reach their potential • Instill respect for reading as a means to lifelong learning in students

Tools for Teaching Reading	Settings in Which Tools Were Learned and Appropriated	Chase's Goals for Teaching Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identity interview ○ Write a letter to a character ○ Create and present Powerpoint/Prezi ○ Arts-based ● Benchmark testing ● Vocabulary quizzes ● Homework assignments ● Standardized reading ability tests ● Peer-review of presentations ● Review games <p>Multimedia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Watching a movie version of a written text ● Reading the subtitles of a movie version of a text ● Video clips ● Computer games ● Listening and linking song lyrics to another text 		

This table shows that Chase learned and used multiple tools across different settings as he worked toward meeting various goals. While the chart is organized sequentially, with tools learned in settings as Chase pursued his goals, learning took an uneven path in actuality.

Similarly, as Elizabeth learned to teach and planned for her future, she learned and appropriated different tools for teaching reading across multiple settings as she tried to achieve her goals. In Table 6, a portrait of Elizabeth's learning is shown:

Table 6

Tools, Settings, and Goals Related to Elizabeth

Teaching Tools Learned	Settings in Which Tools Were Used	Elizabeth's Goals
In-Class Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo elicitation • Literature circles • Learning games • Kinesthetic activities • Creating and performing reading-related skits • Leveled graphic organizers • Creating class anchor charts • Cornell notes • Sticky notes/chalk talk • Sticky note wonderings in a book • Novel studies • Book response/reflective journals • Centers • Choice board/menu of options • Reading strategy activities • Leveled short story studies • Leveled worksheets • Highlighting text to notice features • Ticket in/out the door • Quick write about reading • Warm up/opener • Comprehension flip cards in small groups • Jigsaw • Pair-share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early learning/reading experiences • Apprenticeship of observation • Teacher education program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ University coursework ◦ Field placements • Outside learning experiences (advice from mother) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully learn to appropriate tools across different settings • Build strong relationships with students • Become adept at developing engaging curriculum • Make curriculum relevant to students' lives • Strengthen understanding of herself as a teacher • Continue learning/reflect and learn from practice • Work productively with other teachers • Develop ways to motivating resistant and struggling readers • Manage the classroom effectively • Inspire adolescents to develop a love of reading • Use technology in exciting ways to enhance curriculum • Provide students with choices • Develop strong knowledge of standards

Teaching Tools Learned	Settings in Which Tools Were Used	Elizabeth's Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary activities • Reading workshop • Mini-lessons on reading strategies • Class blog • Teacher modeling/gradual release of responsibility • Creating quiz cards with questions and answers to use in a review game <p>Types of Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole group discussions • Small groups discussions • Vocabulary discussions • Meaning-making discussions <p>Types of Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading novels • Reading short stories • Reading non-fiction articles • Popcorn reading • Round robin reading • Independent reading • Small group reading • Pair reading • Whole group reading • Pair-assisted reading • Free reading • Guided reading • Text summaries • Audiobooks <p>Multimedia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video clips 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect research and practice in thinking about teaching

Teaching Tools Learned	Settings in Which Tools Were Used	Elizabeth's Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animated short films • Movie trailers • Socrative • Kahoot • Powtoon • PowerPoint/Prezi • Webquest • Smore about texts read in class • Memes as discussion starters to lead into talking about a book <p>Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Independent reading ○ Journals ○ Worksheets ○ Reader response questions • Standardized reading ability tests • Surveys • Standardized practice tests • Benchmark tests 		

This table provide a visual of Elizabeth's learning as she practiced using various tools across multiple settings as she worked to meet her goals. Much like with Chase, this process was complex and involved back-and-forth negotiation and adaptation for Elizabeth.

As both of these tables demonstrate, Chase and Elizabeth learned a variety of pedagogical tools for teaching, demonstrated knowledge about teaching adolescent reading gained across multiple settings, and put their knowledge into practice to achieve their teaching-related goals. After creating these outlines, I traced the entangled relationships between tools, settings, and

goals as Chase and Elizabeth learned to teach and planned for the future. Tools, settings, and goals were rarely linked in straightforward, linear relationships. For example, the most immediate influence on Chase and Elizabeth's learning was their field placements, which they discussed at length in interviews. Teacher education coursework, however, served as a frame for thinking about what they learned in their field placements. Chase and Elizabeth carried the tools they learned from their coursework into their field placements. As Chase commented, "The classes were part of the base-work and foundation for the beginning of my own teaching." The deep and lasting influence of teacher education coursework on participants' learning became clear through analysis of their mediated action as they taught in their field placements.

Key Findings

Two key findings were developed from cross-case analysis. First, participants developed a sophisticated ability to negotiate tool use across settings to reach their goals, revealing a complicated relationship. Second, teacher education coursework, in particular, played a significant role in participants' learning. These findings can be understood through the lens of one goal shared by both participants: building strong relationships with students.

Through Chase and Elizabeth's shared goal of building strong relationships with students, teacher education coursework was an important piece of their learning as they developed the ability to negotiate tool use across settings to reach their goals. Both Chase and Elizabeth believed in the importance of developing strong relationships with their students. Chase, for example, built on the Middle Grades Program's focus on developing strong teacher-student relationships and practiced connecting with students in his field placement. This tool came from his teacher education coursework and its emphasis on learning about adolescents' needs as readers and responding to them through teacher/student relationship-building. Chase used

knowledge about building positive student-teacher relationships learned his teacher education coursework as a teaching tool to develop techniques for encouraging students to share with him and asked students about their lives to get to know them. As he carried this tool from his coursework through to his field placement, connecting with students became a hallmark of how Chase learned to teach, and he imagined continuing to employ this tool in different settings in the future.

In another example, Chase learned about using books to anchor a unit in his university coursework and then practiced using that tool in his field placement. During student teaching, Chase planned a unit around *Leon's Story*: he chose the text for the class to read together, set aside time for students to read each day, pulled out and presented themes for discussion, and created assessments to help students demonstrate the connections they had made with the book. In the future, he imagined adapting this tool to include multiple standards each day. Although this tool differed from those typically used in his placement, Chase was able to adapt this tool from his literacy coursework and successfully translate it into the new context of his field placement.

Similarly, Elizabeth learned to teach by using literature circles, a tool she first encountered in her literacy coursework. During her placement, Elizabeth centered one unit around the use of literature circles, a tool she learned initially from her teacher education coursework. Literature circles allowed her to provide students with choices and multiple different opportunities to engage with the text to help them develop as readers, but before she began the unit, she read a practitioner book to bolster her knowledge. Based on her students' positive reaction, Elizabeth envisioned continuing to use literature circles in her teaching in the future. In this instance, Elizabeth brought a tool from her university coursework to her

placement, supplementing her knowledge before she appropriated it.

Elizabeth was further able to practice building relationships with students by using other activities she learned in her teacher education coursework. For example, she used created a kinesthetic charades activity to practice making inferences. Elizabeth's choice to use this tool was influenced by learning about multiple learning modalities in her university coursework and her knowledge of students' interest in active learning. Similarly, Elizabeth planned to play "Theme Uno," a tool she encountered in her university coursework, in another lesson based on her students' love of learning games. In using her relationships with students to plan lessons, Elizabeth engaged her students in learning and adapted tools learned in her teacher education coursework to the new setting of her field placement.

Discussion

Currently, alternative pathways into teaching challenge the necessity and quality of teacher education programs, with both federal policymakers and educational reformers championing market-driven teacher preparation practices that focus on a narrow vision of learning to teach (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Duncan, 2009; Grossman, 2008). Despite federal policymakers and educational reformers who claim teacher education provides weak learning opportunities (Sleeter, 2009), this case suggests that teacher education offers important learning experiences for prospective teachers through university coursework. In this case, the setting of teacher education coursework significantly impacted both Chase and Elizabeth as they learned to teach adolescent reading. Chase and Elizabeth brought tools from their university coursework with them to practice teaching in their field placements and envisioned adapting these tools in their future teaching. For Chase and Elizabeth, teacher education coursework served as a

bedrock to build upon as they practiced the complex work of teaching in their placements and planned to enter their own classrooms.

Researchers have documented the lack of knowledge transfer between teacher education and the field (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012), but I argue that the tools they have traditionally used have been mismatched to the goal. Interviews, a commonly used tool in determining knowledge transfer from one setting to another, rely on participants' memories and the questions asked. In this study, Chase and Elizabeth, as they were consumed in the setting of their field placements, tended to have a difficult time pinpointing the source of their knowledge when asked open-ended questions during interviews. During observations, however, their mediated actions demonstrated the use of tools learned in their teacher education coursework, which showed their learning even when they could not articulate it. Through the lens of mediated action, Chase and Elizabeth asserted the importance of university coursework by appropriating teaching tools across different settings and planning to adapt their tool use in the future.

In teacher education coursework, the particularities of the learning process impact how teacher educators prepare new teachers for the field. While many settings simultaneously contribute to teacher candidates' ideas about teaching, this case illustrates the pivotal role of teacher education coursework as Chase and Elizabeth learned to teach and planned for the future. In contrast to simplified versions of teacher preparation, teacher educators can use university coursework to empower future middle grades reading teachers to give critical consideration to the use of a variety of tools across different contexts, which ultimately benefits adolescent literacy learners.

Beyond challenges to teacher education, the advent of federal accountability measures, such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, has ushered one-size-fits-all "solutions" into

teacher education programs and P-12 schools (Krise, 2016; Ravitch, 2010). Educational reformers—including venture philanthropists, non-profits, and think tanks—offer streamlined, alternative programs for preparing new teachers (Zeichner & Conklin, 2016). This study stands in contrast to simplification in teacher education by showing the nuances and particularities of learning to teach and adolescent reading, even between teacher candidates within the same teacher education program, subject area, and middle school setting. In contrast to this uniformity, these findings assert the importance of accounting for the particular, rather than the general, in learning to teach. The process was idiosyncratic rather than standardized as Chase and Elizabeth learned to teach adolescent reading. They brought together tools from across different settings to reach their goals as they learned to teach adolescent reading and made plans for the future.

Implications for Research and Practice

In learning to teach adolescent literacy, research on teacher education meets the literature on adolescent literacy. As discussed in the literature review, only five studies have previously brought these disciplines together to explore how teacher candidates learn to teach adolescent reading. Currently, we know targeted reading instruction designed with adolescents' specific reading needs in mind is beneficial for them and teacher education can serve as a powerful setting for learning to teach by offering multiple effective ways for teacher candidates to learn to teach. This study adds to the research base and suggests teacher candidates, much like their adolescent students, benefit from the same kind of tailored teacher education. Given the small body of scholarship on learning to teach adolescent reading, more research is needed to flesh out the intersectionality of teacher education and adolescent reading.

Future studies might build on this research by taking up how programs are structured to build connections between theory and practice or how teacher educators help teacher candidates create bridges for knowledge learned across different settings. Scholars might ask questions that foreground tools learned in different settings and how to adapt knowledge of teaching tools between settings, including: In what ways can adolescent literacy teacher education programs foster deep connections between settings for learning? How do certain teaching tools elicit useful practices and insights for teacher educators as they guide middle grades literacy teacher candidates' learning? Questions like these could open up new possibilities for exploring teacher education to contribute to deeper understanding of the process of learning to teach adolescent reading.

In teacher education practice, this case suggests the significance of praxis as middle grades literacy teacher candidates learn to teach. As an important part of practice, these findings offer new possibilities for university supervisors. This study supports strengthening the role of supervisors to include explicitly assisting teacher candidates in making connections between coursework and field placements. Supervisors, through this model, can mediate teacher candidates' experiences and develop links between their learning in the university classroom and the P-12 classroom. This task requires a deep understanding of both program and P-12 contexts as supervisors unpack the tools teacher candidates learn and use in each setting and toward what goals. Supervisors can highlight praxis, making clear the ways in which ideas from university coursework connect with the P-12 classroom.

Conclusion

Using Vygotskian sociocultural theory and a qualitative case study methodology, this study focused on the experiences of two middle grades language arts teacher candidates as they

learned to teach adolescent reading and planned to use that learning in the future. Cross-case analysis showed participants' use of tools in settings toward goals were linked in an uneven, deeply entangled relationship. These findings suggest the importance of teacher education coursework and showed how participants developed a sophisticated ability to negotiate tool use across settings to reach their goals, with implications for both research and practice. This data highlights the myriad influences on teacher candidates as they learn to teach, pointing to a difficult task for both teacher educators and prospective teachers as they prepare for the future.

Two broad questions resonate from this study. First, what kinds of knowledge is—and perhaps more significantly, what kinds of knowledge should be—privileged in adolescent literacy teacher education? With so many kinds of tools (theoretical, conceptual, practical, pedagogical, and content, to name a few) involved in learning to teach adolescent reading, it is difficult to pinpoint those that would best serve teacher candidates as they transition from teacher education to their own classrooms given the wide variety of settings in which teaching and learning occurs. As teacher educators decide which tools to emphasize and from which settings, culture is critically important to the work of learning to teach. Tools can be appropriated in ways that meet the needs of all adolescent readers through careful consideration of culture.

Finally, to what ends do teachers engage in their work? The work of teacher education can be constructed in many different ways, leaving teacher educators and prospective teachers with the task of co-constructing the effective use of tools across different settings and toward what goals with the involvement of multiple, sometimes competing, cultural, historical, and social influences. Ultimately, in learning to teach adolescent reading, the tools learned in settings as a means for pursuing goals are only as useful as the outcomes they help adolescent readers achieve. Through the process of learning to teach, the opportunities afforded by the use

of tools and goals in different settings merit critical attention to reach the promise of helping all adolescent readers realize their potential and attain success.

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Appendix A: Self-Esteem Chant Used by Chase and his Cooperating Teacher

Chant for Self- Esteem

I am somebody!

I am who I say I am!

I am young, intelligent, and gifted!

I am strong, bold, and influential!

I am confident!

I am capable!

I am dedicated!

I will use my mind to explore, my heart to understand, and my life to lead.

I understand I am the future.

I am tomorrow.

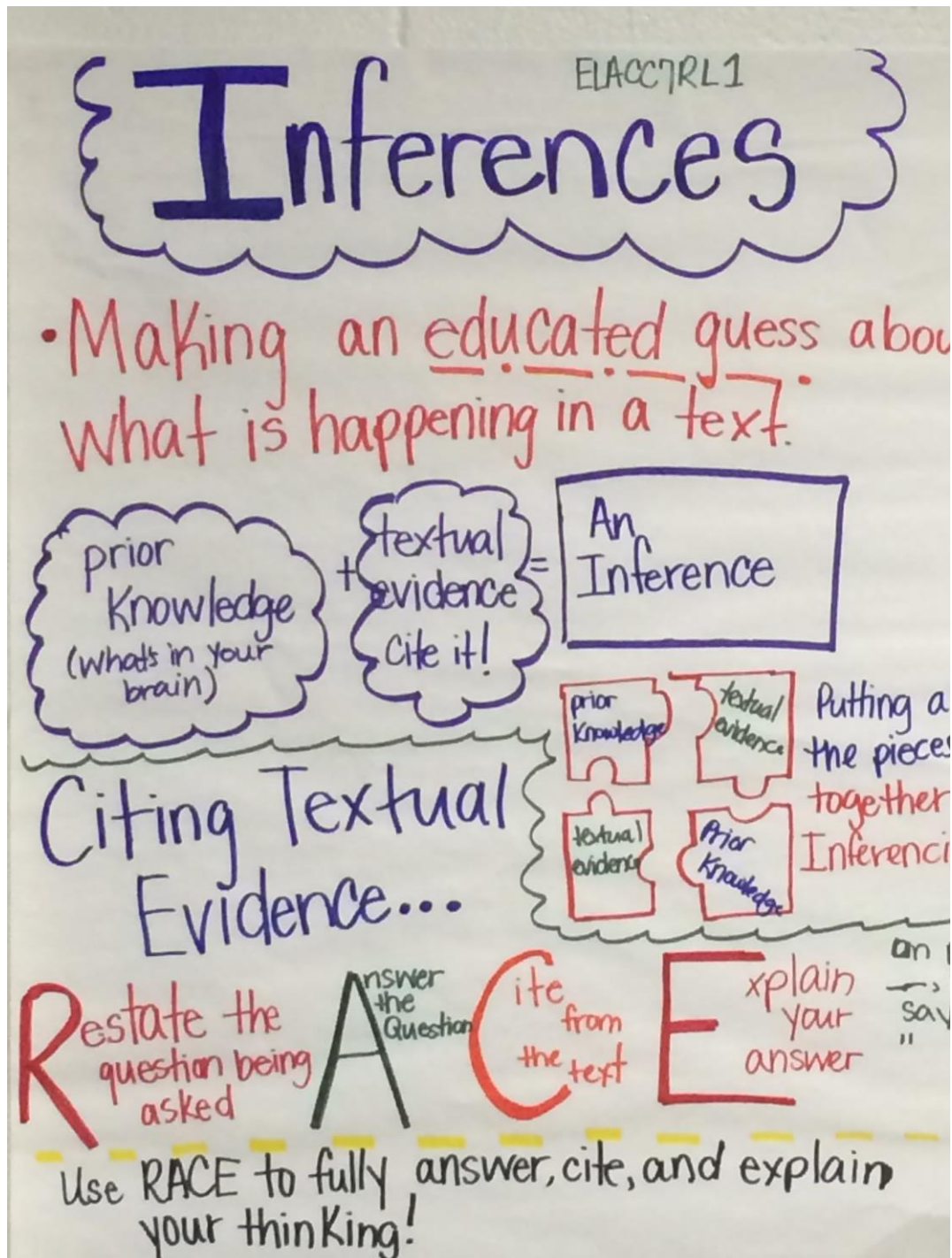
I am the difference.

Today, I will strive to be great!

Today, I will learn!

Today, I will succeed!

Appendix B: Self-Made Poster From Elizabeth's Classroom



Appendix C: Observation Guide Structure

Heading

Participant Name

Observation #____

Date, Time

Grade _____

Cooperating Teacher Name

Descriptive field notes

- A list of bullet points in which I recorded mediated actions.

Informal interview

- A list of bullet points in which I recorded participants' words as we talked about the lesson I observed.
- Questions included:
 - How did it go today? Why?
 - How do you feel like you're learning to teach reading?
 - Does it feel like what you're learning has changed since I last saw you? How?

Interpretive field notes

Narrative paragraphs about my thoughts and early analysis of the observation and informal interview.

Appendix D: Interview Guide for Teacher Candidates

- Tell me about how you learned to read.
- Did that have an effect on how you teach reading now?
- Tell me about how you thought about teaching reading before you took any classes on reading instruction.
- What university/college level classes did you take to learn about teaching reading to middle grades students?
- Tell me about these classes.
- What did you learn about teaching reading to middle grades students from each of these classes?
- Tell me about what you learned from your classes that has been most useful for your teaching practice.
- Tell me about what you learned from your classes that has been not been useful for your teaching practice.
- What can you tell me about what you've learned about teaching reading in your student teaching placement?
- What questions do you still have about teaching reading to middle grades students?

Appendix E: Interview Guide for University Supervisors and Cooperating Teachers

- How did the teacher candidate think about teaching reading at the start of student teaching?
- What has the teacher candidate been learning about teaching reading from coursework?
- What has the teacher candidate been learning about teaching reading from field experiences?
- What have you seen the teacher candidate implement in terms of reading instruction?
- What, if anything, should the teacher candidate implement or know about reading instruction with middle grades students?
- What is most important in teaching reading to middle grades students?
- What methods of reading instruction did the teacher candidate use at the start of student teaching? How has that changed?
- What has the teacher candidate learned about teaching reading that you think will be most useful for his/her future teaching practice?
- What has the teacher candidate learned about teaching reading that you think might not be useful for his/her future teaching practice?
- What do you think the teacher candidate still needs to learn or work on in terms of middle grades reading instruction?

Appendix F: Example Memo From Data Analysis

August 31

What do I know about the data so far?

1. There are a number of worlds--and not just typical ones--involved in Chase's process of learning to teach. The teaching experience Chase gained outside of his teacher education program seems to have had a significant impact on him. It might be useful to categorize these different worlds and explore how they function and relate to each other. I also haven't done much looking at tensions in teacher candidate's processes of learning to teach, which might provide new insights. So far, I have seen tension between the past, present, and future as teacher candidates try to integrate what they bring from their pasts into the present (in the form of teacher education) and how they expect to translate that into the future. It would be useful to examine that more deeply.

2. Finally, I am struck by how, even by the end of the study, Chase doesn't have a finalized, coherent sort of vision for teaching adolescent reading (neither do other participants, so he is not alone). All the practice seems to be just that--practice. But it isn't practice with the big game (his classroom next year) in mind. Besides me, no one seems to have asked him about his plans to use what he has learned in his teacher ed experiences; he hasn't been given explicit instruction or help to learn how to put what he has learned into action. I am especially surprised because Chase knows the context and culture in which he is going to teach next year. With help from his cooperating teacher, supervisor, and professors, I am not sure why his future plans aren't being discussed more. This disconnect might help to explain why the effects of teacher ed programs often fade as teacher candidates begin their careers. Similar to this case, teacher candidates may not have been taught to make connections between their learning in teacher ed and their future classrooms, and as they become immersed in the cultures of their new schools, teacher candidates use what is most readily available to them to make sense of their work.